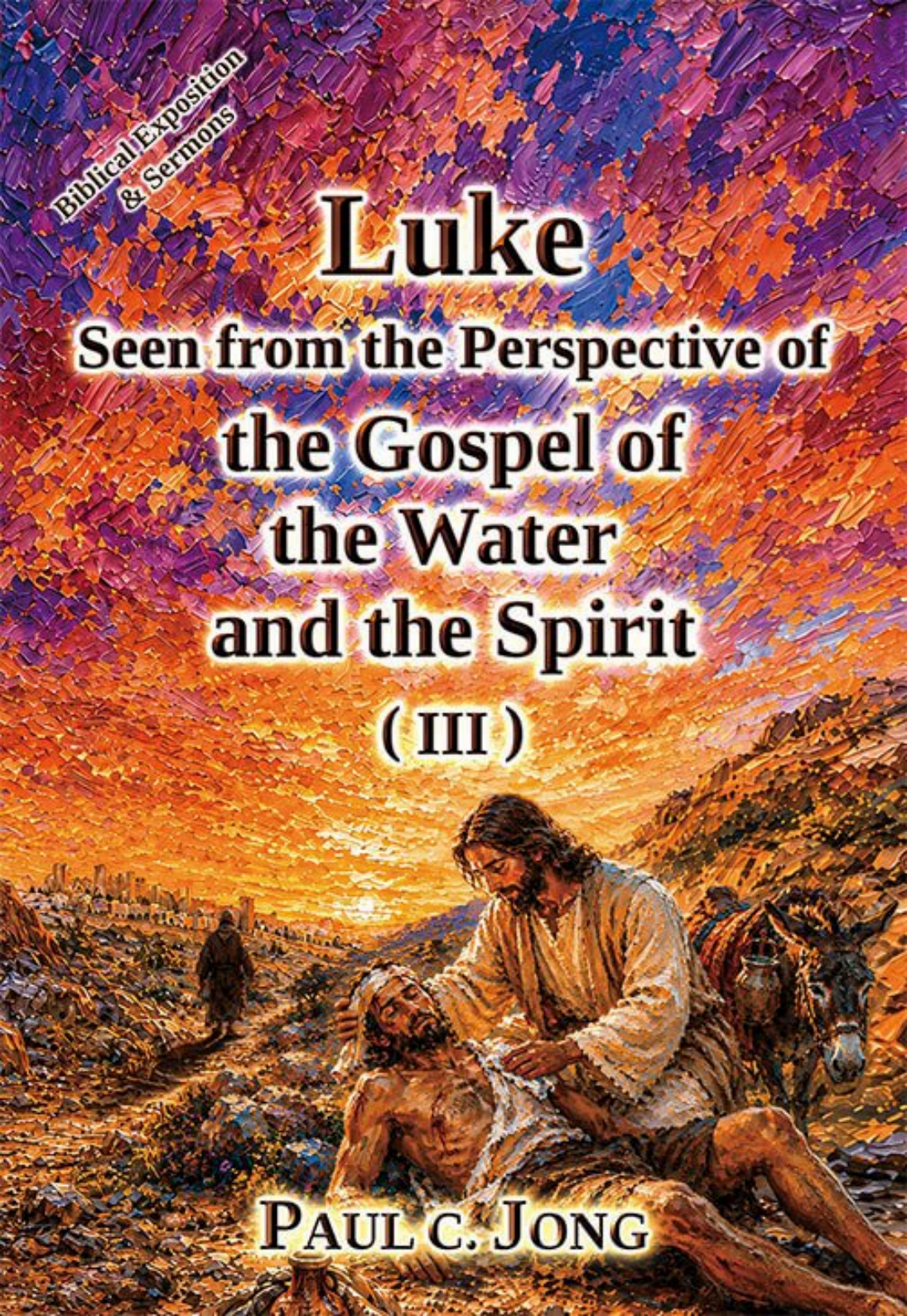
Biblical Exposition & Sermons

Luke

Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

(III)



PAUL C. JONG

“But seek the kingdom of God” (Luke 12:31)

The Gospel of Luke tells us to live by praying first for the Kingdom of God and the preaching of the gospel, rather than holding on to the riches of this world or our own righteousness.

Jesus, who is God, came to this earth to save sinners and completed the gospel of the water and the Spirit through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and His resurrection.

Whoever believes in this gospel receives the remission of all his sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and comes to call God his Father. Such believers also live as wise and faithful stewards who wait for the Lord who will come again and share out food in due season together with the church.

This is a book that everyone must seek out

and read now,

before the Antichrist appears,

as this world is heading toward destruction.

<u>You must believe now.</u>

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Luke
Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (III)

PAUL C. JONG

Hephzibah Publishing House
A Ministry of THE NEW LIFE MISSION
SEOUL, KOREA

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Luke seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (III)

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We offer a prayer of thanks to the Lord for giving us the Word of salvation and blessing us with the gospel of being born again by water and the Spirit.

I would also like to thank God's servants and brothers and sisters for their invaluable service in publishing this book. We all worked hard to write this book.

I hope and pray that this book will help many souls be born again, and I would like to express my sincere gratitude once again to everyone who worked hard with me.

I sincerely hope that the Lord will allow the gospel of being born again by water and the Spirit to be spread throughout the world through those who believe in Jesus.

PAUL C. JONG

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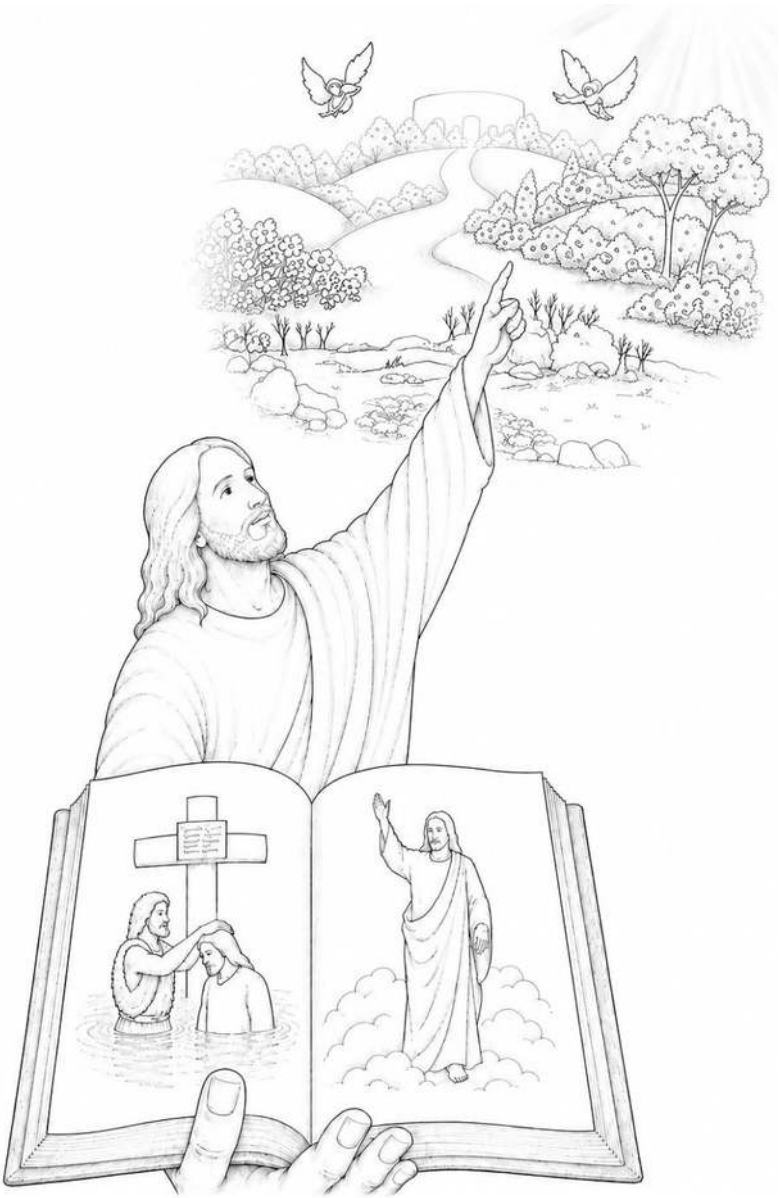

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Preface

Reading the Gospel of Luke is not a matter of learning only as knowledge the prayer and the parables Jesus taught. It is to know through the word what God accomplished in history in order to save sinners, and to believe in the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus Christ completed with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection. Volume 3 of the Gospel of Luke shows what the person who has believed in this salvation must ask for, and where he must set his heart as he lives. The person who has received the remission of sins does not rely on the wealth of the world or on his own righteousness, but hopes for the kingdom of God and serves the gospel together with the church.

Volume 3 of the Gospel of Luke covers Luke chapter 11 through chapter 14. We examine prayer for the kingdom of God and the preaching of the gospel, the faith that abandons covetousness and the worries of life and seeks the kingdom of God first, and the life that waits for the Lord who will come again. Next we learn the faith that enters through the narrow gate, the feast of the kingdom of heaven for which everything has been prepared, and the way of the disciple who abandons his own righteousness and follows the Lord. All these words call us to believe the salvation Jesus completed, to put the will of God before our own desires, and to preach the word of salvation to the souls who do not yet know the gospel.

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The faith that prays for the kingdom of God and the preaching of the gospel

In Luke chapter 11 Jesus teaches His disciples to pray. The saved person asks that the kingdom of God come and that the gospel of the water and the Spirit be delivered to the whole world, rather than that his own desires be fulfilled. He also prays that God would keep him and the saints from hardship and temptation, and provide the health, material resources, and wisdom needed to serve the gospel. The person who has received the remission of sins and calls God Father does not rely on his own strength alone, but entrusts everything to God.

The parable of the man who asked for bread at midnight shows the fact that we must pray without losing heart even when there is hardship. God is the Father who hears the prayer of the person who asks, seeks, and knocks, and who gives the best thing. Therefore we must pray that we may preach the gospel to the souls who have not yet obtained the bread of life. And believing that God will help, we must serve the work of preaching the gospel together with the church. Prayer offered in faith leads to obedience for the gospel.

A life that seeks the kingdom of God and waits for the Lord who will come again

The rich fool of Luke chapter 12 thought that if he stored up much wealth his soul would be at ease, but he did not know that God is the Master of life. To His disciples, who were worried about what to eat and what to wear, Jesus said to seek the kingdom of God first. This means that one must not become so preoccupied with the needs of life that one forgets the work of

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saving souls. If our treasure is in the Lord and the gospel, our hearts also come to be there. The saved person, believing that God will supply what is needed, uses his time, his talents, and his material things for the preaching of the gospel. He also carries out in faith the work entrusted to him as he waits for the Lord who will come again.

A life that enters through the narrow gate and preaches the gospel of the feast of the kingdom of heaven

In Luke chapter 13 Jesus says to strive to enter through the narrow gate. To enter through the narrow gate is not a matter of obtaining salvation by one's own efforts or religious zeal. It is to believe in the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus took the sin of mankind upon Himself with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged on the Cross, and then rose again. It is also, after receiving the remission of sins, not to follow one's own desires but to receive the word of God and follow His will.

At the feast of the kingdom of heaven in Luke chapter 14, everything needed for salvation has already been prepared. Since Jesus removed all sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, a person must not add his own works but must believe the salvation the Lord completed. The person who does not put forward his own goodness and religious acts but admits that he absolutely needs the salvation of God can take part in the feast of the kingdom of heaven by faith. The saved person must preach the word of salvation to the souls who do not yet know this grace, and lead them to the gospel so that they too may receive the remission of sins.

The way of becoming a disciple of Jesus comes with a life of taking up one's own cross and following the Lord. The word to hate even one's family and one's own life means that the heart that loves one's family and one's own life must not come before the will of the Lord. The word to forsake all that one has does not mean to forsake only one's property. It is the word to lay down the righteousness and the stubbornness by which one regards oneself as right and superior, and to acknowledge that the word of the Lord alone is right. The person who has abandoned his own righteousness and has taken hold of the righteousness of the Lord can follow the Lord in faith even in the midst of hardship and live for the gospel.

Before reading this book

This book is organized so that the passages from Luke chapters 11 through 14 can be examined through 'Biblical Exposition,' 'Questions and Answers,' and the sermons of Pastor Paul C. Jong. Part 1 of the Biblical Exposition examines the text divided into the general perspective and the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and makes clear the meaning of salvation that each word conveys. Part 2 divides the text according to its content and unfolds the central events and teachings of each passage in the form of a sermon. The Questions and Answers concisely arrange the main verses and themes and help the reader confirm again what he has examined in the Biblical Exposition. The sermons of Pastor Paul C. Jong show how we today must believe this word and apply it to our lives.

The purpose of this whole course does not stop at piling up knowledge of the Bible. It lies in helping the reader know Jesus

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rightly, believe the salvation He accomplished as his own salvation, hope for the kingdom of God, and serve the gospel together with the church.

I hope that everyone who reads this book will believe in God as Father, pray for the preaching of the gospel, and set his heart on the kingdom of God without having it taken up by the wealth of the world and the worries of life. I hope that he will believe in his heart the fact that Jesus removed all our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, abandon his own righteousness and stubbornness, and preach the word of salvation to the souls who do not yet know the gospel of the water and the Spirit. I hope that the Holy Spirit will make him understand the word, and lead him to be united with the church and to be faithful to the work of saving souls as he waits for the Lord who will come again. ✉

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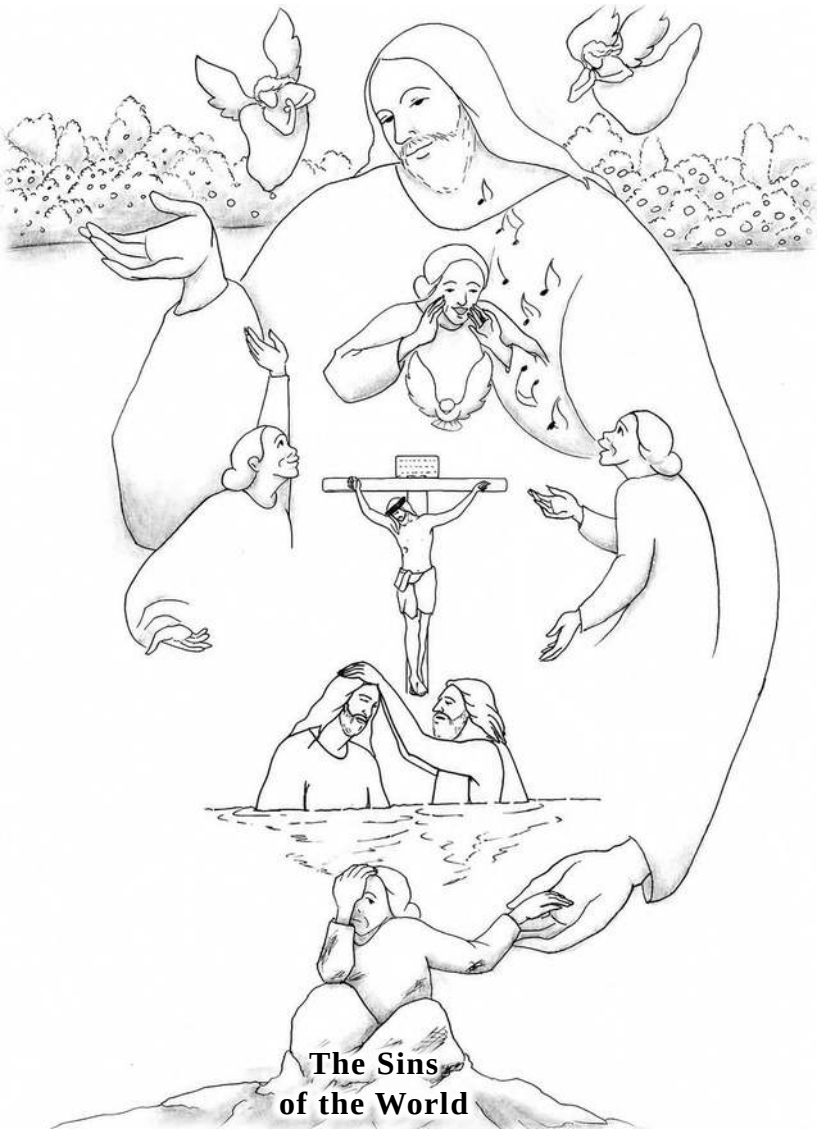

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Luke Chapter 11

Part 1. Understanding the text passage by passage and its gospel-based interpretation

Luke chapter 11 begins with the prayer Jesus taught and deals with the Holy Spirit, the power of Satan, the faith that hears the word, the sign of Jonah, the light of the heart, and the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the lawyers. This chapter shows the life of the disciple who seeks the will of God, believes and keeps the word, and goes on to a change of heart rather than of outward appearance.

1. The prayer that Jesus taught (11:1–4)

"Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.' So He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.'"

General interpretation of the text

When the disciples ask Him to teach them to pray, Jesus

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teaches them to pray calling God *"Father."* Prayer begins with first asking that the name of God be hallowed and that His kingdom come.

Then it asks for the bread needed each day, the remission of sins, and protection from temptation. This does not mean not to ask for one's own needs; it means to rely on God for every need while thinking first of the will and the rule of God.

The person who has received the remission of sins from God must also forgive the person who has wronged him. This does not mean that one obtains the remission of sins from God by forgiving others; it means that an attitude of wanting to forgive others must appear in the life of the person who has received the remission of sins.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—The prayer that seeks the will and the kingdom of God first

When the disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, Jesus told them to ask first that the name of the Father be hallowed and that the kingdom of God come. Prayer is not a means of moving God in order to fulfill one's own desires. It is asking that the will of God be done in oneself, in the church, and in the whole world.

For a sinner to call God Father, his relationship with God must first be restored. A person does not become a child of God merely because he attends church or recites a prayer. He must know and believe how Jesus removed our sins and receive the remission of sins.

Jesus took the sin of all mankind upon Himself by receiving baptism from John the Baptist. And carrying that sin, He was crucified on the Cross, received the judgment of sin, and rose

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from the dead. The Holy Spirit comes upon the person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit and has received the remission of sins, and only then does he become a child of God who calls God Father.

To ask that the kingdom of God come is first to ask that the rule of God be established in one's own heart through the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit. It is also to ask that the souls who do not yet know the gospel may receive the remission of sins and become the people of God, and that the church of God and the gospel may spread throughout the whole world.

The prayer that asks for daily bread also carries the meaning of asking for the bread of the word that gives life to the soul, together with the bread needed by the body. The saints must not think that they can live by their own strength alone, but must rely on God, who supplies life, health, material things, and the word.

Jesus told them to pray, forgiving others, that He would remit their sins, and to pray that they might not enter into temptation. These words must not be understood to mean that the salvation Jesus accomplished is incomplete and that one must receive a new atonement every day.

Jesus took upon Himself and was judged for the sins of our whole lifetime through His baptism and the Cross. The saint who has received the remission of sins must, remembering this grace of perfect salvation, admit his own faults before God and also forgive the person who has wronged him.

The act of forgiving people is not the price by which one saves oneself. It is because one believes the fact that one has oneself had a great debt of sin canceled without any cost that one can forgive others. If one does not forgive the fault of a brother and claims only the mercy one has received from God, it is hard to say that one is rightly enjoying the grace of the gospel.

Temptations and hardships come to the saints as well. If one

overtrusts one's own resolve and will, one can fall into great temptation. Therefore the saints must ask God for protection and help so that they themselves, their families, the church, and the workers of the gospel may not fall into evil temptation.

2. Pray with persistence (11:5–13)

"And He said to them, 'Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him"; and he will answer from within and say, "Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you"? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. 'So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!'"

General interpretation of the text

Jesus tells the story of a man who goes to his friend in the middle of the night and asks for bread. At first the friend is

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reluctant to get up, but because of the continued request he finally gives him what he needs.

This parable does not mean that God is annoyed and answers reluctantly. It means that if even an imperfect person grants an earnest request, the good God cares all the more for the child who prays trusting in Him.

The word “ask, seek, knock” is not a promise either that one receives everything one wants just as one wants it. Just as human parents do not give their children what is harmful, God gives good things to the person who asks. The Gospel of Luke makes clear that the best gift God gives is the Holy Spirit.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—He gives the Holy Spirit to the person who asks for the best thing

The parable of the friend who came in the middle of the night and kept asking for bread does not mean that God is a heartless being who answers only when pestered. It is the word that asks, if even a friend in the flesh does not turn away from a persistent plea, whether God, who loves His children, would turn away from the person who seeks and asks Him.

The prayer that asks, seeks, and knocks is not only for obtaining worldly success. One must know what the best gift God gives is. The Gospel of Luke clearly says that God gives the Holy Spirit to the person who asks.

But one does not receive the Holy Spirit by praying loudly for a long time or by experiencing special phenomena. Nor is it by washing away one’s sins one by one with prayers of repentance so that the Holy Spirit can dwell in a sinful heart. A sinner must hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus

accomplished and receive the remission of sins. Receiving the remission of sins and receiving the Holy Spirit as a gift are not separate things.

One receives the remission of sins when one believes in one's heart the fact that Jesus took our sins upon Himself with His baptism, was judged in our place on the Cross, and rose from the dead. And the Holy Spirit comes upon that heart from which sin has been washed away and seals that person as a child of God.

Even after being saved, prayer must continue. The saints must ask for the wisdom, health, material things, and circumstances needed to preach the gospel, and must pray for the church and the workers of God. Prayer is the confession of faith that one lives not by one's own ability but by the help of God.

3. Jesus and the Beelzebub controversy (11:14–23)

"And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled. But some of them said, 'He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.' Others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven. But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls. If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his

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own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters."

General interpretation of the text

When Jesus casts out a demon that keeps a man from speaking, some people accuse Him of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the chief of the demons.

Jesus says that a divided kingdom falls. If Satan were driving out his own forces, his kingdom could not be maintained, so their claim is contradictory.

That Jesus casts out demons with *"the finger of God"* means that the kingdom of God is already coming among the people. In the parable of the stronger man who comes and overpowers the strong man, the strong man refers to Satan and the stronger One refers to Jesus. Jesus is the One who overcomes the evil powers and sets free the people who were under their rule.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—Jesus is the Savior who is stronger than Satan

When Jesus cast out the demon that kept the man from speaking, that man began to speak. This event revealed that Jesus is God, who rules over the power of evil spirits, and the promised Savior.

But some people slandered Jesus, saying that He cast out

demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. Even though they saw the work of God, they did not believe; rather, they turned the work the Holy Spirit had done into the work of Satan.

If Satan casts out Satan, his kingdom is divided against itself and cannot stand. Jesus cast out demons with the finger of God, and this was the evidence that the kingdom of God had come among the people.

In the word about the strong man, fully armed, guarding his own house, the strong man represents Satan, who was holding sinners captive. But Jesus is the One who is stronger than Satan. The Lord took the sin of mankind upon Himself with His baptism, received the judgment of sin on the Cross, and, by rising from the dead, broke the power of sin, death, and Satan.

A person cannot overcome Satan by his own will and religious discipline. He must believe the salvation Jesus accomplished, receive the remission of sins, and come under the rule of the Holy Spirit. The person who does not gather souls with Jesus ends up as a person who opposes the gospel and scatters souls.

4. The parable of the evil spirit that returned (11:24–26)

"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

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General interpretation of the text

An evil spirit went out of a man, and when it came back, it found the house neatly put in order but empty. Then it brought in seven other spirits more evil than itself, and the last state of that man became worse than the first.

This parable is a warning that it is not enough only to stop bad behavior and put one's outward life in order. Even a person who has experienced deliverance through Jesus can come under the influence of evil again if he does not receive Him.

True restoration does not end with removing what is evil. One must enter a new relationship with God and go on to a life that obeys His word.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—One's heart must become a heart in which the Holy Spirit dwells

He said that after the unclean spirit has gone out, if the house is swept and put in order but left empty, spirits more wicked than itself come in and the state of that man becomes worse than before.

This word does not mean that every person is literally possessed by a demon, nor does it mean that one should conclude that every illness is the work of demons. It is a spiritual warning that merely correcting a person's outward appearance and habits of life does not change the master of his heart.

Even if one gives up alcohol and bad habits, does good works, and keeps religious rules, the sin in one's heart does not disappear. Even if the outside has been put neatly in order, if the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the Holy Spirit are not in

one's heart, the fundamental problem of sin remains as it is.

A person's heart is not a house that is merely to be left empty. It must be filled with the word of the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished and become the dwelling place of God, in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Even the saint who has received the remission of sins must keep hearing the word, be united with the church, and guard his own heart by faith.

5. The truly blessed person (11:27–28)

"And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!' But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'"

General interpretation of the text

A woman says that the mother who bore and raised Jesus is blessed. Then Jesus says that rather, the person who hears the word of God and keeps it is blessed.

This does not mean to disregard Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary herself is described as a person who believed and obeyed the word of God.

Jesus teaches that the standard of true blessedness is hearing the word of God and putting it into practice, rather than blood relationship or religious privilege. Anyone can share in the blessing of the kingdom of God by responding to the word in faith.

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The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—The person who hears the word and keeps it is truly blessed

A woman in the crowd said that the mother who bore and raised Jesus was blessed. She acknowledged the greatness of Jesus, but she looked for blessedness in a relationship of the flesh.

But Jesus said that rather, the person who hears the word of God and keeps it is blessed. The fact of having been close to Jesus in the flesh does not guarantee salvation. Neither can the fact of living with a believing family or having attended church for a long time take the place of one's own remission of sins.

To keep the word does not mean to keep the law perfectly and establish one's own righteousness. It is to hear the word of the salvation God accomplished for sinners and to believe it in one's heart, without changing it according to one's own thoughts or discarding it.

The person who keeps in his heart the word of salvation accomplished through the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus is the truly blessed person. Even after receiving the remission of sins, one must keep hearing and confirming this word and live within the gospel.

6. The sign of Jonah (11:29–32)

"And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, 'This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. The queen of the South will rise up in

the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here."

General interpretation of the text

The people have already seen many miracles of Jesus, but they demand yet another sign. Jesus says that no sign will be given to that generation except the sign of Jonah.

In the Gospel of Luke the emphasis is on the point that, just as Jonah himself became a sign to the people of Nineveh, Jesus Himself is the decisive sign given to the people of that time. More broadly, it can be understood as pointing even to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The people of Nineveh repented when they heard the word of Jonah, and the queen of the South came from a distant place to hear the wisdom of Solomon. But the people of that time did not receive Jesus, who is greater than Jonah and Solomon, even though they saw Him directly. The problem was not a lack of evidence but the stubbornness that did not accept the evidence already given.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—The sign of Jonah points to the death and resurrection of Jesus

The people had already seen the word and the power of Jesus,

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but they demanded yet another sign. They did not seek a sign in order to believe; they tried to test Jesus and fit Him to the standard of their own judgment.

Jesus said that there was no sign to show them except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah went into the great fish and came out, Jesus would also die for sinners and rise from the dead. The death and resurrection of Jesus are the clearest sign of salvation given to sinners.

But the death of Jesus cannot be understood apart from His baptism. When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River, He took all the sins of the world upon Himself. Therefore His death on the Cross is the judgment on the sins He took upon Himself with His baptism, and His resurrection is the evidence that He finished that judgment and overcame sin and death.

The people of Nineveh turned when they heard the preaching of Jonah, and the queen of the South came a long way to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Yet the people of that time did not believe in Jesus, who is greater than Jonah and Solomon, even though He was right before them. Today also we must not wait only for new miracles and experiences while rejecting the gospel of the water and the Spirit that has already been written.

7. The lamp and the eye of the heart (11:33–36)

"'No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then

your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light.'"

General interpretation of the text

A person lights a lamp and puts it on a lampstand instead of hiding it. The light of the kingdom of God revealed through Jesus is also, in its essence, not something hidden.

If the eye is clear, the whole body is full of light, but if the eye is bad, the body also becomes dark. Here the eye represents a person's heart and spiritual perception with which he looks at Jesus and the gospel.

If one is gripped by prejudice, greed, and pride, one may not be able to accept the clear light even after seeing it. Therefore, before being sure that one knows the truth, one must examine whether one is receiving that light with a humble and upright heart.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—The eye of the heart that sees the light of the gospel must be full of light

A lamp is not lit in order to be hidden; it is put on a lampstand so that those who come in may see the light. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished is the light that exposes people's sins and wrong faith and shows the way of the remission of sins.

But even if the light is bright, if a person's eye is bad, he cannot see that light. If the heart is full of self-righteousness,

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greed, and religious prejudice, one may fail to see, even while reading the Bible, how the baptism and the Cross of Jesus removed one's own sins.

One must examine whether the light one thinks is within oneself is not actually darkness. For one can think that one knows the truth while putting human traditions and doctrines before the word of God.

One must fix the eye of one's heart on the word of God and see clearly the work of salvation Jesus accomplished. When one knows and believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, one's heart becomes full of light, and that person can also deliver the light of salvation to other souls.

8. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees (11:37–44)

"And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. Then the Lord said to him, 'Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you. 'But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them.'"

General interpretation of the text

A Pharisee is surprised to see that Jesus does not perform the religious ceremony of washing His hands before the meal. Jesus points out that they make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but inside they are full of greed and wickedness.

They thoroughly tithed even small herbs, but they neglected justice and the love of God. Jesus rebukes not the tithe itself but the attitude that keeps small rules while abandoning justice and love, the heart of the law.

They also loved the best seats and the respect of people. Jesus compares them to graves that people walk over without knowing it. For while they looked pious outwardly, in reality they were having a harmful influence on others. True cleanness must appear in a changed heart and merciful actions rather than in outward form.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—The heart is not made clean by a religion that adorns the outside

The Pharisee thought it strange that Jesus did not wash His hands according to the ceremony before the meal. They regarded making the outside of the cup and dish clean as important, but their hearts were full of greed and wickedness.

One can adorn one's outward appearance with religious ceremonies, service, and offerings. But such acts cannot wash away the sin of the heart. The sin of the heart can be washed away only by the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished.

The Pharisees thoroughly tithed even small herbs, but they

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abandoned the justice and the love of God. The justice and the love of God are not a matter of unconditionally overlooking sin. God had Jesus take the sin of the world upon Himself with His baptism and, by judging that sin on the Cross, saved sinners righteously.

Offering material things is not wrong in itself. But one must not establish one's own righteousness with offerings and service while not believing the righteousness Jesus accomplished. The heart must first be made clean by the gospel, and after that material things and service must appear as the fruit of thanksgiving.

The Pharisees loved the best seats and the greetings of people. They seemed to serve God, but in reality they sought the recognition of people rather than the glory of God. The person who is pious outwardly but whose heart is full of sin and self-righteousness can, like a grave that is not seen, lead himself and others into wrong faith.

9. The warning to the lawyers (11:45–54)

"Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, 'Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also.' And He said, 'Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore the wisdom of God also said, "I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute," that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may

be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation. 'Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.' And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him."

General interpretation of the text

The lawyers loaded people with heavy burdens through complicated regulations, yet they did not try to lighten those burdens. The role of a religious leader is not to crush people but to help them understand the will of God rightly and obey it.

They adorned the tombs of the prophets of the past, but they did not accept the word of God that rebuked them. While honoring the prophets of the past, they rejected the truth being spoken to them in the present.

Jesus rebukes them for having taken away "*the key of knowledge,*" not entering in themselves and hindering those who were trying to enter. Knowledge of the Scriptures must lead people to God; it must not become a tool for maintaining the power or superiority of leaders.

Rather than repenting when they hear the rebuke of Jesus, the scribes and the Pharisees try to catch Him in His words. Whether one examines oneself or attacks the One who spoke when one has heard the word of God reveals the state of one's heart.

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The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—One must not block the door of salvation with the key of knowledge

The lawyers loaded people with burdens hard to bear, while they themselves did not touch those burdens with even one finger. Though they taught the law, they did not know the true purpose of the law.

The law is not a ladder by which a person becomes righteous through his own efforts. It exposes a person's sin and makes him realize that he is a sinner who cannot keep all the commandments, so that he may seek Jesus Christ. Yet the lawyers used the law to condemn and oppress people.

They built the tombs of the prophets who had died in the past, yet they did not accept the word the prophets had preached. In the end they even opposed Jesus, who came as the fulfillment of that word. If one says that one honors the people of faith of the past while rejecting the word of truth being delivered to oneself now, one comes to walk the same road they did.

Even with the key of knowledge, the lawyers did not enter the kingdom of God themselves, and they even hindered those who were trying to enter. The purpose of knowledge of the Scriptures does not lie in exalting oneself. It lies in realizing the salvation Jesus accomplished through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, and in leading others to know that salvation as well.

The scribes and the Pharisees who heard the rebuke of Jesus did not turn; rather, they looked for something to catch in the words of Jesus. A heart that does not admit its own wrong before the word can become all the more stubborn the more it hears the truth.

Conclusion of Part 1—The gospel of the water and the Spirit that Luke chapter 11 conveys

Luke chapter 11 first tells us to ask God for the best thing. The best thing is, before worldly success, to receive the remission of sins, obtain the Holy Spirit as a gift, and become a child of God.

Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with His baptism, received the judgment of sin on the Cross, and rose from the dead. When we know and believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, the sin of the heart is washed away and the Holy Spirit comes.

The person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells does not adorn only the outside while leaving his heart empty. He hears the word of God and keeps it, looks to the salvation Jesus has already accomplished rather than to new signs, and examines his own faith by the light of the gospel.

Nor does he, like the Pharisees, boast of religious acts and position or load others with the burden of the law. He remembers the grace of the remission of sins he has received, forgives others, and delivers the word of salvation, the key of knowledge, to the souls who do not yet know the gospel. ✉

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Part 2. An expository sermon
following the text passage by passage

Jesus, who lights the way of salvation with prayer and the word

Introduction

In Part 1 above we looked at each passage of Luke chapter 11 side by side, from the general interpretation of the text and from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Now, following the flow of the same text, we will look closely at what prayer and the Holy Spirit, the authority of Jesus, and the faith that hears and keeps the word teach us about our faith and our lives.

The prayer Jesus taught and the gift of the Holy Spirit, the authority of the Lord who is stronger than Satan, the sign of Jonah and the light of the heart, and the warning to the Pharisees and the lawyers are not words separated from one another. All these words show not a religion that corrects only the outward appearance, but the faith whose heart is made clean by the gospel and which lives according to the word.

The expository sermon that follows traces the flow of the text and examines how the gospel of the water and the Spirit—by which Jesus took the sin of mankind upon Himself with the baptism He received from John and completed salvation through the Cross and the resurrection—is testified to in each passage.

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The prayer that seeks the will of God first

"Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.' So He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.'" (Luke 11:1–4).

The prayer that Jesus taught

Earlier, Jesus said to Martha, who was worried and troubled about many things, that Mary, who was listening to the word of the Lord, had chosen the good part. In chapter 11 that follows, He teaches His disciples to pray. Hearing the word and praying are not separated from each other. Prayer is knowing the will of God and the gospel through the word, believing that word, and responding to God.

In verse 1 Jesus was praying in a certain place. Jesus is the Son of God and is one with the Father, but while He lived on this earth clothed in flesh, He kept praying. He had fellowship with the Father not only when an important matter lay ahead of Him but as a daily practice. Watching Jesus pray, the disciples realized the fact that they too had to learn how to pray rightly.

The Gospel of Luke records that when Jesus had been baptized in the Jordan River and was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit came upon Him. The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist was the beginning of the work of

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salvation by which He took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body and fulfilled the righteousness of God. Carrying that sin, Jesus went to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and rose again on the third day.

The prayer of Jesus was not simply meditation to calm the mind or a religious ceremony. It was prayer offered as He knew the will of the Father and obeyed that will, carrying out the work of salvation of taking the sin of the world upon Himself and bearing the Cross. Therefore the prayer of the saints also must not be a means of fulfilling their own desires, but fellowship that seeks the will of God within the salvation Jesus accomplished and obeys that will.

After seeing Jesus pray, the disciples asked Him to teach them too how to come rightly to God. Jesus taught them the center and the order of prayer, so that they would ask for the name and the kingdom of God, for daily bread and mercy, and for protection from temptation. Prayer does not begin with pouring out human desires and fears; it begins with learning what we must ask of the Lord.

The Lord's Prayer is not a sentence merely repeated with the mouth, but a prayer in which one believes what the Lord taught and lives one's whole life asking God for help.

The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit calls God Father

The first word of the prayer is *"Our Father."* Jesus taught His disciples to call the holy and almighty God Father. This shows the relationship of a child who draws near to God in Jesus Christ.

A sinner cannot come to the holy God by his own merit or

religious zeal. For sin stands between God and man. But Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with His baptism in the Jordan River and received the judgment of those sins in our place on the Cross. And He rose from the dead and gave new life to those who believe.

When one believes in one's heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, accomplished through the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus, one receives the remission of all sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. The person who has not received the remission of sins must ask to come to know and believe this gospel. The person who has received the remission of sins prays calling God Father, relying not on his own merit but on the righteousness of Jesus.

The prayer *"Hallowed be Your name"* asks that the name of God be acknowledged as holy and exalted in the world, and that His holiness be revealed through our faith and our lives.

When a sinner believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, becomes a righteous person without sin, and calls God Father, the name of God is hallowed. The person who has received the remission of sins must exalt not his own merit but the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished, and must ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that the name of the Father may not be reviled through his life.

The prayer *"Your kingdom come"* is the prayer that asks that the gospel of the water and the Spirit be preached to the whole world and sinners be saved, and that Jesus come again and establish the kingdom of God. Therefore the saints must pray that the word of the remission of sins may be preached to their families, their neighbors, and the whole world, and must look for the kingdom of the Lord to come quickly rather than for worldly success.

In verse 3 Jesus told them to pray, *"Give us day by day our*

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daily bread." Seeking the kingdom of God first does not mean disregarding the bread needed by the body and one's practical needs. Jesus knows that a person is a being who must eat and live every day, and He had them ask God for the bread they need.

Daily bread includes not only the food and the necessities of life needed to live from day to day, but also the bread of the word that keeps our faith. The words *"day by day"* and *"daily"* teach not a life that stores up many things and relies on its own strength, but a life that believes in and asks of God, who supplies day by day what is needed for both spirit and body.

Daily bread is not bread for me alone. Jesus had them pray *"give us,"* not "give me." The person who asks God for bread must share what he has received with neighbors in need and look after the needs of others as well.

The saint who has received the remission of sins asks for mercy and protection

In verse 4 Jesus told them to pray, *"And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us."* This word does not mean to obtain again the perfect remission of sins one has received by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The sins Jesus took upon Himself with His baptism and was judged for on the Cross include all our sins of the past, the present, and the future. The salvation of Jesus is not incomplete, nor is it a work that a sinner must supplement every day by his own efforts. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit is justified by believing the fact that Jesus paid the price of all our sins once and for all.

Even a saved person does wrong through the weakness of the flesh, but he has already received the remission of even those

sins through the baptism and the Cross of Jesus. The prayer *"forgive us our sins"* is not a prayer of repentance for receiving the remission of sins again, but a prayer that believes the remission of sins already accomplished, admits one's own shortcomings, and asks God for mercy and help.

If a saint has hurt another person, he must admit his wrong before God, apologize, and correct his behavior. But the remission of sins Jesus completed is not canceled because of that wrong. Believing and giving thanks that the Lord has removed even those sins, one must ask Him to have compassion on one's weakness and to help one live rightly.

Jesus told us to pray, forgiving those who have sinned against us. It is not that we obtain the remission of sins by the merit of having forgiven others; it is because we have first received the remission of all sins from Jesus that we can also forgive those who have wronged us. The Holy Spirit makes us remember the mercy we have received and leads us to lay down hatred and revenge.

The prayer *"And do not lead us into temptation"* is a prayer asking to be kept from falling into great hardships and evil things that we cannot bear. Because we are weak, our faith and our life of faith can be shaken if we meet too great a hardship. Therefore we must ask God for help so that we ourselves, the church, and the ministry of the gospel may be protected from the evil one and from dangerous circumstances.

If one has already entered into temptation, one must not try only to endure it by one's own strength but must pray to be delivered from that temptation. Even in times of peace, one must ask to be protected from falling into great hardship, and must pray that He would keep the gospel, the church, and the saints.

The Lord's Prayer keeps saying *"us,"* not "me." It prays that He would give us bread, have mercy on our sins, and keep us

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from temptation. This shows that prayer does not stop at speaking of personal wishes, but is a matter of embracing the church and the family, neighbors and the community.

The order of this prayer is also important. It first asks for the name and the kingdom of God, and then asks for our bread, mercy, and protection. This does not mean that our needs are not important; it means to look at every need within the holiness and the kingdom of God. When the will of God stands at the center, our wishes also become pure, and we come to discern what we must ask for.

Prayer is not a technique by which we move God and make Him submit to our own plans. It is believing in God as Father within the salvation Jesus accomplished, asking first for the name and the kingdom of the Father, and honestly telling Him our needs and our weaknesses.

That we have received the remission of all sins does not mean that there is no longer any need to pray. The saints need bread and protection every day, and they must keep praying for the preaching of the gospel and the kingdom of God. But one does not receive the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit by the merit of having prayed much. The power to wash away sin lies only in the baptism Jesus received and in the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection.

The prayer of the saints is not an act for accomplishing salvation, but the fellowship of grace in which a child of God who believes the salvation already completed asks the Father for help. Because Jesus has opened the way to come to God, we can pray in faith without putting forward our self-righteousness.

Luke 11:1–4 teaches us to ask first for the name and the kingdom of God, and to ask for the bread, mercy, and protection we need each day. The saint who has received the remission of all sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit admits his

own weakness, relies on God the Father, and lives praying that the gospel may be preached to the whole world and that the kingdom of the Lord may come quickly.

God, who gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask

"And He said to them, 'Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him"; and he will answer from within and say, "Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you"? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. 'So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!'" (Luke 11:5–13).

We must admit what we lack and ask God for it

This word follows immediately after Jesus taught His disciples the Lord's Prayer. Jesus told them to ask for the name and the kingdom of God, for daily bread and the remission of

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sins, and for protection from temptation. Now Jesus explains with what kind of faith the disciples must keep offering such prayers.

Through the parable of the man who asked for bread at midnight, Jesus taught them not to lose heart but to keep asking God. And in the conclusion of this parable He said that the heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit, the best gift, to those who ask.

In verse 5 Jesus spoke of a man who went to the house of his friend at midnight. He asked, *"Friend, lend me three loaves."* This man had another friend who had come to him on a journey, but he had nothing to set before him. In those days a traveler could arrive at a late hour, and it was an important responsibility to show hospitality to a guest who had come.

But in this man's house there was no bread to set before the guest. He had to admit his own lack. He did not pretend to have what he did not have, nor did he send the guest away; he went to ask for help from the friend who had bread. Prayer is like this. The starting point of prayer is admitting one's own lack and inability.

A person does not pray when he thinks he can solve every problem by his own strength. Some seek God only when, having relied on health and wealth, knowledge and experience, they meet something they cannot solve by their own ability. But the saints must know the fact that they need the grace of God at every moment, not only when they meet a great crisis.

The man who asked for bread at midnight did not demand bread to fill his own stomach. He asked in order to feed the friend who had come to his house. Here lies a need for the sake of another person. Our prayer also must not stay at seeking only our own benefit, but must become intercessory prayer that embraces our families, our neighbors, the church, and the souls

who do not yet know the gospel.

The confession of verse 6, *"I have nothing to set before him,"* makes us think of our limits in preaching the gospel and serving people. We cannot produce the remission of sins and new life for other people. Nor can we give life to a person's soul with fine words and human wisdom alone. We must ask God, who gives what we do not have.

The bread of life that saves sinners does not come from man. Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon Himself by receiving baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River, carried those sins and shed His blood and died on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising again on the third day. We are the people who receive this gospel of the water and the Spirit from God and deliver it to others.

We must ask without losing heart until we receive the answer

The friend inside the house had already shut the door and gone to bed with his family, but the man outside did not withdraw until he received the bread he needed. If even a human friend who feels inconvenienced gave what was needed to the one who persisted, the good God the Father hears all the more willingly the prayer of the child who asks in faith.

In verse 8 Jesus said, *"though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs."* Persistence represents the attitude of not giving up after asking once and being refused, and of continuing to ask without hiding one's need.

This man did not go back because it was the middle of the night. For feeding the friend who had come to him was more

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important than saving his own face. In the same way, the saints must believe that God is the One who can supply their needs and must ask until they receive the answer.

When prayer is not answered immediately, a person can think that God is not listening. Some give up after praying a few times, or conclude that God does not love them. But Jesus tells us not to lose heart but to keep asking. Even when the answer is delayed, we are to believe the goodness of God and remain with Him.

The power of prayer does not come from the loudness or the zeal of a person; it lies in God, who hears prayer. The saints keep praying because they believe that God is a Father who is good and faithful and has the ability to supply the needs of His children.

We must pray with the faith that asks, seeks, and knocks

In verse 9 Jesus said, *"ask," "seek,"* and *"knock."* To ask is to tell God one's needs. To seek is to keep going forward, examining the word in order to discover the will of God and the right way. To knock is the action of coming to God without giving up even when the door seems shut.

Asking, seeking, and knocking are not three separate secret methods. They show, in several expressions, the earnestness and the persistence of prayer that relies on God. The saints must tell God what they need, seek the will of God in the word, and actually act according to that will.

Verse 10 says that everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. This promise is the ground on which a believer can pray boldly. God does not

ignore the cry of His children or regard prayer as vain.

The saints must pray in faith for the kingdom and the righteousness of God, for the preaching of the gospel and the salvation of souls. They must ask for the wisdom, health, and material things needed so that the gospel may be delivered to their families, workers of the gospel may rise up, and the church may preach the gospel widely. When we ask, seek, and knock for the will in which God delights, God opens the shut door and supplies what is needed.

In verses 11 and 12 Jesus gave the relationship of a father and a son as an example. There is no father who gives a serpent when his son asks for a fish, or a scorpion when he asks for an egg. A fish and an egg become food for the child, but a serpent and a scorpion bring danger. A normal parent does not give what is harmful when the child asks for something to eat.

In verse 13 Jesus said, *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children."* This does not mean that human parents have no love at all; it means that even human beings, who have a sinful nature, know how to give good things to their own children. If so, how much more would the perfectly good God give good things to His own children?

The best gift is the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit

The core of this passage lies in verse 13. A person needs health, material things, and daily bread too, but what he needs above all is to receive the remission of all sins, become a child of God, and receive the Holy Spirit. God leads the person who asks to the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and has him receive the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit by believing that gospel.

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The Holy Spirit is not a reward received as the price of long prayer and fasting. No matter how much a person sheds tears and repeatedly offers prayers of repentance, that does not become the righteousness that washes away sin. In order to save sinners, God accomplished perfect salvation in Jesus Christ.

Jesus took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River. And carrying those sins, He was crucified on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and so received the judgment of sin in our place. He was buried and rose again on the third day, and so overcame sin and death and completed eternal salvation.

When a person hears this gospel of the water and the Spirit and believes it in his heart, he receives the remission of all sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. Receiving the Holy Spirit is not because of the merit of prayer, but because one believes the righteousness of God accomplished through the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus. God has the person who asks and seeks meet the true gospel, and has him receive the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit by believing that gospel.

The remission of sins and the receiving of the Holy Spirit take place together when one believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When one believes the fact that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with His baptism and received the punishment of those sins on the Cross, all the sins of the heart disappear. At that very moment the Holy Spirit comes upon that heart and seals that person as one of the people of God.

The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the saint who has received the remission of sins, makes him understand the word of God, and keeps his faith. He gives the saint wisdom and ability so that he may preach the gospel and serve the will of God, and leads him to live by faith in union with the church.

The person who does not yet know the gospel must ask God to let him meet the true word of the remission of sins. To the person who sincerely asks and seeks the remission of sins, God opens the way to hear the gospel and has him receive the Holy Spirit by believing the salvation Jesus accomplished.

This word teaches us not to look for the qualification to pray in perfect human works. The boldness to come to God does not come from the self-righteousness that says, "I have lived better than others." It comes from the faith that one has received the remission of all sins through the baptism and the Cross of Jesus and has become a child of God.

Today the saints can also ask God about material things and health, and about problems of career and family. God knows and cares for not only spiritual matters but also our actual needs. Therefore, even when the saints ask for business, property, and health, they must pray entrusting it to Him in faith, so that the way that is beneficial to the kingdom of God and the gospel, rather than their own greed, may be accomplished.

Persistent prayer is prayer that does not give up because it believes in God. It is not merely repeating one's own demands; it is prayer that seeks the will of God through the word and believes the promise that God answers with what is best.

The man who asked for bread at midnight admitted what he did not have and knocked on the door in order to feed another person. We too must admit our spiritual poverty and ask God. We must ask for the wisdom and love to preach the gospel, the ability to serve the wounded, the faith by which the church can keep the truth, bread to share with the poor, and a heart to forgive our neighbors.

God hears the prayer of the person who asks and answers with what is best. In particular, He has the person who seeks the truth meet the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and has him

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receive the remission of all sins and the Holy Spirit as a gift by believing the baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection. The saint who has received the remission of sins and become a child of God must believe this promise and keep asking, seeking, and knocking for what is needed for the gospel and the kingdom of God.

Jesus, who overcame the power of Satan

"And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled. But some of them said, 'He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.' Others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven. But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls. If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters. 'When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, "I will return to my house from which I came." And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter

and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.'" (Luke 11:14–26).

Jesus, who cast out the demon with the finger of God

This section comes immediately after Jesus taught His disciples to pray and said that the heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit, the best gift, to those who ask. After speaking of the gift of the Holy Spirit in verse 13, from verse 14 on the event is recorded in which Jesus casts out an unclean spirit. This shows that the kingdom of God, which comes through the Holy Spirit, and the power of Satan, which oppresses people, stand opposed to each other.

In verse 14 Jesus cast out a mute demon. When the demon had gone out, the man who could not speak began to speak. The text clearly states that in the case of this man, the state of being unable to speak was connected with the work of a demon.

When Jesus cast out the demon, the mute spoke. This shows the fact that the authority of Jesus does not stop at mere words or claims but actually sets people free from the power of evil. The man who until then had not been able to express his own thoughts came to speak again, and the multitudes marveled when they saw this.

But not everyone believed in Jesus just because they had seen a marvelous thing with their own eyes. Some among the crowd did not acknowledge that the authority of Jesus had come from God; rather, they slandered Him, saying that He cast out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. Even after seeing a clear work of deliverance, they turned that good work upside down and called it evil.

Verse 15 shows that people do not fail to believe in Jesus

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only because of a lack of evidence. The event in which Jesus cast out the demon was already a sign showing His authority. But the person who rejects Jesus in his heart makes up a different explanation no matter how clear the evidence he sees.

A sinner can deny the work of God in order to protect the judgment he has established and his religious authority. For if he accepts Jesus, he must admit that he was wrong and obey Him. So the people tried to keep their own position even to the point of slandering the good work God had done as the work of demons.

In verse 16 other people tested Jesus and demanded a sign from heaven. Even though they had already seen the sign in which He set free the demon-possessed man and made him speak, they demanded another sign. Their demand did not come from a humble question wanting to know and believe the truth, but from an attitude of testing Jesus and trying to catch Him.

The person who has decided not to believe keeps demanding new evidence no matter how many signs there are. He says, "If You show me this too, I will believe," but when that is done, he puts forward yet another condition. Faith begins not from endlessly confirming miracles before one's eyes, but from honestly hearing the word of God and accepting who Jesus is.

Jesus brought down the kingdom of Satan and revealed the kingdom of God

Verse 17 says that Jesus knew their thoughts. Even without saying it directly with their mouths, the people doubted and slandered Jesus in their hearts. Jesus knew even those hidden thoughts and said, *"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls."*

If a nation fights within itself, it falls even without an attack from outside. A family or a community cannot be maintained either if its members constantly oppose one another. Using this fact, Jesus made clear that the claim that He cast out demons, the subordinates of Satan, by the power of Satan does not hold together logically.

In verse 18 Jesus asked how the kingdom of Satan could stand if Satan were divided against himself. The purpose of Satan is to oppress people, to lead them away from God, and to hold them captive to sin and falsehood. That Jesus completely set free the demon-possessed man was not a work of building up the kingdom of Satan but of bringing it down.

Satan tries to hold people under sin, falsehood, and death, but Jesus is the Son of God, who is stronger than Satan. The demon could not defy the command of Jesus and had to go out of that man. The center of this event lies not in the power of Satan but in the authority of Jesus Christ, who broke the power of Satan.

"Your sons" in verse 19 refers to the people who belonged to the group of those who slandered Jesus and who claimed to cast out demons. While acknowledging the exorcisms connected with themselves, they slandered the work Jesus did as the work of Satan.

Jesus exposed the inconsistency of their judgment. Regarding the same kind of work, they called it the work of God when their own side did it, but denounced it as the work of demons when Jesus did it. This was a judgment that came not from the evidence but from the prejudice that wanted to reject Jesus.

In verse 20 Jesus declared, *"But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you."* This is the core of the event. The casting out of demons by Jesus was not merely a marvelous power; it was the sign that the

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kingdom of God was invading the domain of Satan and setting people free.

The kingdom of God does not mean only a change of place. It is the rule in which God reigns as King and drives back the power of sin and Satan. That Jesus came, cast out demons, healed the sick, and preached the gospel to sinners was the evidence that the rule of God had already come among them.

"The finger of God" refers to the power and the authority of God that appeared in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus is not one who borrowed power from the ruler of the demons; He is the Son of God and the King who brought the kingdom of God to this earth. Before a single word of His, the power of the demons retreated.

Jesus, the stronger One, took away the armor of Satan

In verse 21 Jesus spoke of a strong man, fully armed, guarding his own house and goods. In this parable the strong man refers to Satan, who holds people captive under sin, fear, and death. While Satan relies on his own armor and guards his house, his goods seem to be safe.

A human being born under sin cannot escape the power of Satan by his own strength. A person resolves to live a good life, practices religious disciplines, and tries to restrain his desires, but he cannot by himself remove the root of sin and the power of death. The law exposes sin, but man has no power to save a sinner from the power of Satan and death.

In verse 22 *"a stronger than he"* appears. The stronger one comes and overcomes the strong man, takes away the armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. This stronger One is Jesus Christ. Satan is strong, but he is not a being equal to Jesus. Jesus is the Son of the Creator God and the One who completely

overcomes the power of Satan.

The most powerful weapons with which Satan holds sinners captive are sin, condemnation, and death. If a person has sin, he cannot help fearing judgment, and Satan accuses him on the ground of that sin and drives him to despair. Therefore, unless the problem of sin is solved, one cannot be completely free from the condemnation of Satan.

Jesus took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River. And carrying those sins, He was crucified on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and so received the punishment of sin in our place. The baptism and the Cross of Jesus are the salvation of God that removed the ground of sin and condemnation by which Satan holds people captive.

Jesus actually died, but He rose again on the third day. Death could not hold Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus is the declaration that the price of sin has been paid in full and that the power of death has been defeated. In this way, through His baptism and the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection, Jesus broke the power of condemnation and death that held sinners captive.

The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of all sins and escapes condemnation. Even if Satan accuses him by bringing up his past sins and present shortcomings, the saint relies not on his own good deeds but on the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished. He believes that there is no sin Jesus did not take upon Himself and no sin that was not judged on the Cross.

That Jesus divides the spoils of Satan means that He sets free the people who were held captive under the power of sin and Satan and makes them the people of the kingdom of God. That the man oppressed by the demon was set free and came to speak

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again shows that Jesus, the stronger One, has overcome the power of Satan.

In verse 23 Jesus said, *"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters."* In the face of the confrontation between Jesus and Satan, one cannot remain neutral forever. Not to receive Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior, and to slander His work as the work of Satan, is in fact to oppose Jesus.

A person may say, "I do not oppose Jesus, but I will not believe in Him either." But in the matter of sin and death there is no neutral third way that does not accept the salvation of Jesus. One either gathers the people of the kingdom of God together with Jesus, or takes the side that rejects Him and scatters.

We must receive the Holy Spirit into our hearts through the gospel of the water and the Spirit

From verse 24 on, Jesus speaks of the case in which an unclean spirit goes out of a man and then comes back. The spirit goes through dry places seeking a place to rest, and when it cannot find one, it decides to return to the house from which it came out. Here the person is described as the house in which the spirit dwelt.

In verse 25, when the spirit came back, it found the house swept and put in order. The house had gotten out of its dirty and disorderly state and had been neatly put in order. But the most important thing is not the fact that the house had become clean, but that no new master had appeared to rule that house.

This parable shows the fact that fundamental salvation is not accomplished by outward improvement of life alone. If one gives up drinking and gambling, corrects bad habits, and keeps

religious rules well, one's life can be put in order to some degree. Such a change is a good thing, but it does not in itself mean being born again or the remission of sins.

A person can stop evil behavior for a while out of fear or by willpower. He can also make his outward appearance clean through religious training. But unless he believes the gospel Jesus accomplished, receives the remission of sins, and has the Holy Spirit dwell in his heart, the fundamental master has not been changed.

In verse 26 the spirit comes back with *"seven"* other spirits more wicked than itself and dwells in that man. As a result the last state of that man became worse than the first. "Seven" emphasizes the fact that a rule of evil far stronger and more serious than before has begun.

The *"dry places"* of the text refer to the places where there is no word of the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even if the heart has been swept and put in order with religious acts and morality, if the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not in it and the Holy Spirit does not dwell there, that heart is still empty. Into the heart that has no word of the gospel that washes away sin, the evil spirit comes back in and rules more strongly than before.

Sweeping and putting in order the house of the heart may be possible to some degree by the law and morality. But removing sin itself and making a person new cannot be done by human will. One must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus took sin upon Himself with His baptism, was judged on the Cross, and rose again.

When one believes this gospel, one receives the remission of all sins and the Holy Spirit dwells in one's heart. The Holy Spirit is not one who merely visits for a moment; He is God, who seals the saved person as the possession of God and rules him by the

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word. Now that person's heart is no longer an empty house, and the Holy Spirit dwells in that heart.

That the Holy Spirit dwells in a person does not mean that the saved person no longer has any temptation or spiritual attack. Even a believer can have the desires of the flesh, the temptations of the world, and the accusations of Satan. But he is no longer the possession of Satan; he is a person who belongs to Jesus Christ. He must follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the word and prayer and stand against evil temptations.

A church and a religious life without the gospel are like an empty house

Today a church too can become a house that is only swept and put in order outwardly. If it puts its buildings and systems in order and emphasizes ethics and manners, but does not have the gospel completed through the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus, it cannot make a person's soul new. It can become a community that has many religious rules but has neither the life of the Holy Spirit nor the joy of the gospel.

It is the same with an individual's faith. One must not think that one has been born again because one attends church and has given up cursing, drinking, and smoking. What is important is not that one has corrected a few outward habits, but whether one has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit, received the remission of all sins, and received the Holy Spirit.

Of course, even after believing the gospel, one must correct wrong habits and live a holy life. But that order must not be reversed. It is not that one earns the qualification to receive the Holy Spirit by living a clean life; it is that, after one has received the Holy Spirit by believing the gospel by which Jesus made us

clean, one's life is changed as one follows His guidance.

This section demands that we look honestly at the work of Jesus. Jesus cast out the demon that oppressed a man and showed the fact that the kingdom of God had come. Yet the people slandered that good work as the work of Satan. When the heart is stubborn, one can interpret the evidence of salvation backward even after seeing it.

The saints must discern every teaching and every spiritual work by the word of God. The work that testifies to the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus removed all sins through His baptism in the Jordan River, the Cross, and the resurrection, and that leads sinners to the remission of sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, is the work of God.

In the end this text shows two kingdoms and two masters. On one side is the kingdom of Satan, which holds people captive with sin, falsehood, and death, and on the other side is the kingdom of God, which sets sinners free and gives them life. And Jesus is the King of the kingdom of God, who is stronger than Satan.

Jesus took our sins upon Himself with His baptism in the Jordan River, paid the price of sin in full with the blood of the Cross, and broke the power of death by rising from the dead. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit and is transferred from being the possession of Satan to being a child of God.

Therefore salvation is not a matter of emptying the heart for a while or making one's outward behavior neat. It is Jesus, the stronger One, delivering us from the power of sin and Satan and dwelling in us through the Holy Spirit. The saints must not remain an empty house, but must live as the people of the kingdom of God under the rule of the Holy Spirit, in the word, in prayer, and in the gospel.

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Blessed are those who hear the word and keep it

"And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!' But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'" (Luke 11:27–28).

True blessedness lies in believing the word of God

This word comes immediately after Jesus cast out the mute demon and said that if He cast out demons with the finger of God, the kingdom of God had already come upon them. Jesus taught that He is the One stronger than Satan, and that what is needed is not a house that is only swept and put in order on the outside, but a new life in which God dwells.

A woman in the crowd who was listening to that word raised her voice. Greatly admiring the wisdom and the authority of Jesus, she cried out how blessed the mother must be who had borne Jesus and nursed and raised Him.

The expression *"Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!"* is an exclamation that exalts Jesus through the mother who bore Him. Put simply, it means, "The mother who bore and raised such a wonderful son is truly a blessed person." Seeing the greatness of Jesus, the woman thought first of the blessing of the flesh that His mother had received.

To be used in conceiving and bearing Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was a special grace given to Mary. But the true blessedness of Mary did not lie only in the fact that she became the mother of Jesus in the flesh. Mary was a person who believed

and received in her heart the word God had delivered.

But when Jesus heard the woman's exclamation, He led the essence of blessedness to a deeper place. He said, *"More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"* This means that the relationship of hearing, believing, and treasuring the word of God is more fundamentally important than the relationship of having conceived Jesus in the flesh and nursed Him.

When Mary heard the word of God delivered by the angel, she received it, saying, *"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word."* Elizabeth also said, *"Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."* Mary became a blessed person because she believed the word of God.

This is also a declaration that the way of blessedness is open to everyone. No one can conceive and bear Jesus in the flesh as Mary did. If that alone were the greatest blessing, that blessing could be given to only one person. But the blessing of hearing the word of God and keeping it is open to anyone, beyond nation and gender, status and era.

Jesus taught that lineage of the flesh or family relationship does not guarantee salvation. One does not automatically become a child of God merely because one is a relative of Jesus. Nor does the fact that one has parents or a pastor of good faith in one's family, or that one was born and raised within the church, remove that person's sins.

Faith is not inherited by blood. Even if the parents have believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins, the children too must each hear the gospel and believe it in their hearts. Conversely, even if there is no believer among one's family and ancestors, if one oneself hears the word of God and believes it, one can receive the remission of sins and

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become a child of God.

In Luke chapter 8 also, when His mother and brothers came to see Him, Jesus said, *"My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."* Jesus did not disregard His family in the flesh; He taught the new spiritual family that is joined together by the word of God.

The family of God is the people who hear the word of God, believe it, and act according to that faith. Those who have believed the gospel of Jesus Christ and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit call God Father and become brothers and sisters in Christ who join their hearts and their strength together in the work of serving the gospel.

We must hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart

In verse 28 Jesus first spoke of the person who hears the word of God. In the Bible, to hear does not mean only that a sound enters the ears. It includes the attitude of carefully receiving the meaning of the word and acknowledging that word as the word of God spoken to me.

The crowd too was listening to the word of Jesus. But not all of them heard in the same way. Some slandered Jesus, saying that He had borrowed the power of Beelzebub, even after seeing Him cast out demons. Others demanded yet another sign even though they had already seen a sign. They were near Jesus in body and heard the word with their ears, but they did not receive it in their hearts.

The woman in the crowd admired the greatness of Jesus, but she too looked for the center of blessedness in the privilege of the flesh that the mother of Jesus had. Jesus told her not to stop

at mere admiration but to hear and receive the word of God that He was delivering.

Today as well, one can respect Jesus as a great teacher or a loving holy man. One can shed tears at a moving sermon or be amazed at the miracles of Jesus. But admiring Jesus and believing in one's heart the gospel He accomplished are not the same.

At the center of the word of God that a person must hear is the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished. Jesus came to this earth as the Son of God, and by receiving baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River, He took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body.

Carrying the sins He had taken upon Himself with His baptism, Jesus went to the Cross, shed His blood, and died. He received in our place the judgment a sinner must receive, was buried, and rose again on the third day. Through the baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection, the work of salvation that washes away the sin of mankind was completed.

To hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not stop at knowing information about these events. It is to receive in one's heart the fact that all my sins were included in the baptism Jesus received, and that the judgment He received on the Cross was the judgment I had to receive.

The resurrection of Jesus also must be believed not merely as a miracle that happened long ago, but as the victory of my Savior, who overcame sin and death. When one believes this gospel in one's heart, one receives the remission of all sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. This is the faith that truly hears the word of God.

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The faith that keeps the word appears in one's life

Jesus spoke of keeping the word together with hearing it. To keep does not mean to do the law and the commandments perfectly and be saved by one's own efforts. A sinner cannot make himself righteous by works. Salvation is received only by believing the righteousness of God that Jesus completed.

To keep the word is first to treasure in one's heart the gospel one has heard. It is to hold on to the word that Jesus has washed away all my sins, without having it taken away by doubt and false teaching. Even when Satan condemns one by bringing up one's shortcomings and failures, it is to believe not one's own works but the righteousness Jesus accomplished.

The faith that keeps the word appears as obedience and as serving the gospel. The person who has truly believed the gospel follows the word of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, gives his body, heart, and time to unite in the preaching of the gospel, and serves so that other souls may be saved.

Therefore hearing and keeping cannot be separated from each other. If one hears only with the ears and does not receive in the heart, it cannot become the faith that leads to salvation. Conversely, to act zealously according to one's own thoughts without hearing the word is not obedience either. One must first hear and believe the gospel, and then live according to that faith.

In verses 24–26 above, Jesus said that the unclean spirit, though it had gone out, comes back to the house that has been swept and put in order and makes the state of that man worse. Merely sending out what is evil and putting one's outward life in order is not enough. The word of God and the rule of the Holy Spirit must be in the heart.

That He went on to say, *"blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it,"* is also connected with the parable of

the empty house above. One cannot enjoy true blessedness by outward religious life and moral repair alone. The person who hears and believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, so that the Holy Spirit dwells in his heart, and who keeps that word, is the blessed person.

This blessedness is different from the blessing the world speaks of. People think of health and wealth, high position and fine children as blessings. The woman too thought first of the blessing of a mother who had such a wonderful son as Jesus. But Jesus spoke of the relationship joined with the word of God as the true blessedness, rather than of the conditions of the flesh, which can pass away.

Health, wealth, and family are all gifts to be thankful for, but they are not eternal. On the other hand, the remission of sins and eternal life received by believing the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus cannot be taken away by the world. That the Holy Spirit dwells in one's heart is the greatest blessing a person can receive.

One does not become a blessed person merely by the fact of having attended church for a long time and having accumulated much knowledge of the Bible. One must hear and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart, and even after being saved, one must keep hearing the word of God, keep the gospel, and obey that word.

The life that keeps the word of God appears in the action of uniting in the preaching of the gospel and serving souls. It preaches the gospel to those who have not yet received the remission of sins, joins hearts with weak saints, and faithfully carries out the work God has entrusted. Such service is not merit for obtaining salvation but the fruit of faith borne by the person already saved through the gospel.

Through the exclamation of one woman, Jesus taught

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everyone the way of true blessedness. More than the fact of having been close to Jesus in the flesh, what is important is to hear and believe His word. More than being amazed at an amazing sign, what is important is to receive Jesus, to whom that sign testifies, as Savior.

Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with His baptism in the Jordan River, received the judgment of sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose from the dead. The person who hears this gospel of the water and the Spirit, believes it in his heart, and has received the remission of all sins is the truly blessed person.

And the person who treasures that gospel in his heart and lives following the guidance of the Holy Spirit is the person who keeps the word. Not lineage and office, religious career and outward success, but hearing, believing, and keeping the word Jesus accomplished is the eternal blessedness that God acknowledges.

Jesus, who revealed salvation through the sign of Jonah

"And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, 'This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and

indeed a greater than Jonah is here" (Luke 11:29–32).

The evil generation that rejected the sign already given

This word follows after Jesus cast out the mute demon. Jesus had already cast out the demon and said that if He did such things with the finger of God, the kingdom of God had come upon them. A clear sign showing the authority of Jesus had already appeared.

But some people slandered Jesus, saying that He cast out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. Others tested Jesus and demanded that He show them a sign from heaven. Even though they had already seen a sign, they demanded yet another sign of the kind they wanted.

In verses 27–28 a woman in the crowd admired the word of Jesus, but Jesus said that the person who hears the word of God and keeps it is blessed rather than a relationship of the flesh. Verses 29–32, which follow, deal with the unbelief of the people who, though they had heard the word, did not believe and kept demanding only signs.

In verse 29, when the crowds had gathered more thickly, Jesus said, *"This is an evil generation."* These people had hardened their hearts not to believe even after seeing the word and the authority of Jesus, and they demanded yet another sign in order to test Jesus and catch Him.

These people had heard the word of Jesus and had also seen demons cast out and sick people healed. The evidence that the authority and the mercy of Jesus came from God kept appearing. But instead of believing and obeying, they slandered Jesus and demanded more signs.

The purpose for which they demanded a sign was not in order to believe but in order to justify their own unbelief. The person

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whose heart has no will to receive God puts forward yet another condition even after seeing one sign. He says he will believe if his illness is healed, but when it is healed, he calls it a coincidence and endlessly demands other evidence.

To such a generation Jesus said, *"no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet."* He was telling them what the decisive and greatest sign was that they had to look to and believe.

The sign of Jonah reveals the baptism, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus

Jonah disobeyed the word of God and, while fleeing to Tarshish, was thrown into the sea and swallowed by a great fish. He prayed to God in the belly of the fish, and God had the fish vomit him onto dry land. After that, Jonah went to Nineveh according to the command of God and preached the word of judgment.

The event in which Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights and then came out onto dry land revealed that Jesus would die, be buried, and rise again on the third day. The Gospel of Luke also speaks of the people of Nineveh, who repented when they heard the preaching of Jonah, and so emphasizes the word of judgment and repentance delivered through Jonah.

To the people of Nineveh, Jonah was not simply a man who performed miracles. He was a prophet of judgment sent by God. When Jonah proclaimed the destruction of Nineveh, the people of Nineveh heard that word and turned from their evil ways. It was not that they saw some splendid power of Jonah; they heard the warning of God delivered through him and repented.

In the same way, Jesus Himself was the sign to that generation. The Son of God came among them clothed in human flesh, preached the word of the kingdom of God, and saved sinners. The words and the works of Jesus, and His death and resurrection, were the decisive sign of God that they had to accept.

Jesus is far greater than Jonah. Jonah was a weak prophet who disobeyed the word of God and fled. But Jesus obeyed the will of the Father completely. Jonah was thrown into the sea for his own sin, but Jesus, though He had no sin, took the sins of others upon Himself and was judged.

Jonah did not take the sins of Nineveh upon his own body. He only delivered the word of judgment. But Jesus did not merely command sinners to repent and stand far off. In order to save sinners, He Himself took their sins upon Himself and entered the place of judgment.

Jesus took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River. The sinless Son of God took over all the sins of sinners and began His public ministry. The baptism of Jesus was the work of salvation for fulfilling all the righteousness of God.

Carrying the sin of the world that He had taken upon Himself with His baptism, Jesus was crucified on the Cross. Nailed through His hands and feet and shedding His blood, He received in our place the punishment a sinner must receive. His dying on the Cross was not a defeat because Jesus was powerless; it was His paying the price of sin in full.

And Jesus was buried and rose from the dead on the third day. The tomb could not hold Jesus, and death could not overcome Him. The resurrection of Jesus is the surest sign that He is the Son of God and the Savior who has completely overcome sin and death.

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Because Jesus first took all the sins of mankind upon Himself with His baptism in the Jordan River, He received the judgment of the sin of the world on the Cross. That He took sin upon Himself with His baptism, paid the price of sin with the blood of the Cross, and overcame sin and death with His resurrection is the perfect gospel of salvation, joined together as one.

There is no greater sign than the salvation Jesus accomplished through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. Fire coming down from heaven, or an illness being healed and wealth increasing, cannot wash away all the sins of a person. Even if a dead person were brought back to life for a time, if he died again, eternal salvation would not have been completed.

But Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon Himself, received the judgment of those sins completely, and rose again. The person who believes this gospel receives the remission of all sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and obtains eternal life. This is the greatest and eternal sign of God given to sinners.

In verse 30 Jesus said that just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man would be to this generation. Jesus called Himself *"the Son of Man."* This shows that the Son of God came clothed in human flesh, to represent mankind and accomplish salvation.

Jesus did not stand before the people as a mere provider of miracles. He Himself is the sign to be believed. Before demanding that Jesus show them something more, the people had to look at who the Jesus before their eyes was.

Jesus, who is greater than Solomon and Jonah

In verse 31 Jesus said that in the judgment the queen of the South would rise up and condemn the men of this generation. The queen of the South came from a distant place to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Not shrinking from the long distance and the labor, she wanted to hear the wisdom God had given to Solomon.

The queen of the South was not one of the people of Israel, nor did she live near Solomon. Yet she came from the ends of the earth to hear words of wisdom. On the other hand, the people of the time of Jesus did not believe His word even though One greater than Solomon was among them.

Solomon was a king who had received wisdom from God, but he was not a perfect man. His wisdom too was something he had received from God. But Jesus is, beyond a man who received wisdom, the very wisdom of God and the King of kings. Nevertheless the people made light of the word of Jesus, who is greater than the wisdom of Solomon.

Today the whole Bible is easily accessible, the death and resurrection of Jesus have already been proclaimed, and the gospel can be heard in many ways. This privilege is something to be thankful for, but at the same time it brings a greater responsibility. One is not saved merely by the fact of having heard the gospel often; one must respond in faith to the word one has heard.

If one keeps looking only for new miracles and mysterious experiences even after attending church for a long time and hearing countless sermons, one can have an attitude similar to that of the people of the time of Jesus. Even though Jesus, the true wisdom, has already spoken, one can chase only after human prophecies, special revelations, and omens of success.

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The people of Nineveh turned when they heard the word of Jonah

In verse 32 Jesus said that the men of Nineveh would rise up in the judgment and condemn this generation. The reason was that the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah. Jonah was a prophet far inferior to Jesus, but the people of Nineveh received his warning as the word of God.

The repentance of the people of Nineveh was not simply a matter of feeling a frightening emotion. They admitted their evil, humbled themselves before God, and turned from their evil ways. Repentance does not end with shedding tears for a moment out of fear of the consequences of sin; it is turning from the wrong direction to God.

Within the gospel of the water and the Spirit, true repentance is to abandon the thought that one can wash away one's sins with one's own good deeds and religious efforts, and to return to Jesus. One must admit one's sins and believe the word that Jesus completely removed all those sins through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

The people of Nineveh heard the preaching of Jonah, but the people of the time of Jesus heard the word of Jesus, who is greater than Jonah. If they did not believe even though One greater preached a more perfect gospel, their responsibility is all the greater. That is why the response of the people of Nineveh becomes the evidence that exposes the stubbornness of that generation.

The center of the word *"a greater than Jonah is here"* is the greatness of Jesus. Jesus is not one among countless prophets. He is God, who sent the prophets, and the Savior to whom all their testimony points.

Jesus not only warns of judgment but also received that

judgment Himself in our place. Jonah did not die for the people of Nineveh, but Jesus gave His own body for sinners. This is the love and the salvation of Jesus, who is greater than Jonah.

The word of Jesus makes clear that there really is a judgment. Both verse 31 and verse 32 speak of *"the judgment."* A person's life does not end with death; there is a time when everyone stands before God and it is revealed how he responded to the word and the gospel he received.

Today we must be on guard against a sign-centered faith. If one thinks that God is with one only when an illness is healed, business goes well, or one has a special dream, one's faith is shaken according to circumstances. When the miracle one wants does not happen, one doubts God, and one may unconditionally accept as a servant of God a person who shows amazing phenomena.

The queen of the South and the people of Nineveh were all people from outside Israel. This shows the fact that the right response to the word of God is not automatically determined by nation and religious background. A person raised in an environment of faith can reject the gospel, and a person hearing the gospel for the first time can humbly receive it.

Therefore one must not boast of the fact of having been in the church for a long time. What is important is not only how much of the word one has heard, but whether one believes that word in one's heart. If one has heard more of the word, one has been given a greater responsibility along with the greater privilege.

Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with the baptism He received in the Jordan River, died on the Cross, and rose again on the third day. There is no greater and more amazing sign than this event, in which God came to this earth clothed in human flesh and saved sinners.

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Jesus, who saved us, is not only greater than Jonah and Solomon but is God, who created and rules all things in the universe. That great One has saved us through the gospel of the water and the Spirit and made us the people and the workers of God.

We must not go around looking for new signs, but must know and believe Jesus, who has already completed salvation. When we believe in our hearts the greatness and the power of Jesus and the perfect salvation He accomplished, our hearts become full of faith and thanksgiving toward God, and we come to live serving the gospel in reliance on Him.

The bright eye that sees the light of the gospel

"No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light" (Luke 11:33–36).

Jesus is the light of salvation already clearly revealed

Just before this, the people demanded from Jesus a sign from heaven. Jesus, who is greater than Jonah and greater than Solomon, was before them, but they did not receive the light of salvation that had already appeared and demanded only yet another sign.

Even after seeing the clear work of Jesus casting out demons, some people denounced it as the power of Beelzebub. It was not that the light of God had not appeared. The light was already shining brightly before them. The problem lay in the fact that they did not have the eyes to receive that light. Therefore verses 33–36 are a word that deals not with a lack of light but with the state of the spiritual eyes and the heart of the person who looks at that light.

Jesus said, "No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a cellar or under a bushel, but on a lampstand." The purpose of lighting a lamp lies not in hiding it but in letting those who come into the house see the light. A cellar is a hidden place where the light of a lamp is not revealed, and a bushel is a vessel for measuring the quantity of grain. If a lamp is put under it, the light is blocked. A normal person puts a lamp on a lampstand where people can see it.

The light of the lamp shows the revelation of God and the word of salvation clearly revealed through Jesus Christ. God sent His Son into the world and did not hide who He is and what work He does. Jesus taught the word, healed the sick, and cast out demons. He had compassion on sinners and openly revealed that He is the Savior who has brought the kingdom of God.

In the end Jesus fulfilled the righteousness of God by receiving baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River. The sinless Son of God took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. And carrying those sins, He was crucified on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and so received the punishment of sin in our place. He was buried and rose again on the third day, and so overcame the power of sin and death and completed salvation for sinners.

The baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross, His death,

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and His resurrection are not secret knowledge hidden from people. They are the work of salvation that God has clearly testified to through the Bible, like a lamp on a lampstand. He revealed it openly so that anyone who hears this word and believes it can be saved from all sins. The gospel is not a secret that only a special class or people with mystical experiences can know; it is the light of the salvation of God that any sinner must hear and believe in his heart.

A good eye sees the gospel of the water and the Spirit rightly

But just because a lamp is burning brightly, not everyone receives that light in the same way. So in verse 34 Jesus said, *"The lamp of the body is the eye."* A person receives the light from outside through his eyes and discerns the road and the things around him. If the eye is sound, the whole body receives the help of the light, but if the eye does not function properly, it is as though the body moves in darkness even in broad daylight.

Here the eye refers to the eye of the heart that looks at the word of God and Jesus Christ. A good eye is the faith that receives just as it is what God has said, without putting forward one's own assertions and religious preconceptions. The person who has such an eye does not see Jesus simply as a teacher who performs miracles, but sees Him as the Savior who took all sins upon Himself for his sake and washed them away completely.

Conversely, for "the eye to be bad" means a heart that sees the truth in a distorted way. Such were the eyes of the people who saw the power of Jesus and yet denounced Him as relying on the ruler of the demons. Even while seeing the work God had done, they judged it to be the work of Satan. Though One greater

than Jonah and greater than Solomon was before their eyes, they demanded yet another sign. It was not that they could not believe for lack of light; they could not see because of a heart that rejected the light.

Today as well, a person may read the Bible a great deal and have many religious experiences and yet fail to see precisely the salvation accomplished by the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus. If one speaks only of the blood of the Cross of Jesus and does not see when and by what method He took the sin of the world upon Himself, it is hard to understand the whole picture of salvation completely. The fact that Jesus took all sins upon Himself by receiving baptism in the Jordan River, that carrying those sins He shed His blood and was judged on the Cross, and that He rose from the dead must be believed together.

The person who sees the gospel of the water and the Spirit rightly does not separate the baptism of Jesus from His Cross. The baptism of Jesus was the righteous work of taking the sin of the world upon His own body, and the blood of the Cross was the result of His receiving in our place the punishment of the sins He had taken upon Himself. His death is the death that paid the wages of sin in full, and His resurrection is the evidence that that atonement is perfect and the victory that gives new life to those who believe. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the person who believes this word of salvation and makes him understand and be sure of the righteousness Christ accomplished.

Jesus said of the person who has a good eye, *"your whole body also is full of light."* When one rightly believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the center of one's heart becomes full of light. While knowing the fact that one was a being who had to be judged because of sin, one comes to have the assurance that one has now received the remission of sins because Jesus took all those sins upon Himself and was judged. One escapes the fear

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of death and judgment, comes to be able to call God Father, and comes to live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In verse 35 Jesus warned, *"Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness."* This is the word that it is not enough merely to think that one is in the light. A person can mistake his own thoughts and religious convictions for the light of God. He can think his own judgment is absolutely right because he knows the Bible well, holds an important office in the church, and has had special experiences. But if that conviction differs from the word of salvation Jesus accomplished, what he regards as light may in reality be darkness.

Self-righteousness in particular makes darkness look like light. If one thinks one is acknowledged by God because one is better than others, prays much, and has kept the law well, it is hard to accept the perfect righteousness Jesus accomplished. If one believes that one can wash away one's sins little by little only by repenting of them and shedding tears every day, one is not fully believing the fact that Jesus took the sin of the world upon Himself once and for all and judged it through His baptism and the Cross. The ground of the remission of sins lies not in human feelings and works but in the righteousness Jesus Christ completed.

Therefore one must examine what one believes before the word of God. One must clearly know and believe why Jesus received baptism in the Jordan River, whose sins He carried when He was crucified on the Cross, and what He accomplished by rising from the dead.

We must shine the light of the gospel on the world

In verse 36 Jesus said that if the whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it becomes completely full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives light. When one honestly receives the light of God, that light does not stay in only one corner of the heart. It illuminates one's understanding of salvation, changes the eyes with which one looks at oneself and one's neighbor, and transforms one's purpose in life and one's values. The person who has received the remission of sins, rather than condemning others and exalting himself, remembers that he too was saved by grace and comes to have compassion.

The church must not hide the lamp in a cellar or under a bushel, but must clearly preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It must make clear, so that people may realize and believe, why Jesus received baptism, why He died on the Cross carrying those sins, and how He completed salvation by rising again.

The person who preaches the gospel is not a person who shows himself, but a person who shows the salvation Jesus accomplished. The source of the light is not human wisdom and ability but Jesus Christ and His word. The saints must shine the light of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that they have received on other souls and serve so that they too may receive the remission of sins and obtain the light of life.

The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit no longer wanders in darkness looking for a solution to his own sins. For Jesus took all sins upon Himself with His baptism, paid the price of those sins with the blood of the Cross, and rose from the dead and gave eternal life.

The salvation Jesus Christ accomplished has already been clearly revealed, like a lamp on a lampstand. The person who receives this gospel in his heart is the person who has a good eye.

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That person receives the remission of all sins and the Holy Spirit as a gift, and lives shining the light of the gospel he has received on the world so that other souls too may come out into the light of life.

It is the heart, not the outside, that must be made clean

"And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. Then the Lord said to him, 'Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you" (Luke 11:37–41).

A faith that makes only the outward appearance clean cannot wash away the sin of the heart

While Jesus was speaking about the lamp and the eye, a Pharisee invited Jesus to a midday meal. Jesus did not refuse his invitation merely because he was a Pharisee; He went into the house and sat down at the table. Jesus accepted the invitations of sinners and tax collectors, and He also went into the house of a Pharisee. This shows that Jesus is not One who came to save only a particular class, but One who delivers the word of salvation to everyone who realizes his sin and receives the truth.

But that Pharisee saw that Jesus did not wash His hands before eating the food and thought it strange. Here, washing the

hands does not refer only to the hygienic hand-washing of today. It means the ceremonial rite of purification performed before eating food according to the religious tradition of the Jews. They washed their hands in a set manner, in the sense of washing away the uncleanness they might have picked up through contact with the outside world.

The Pharisee looked first at whether Jesus had followed the prescribed ceremony rather than at the heart and the word of Jesus. He did not see the fact that the One sitting before him was the Son of God and the Christ who had come to save sinners; he saw only that Jesus had not washed His hands before the meal. In Luke 11:34 Jesus said that if the eye is bad, the whole body also becomes dark, and such was the Pharisee who appeared right after that. His physical eyes saw the action of Jesus, but his spiritual eyes did not see who Jesus was.

There is no record that the Pharisee criticized Jesus with his mouth. He thought it strange in his heart. But Jesus knew his heart even before a word came out of his mouth. People see the outward appearance and the actions of others, but Jesus sees even the judgments and the motives hidden inside a person's heart. The Pharisee judged that Jesus had not washed His hands, but Jesus rather exposed that man's unwashed heart.

Jesus said, *"Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean."* The Pharisees were very sensitive about removing the uncleanness on the outside of cups and dishes. They carefully watched what they ate and drank, what vessels they used, and with whom they ate. By strictly keeping these regulations, they thought that they were holier than other people.

Washing cups and dishes clean is not wrong in itself. The problem lay in wiping the outside clean while not looking at what was contained inside. No matter how brightly the outside of a cup is polished, if there is something dirty inside it, that cup

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cannot be called a clean cup. Through this picture Jesus contrasted the outward piety and the inward corruption of the Pharisees.

Jesus said, *"but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness."* The Pharisees looked pious to people. They prayed and fasted, gave tithes, and kept many rites of purification. But in their hearts were greed and wickedness. They had the religious appearance of serving God, but in reality they loved wealth and honor, high positions and the praise of people. Outwardly they seemed to be for God, but in their hearts they sought their own benefit.

While strictly keeping the rites of purification, the Pharisees did not have compassion on the poor and the weak. They loaded people with heavy religious duties while they themselves tried to receive honor and hospitality. What they had to wipe clean was not only the outside of the cup and the dish but their hearts full of greed and wickedness. But a person cannot wash away the sin of his heart by his own strength as he washes his hands with water.

What defiles a person is the sin inside the heart

The source of what defiles a person lies not outside but inside the heart of the sinner. Inside the heart are evil thoughts, lewdness, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, and pride. It is not the food that comes in from outside or the dust on the hands that makes a person's soul a sinner; the sin inside the heart comes out in thoughts, words, and actions and defiles the person.

A person can restrain his behavior to some degree and dress himself up to look pious to others. He can smile even when angry,

pretend to have no greed even when he has it, and act as if he loves a person even while hating him. But he cannot remove the sin inside his heart by his own efforts. The more he manages his outward appearance, the more pious he may look to others, but that does not make his heart clean before God.

It is the same with religious acts. Worship, prayer, offerings, and service do not wash away the sin of the heart. The way to please God and be justified is not one's own works but believing the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ accomplished. Faith comes first, and works follow from that faith. If one abandons this order and tries to make oneself clean by works, one goes the way of the Pharisees, who wiped only the outside of the cup and the dish.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, *"Foolish ones!"* This word does not mean that they lacked knowledge. They knew the law and the religious traditions well. But they were foolish because they thought they could show their outward appearance to God while hiding their inner hearts. God is not One who made only the outside of a person but One who made the inside as well.

The word *"Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?"* means that God is the Creator not only of our bodies and actions but also of our hearts and souls. God is not One who sees only what clothes a person wears, what words he speaks, and what ceremonies he performs. He knows everything, even why a person acts as he does, what the motive of his heart is, and what he loves and relies on.

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The gospel of the water and the Spirit makes the inside of a person clean

But how can a person defiled by sin make his heart clean? Fundamental sin cannot be removed by resolve and self-cultivation, or by repeated rites of purification. A person did not become a sinner by doing a few bad deeds; he is a being born with sin in his heart who lives his whole life revealing that sin outwardly. Therefore what is needed is not a method that wipes away only sinful behavior, but a salvation that completely deals with all the sins in the heart.

Jesus, the Son of God, came into the world clothed in flesh precisely in order to wash away this sin. Jesus had no sin, but He received baptism in the Jordan River from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. Through that baptism He took upon His own body all the sins that all the people of the world commit with their hearts and their actions. Not only the sins people revealed outwardly, but even the sins of greed and wickedness, hatred and lewdness, pride and hypocrisy that they harbored in their hearts all passed on to Jesus.

Carrying all those sins, Jesus was crucified on the Cross. Nailed through His hands and feet, He shed His blood and died, and so received the punishment of sin in our place. The blood of the Cross is the evidence that Jesus bore the judgment for the sin of mankind with His life. His death was the death a sinner had to die, and the curse He received was the curse a sinner had to receive.

Jesus was buried and rose again on the third day. The resurrection of Jesus shows the fact that the judgment on the sin of the world has been completely finished and that the power of sin and death has fallen. The baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection are not a matter of

having repaired only the outside of a sinner. They are the salvation that completely washed away all the sins of a sinner before God and had him obtain new life.

The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of all sins. When one believes the fact that Jesus took the sin of the world upon Himself with His baptism, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and rose again and became the Savior, God counts that faith as righteousness. In that person's heart no sin remains to be judged any longer, and the Holy Spirit dwells there.

A heart made clean appears in mercy and sharing

In verse 41 Jesus said, *"But rather give alms of such things as you have."* This word does not mean merely to express in fine words what is inside the heart. It is the word to actually help and share with people in need, with the wealth and the food one has. The person who is full of greed and wickedness holds on to everything for himself alone, but the person who knows the grace of God and whose heart has been filled with compassion shares what he has with his neighbors.

The Pharisees were zealous in washing the outside of cups and dishes, but they were stingy in helping the hungry with the food contained in those cups and dishes. Jesus turned their attention from ceremonial purity to actual mercy. The cleanness in which God delights appears in a life that abandons greed, loves people in need, and shares what one has.

Almsgiving is not a price for obtaining the remission of sins; it is the fruit borne by a heart that has been delivered from greed and wickedness by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The person who has received the remission of all sins by

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the grace of Jesus and has received the Holy Spirit, empowered by the love of God, has compassion on his neighbors and actually serves them.

Zacchaeus is a good example. Zacchaeus had lived gathering wealth as a chief tax collector, but when he met Jesus, he said that he would give half of his goods to the poor and, if he had taken anything from anyone by false accusation, would restore it fourfold. It was not because Zacchaeus shared his property that Jesus entered his house. Jesus first came to Zacchaeus, and after Zacchaeus received Jesus, he turned from greed and showed the fruit of almsgiving and restitution.

Therefore we must not start from adorning our outward appearance more beautifully, but must first admit that we are sinners who cannot wash away the sin of our hearts. And we must believe in our hearts the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. Only this gospel makes a person's heart clean from all sins and makes it a temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells.

The person who has received the remission of sins comes to have compassion on others because he knows the fact that he was saved by the one-sided grace of God. He does not use all his wealth, time, and ability for himself alone but shares them for the gospel and for his neighbors. He does not try to wash away his sins with almsgiving and good deeds; he does good in thanksgiving for the love of Jesus, who has already washed away his sins.

The Pharisees, who abandoned justice and love

"But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them" (Luke 11:42–44).

While eating at the house of the Pharisee, Jesus exposed their outward purity and inward corruption. They were sensitive about making their hands and the outside of cups and dishes clean, but their hearts were full of greed and wickedness. Jesus told them to give alms of what they had, and then He declared *"woe"* three times. Verses 42–44 show the wrong of the Pharisees from three directions. They had reversed the priorities of faith, they loved to be exalted by people, and they harmed even others through their hidden spiritual death.

The *"Woe to you"* that Jesus repeatedly spoke is the solemn declaration pronounced on the Pharisees, who rejected the righteousness of God and were heading for judgment. They were religious leaders respected by people, but sin remained as it was in their hearts, which did not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The way for them to escape the judgment of God was to turn from their self-righteousness and religious acts and believe the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ accomplished.

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They were zealous in works while abandoning the righteousness and the love of God

In verse 42 Jesus said that the Pharisees *"tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs."* Mint and rue were small plants used for fragrance, medicine, and food ingredients. The Pharisees kept the religious regulations so minutely that they counted not only the large produce of the field but even the small herbs and fragrant plants grown in the garden and set apart a tenth of them.

But Jesus pointed out what they had abandoned rather than the acts they had kept so minutely. While thoroughly tithing small herbs, the Pharisees did not believe in Jesus, whom God had sent to save sinners, and they abandoned the justice and the love of God.

Love for God is not necessarily the same as religious zeal. A person can do many religious acts and yet love his own righteousness and honor more than God. The Pharisees said that they were for God, but they did not receive the Son whom God had sent. While saying that they loved God, they judged and opposed Jesus, the Son of God. This shows that their zeal was not love toward God but zeal for establishing their own righteousness.

God loved sinners and sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. Jesus took all the sins of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, in the Jordan River. He took upon Himself not only the sins people revealed outwardly but even the sins of greed and wickedness, pride and hypocrisy inside their hearts.

Carrying the sins He had thus taken upon Himself, Jesus was crucified on the Cross, shed His blood, and died. The blood of the Cross is the evidence that He received the punishment of sin

completely. The death of Jesus was the death a sinner had to die, and the judgment Jesus received was the judgment all mankind had to receive. Jesus was buried and rose again on the third day, and so overcame sin and death and completed salvation.

This baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection are the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The person who believes this gospel in his heart receives the remission of all sins, not by the merit of works but by the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished. And he receives the Holy Spirit as a gift in the heart from which sin has disappeared. True love toward God begins from knowing and believing this grace that has saved oneself.

Jesus said, *"These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."* This is not the word to abandon the obedience one ought to practice, but the word not to abandon the righteousness and the love of God while putting forward one's works. One must first believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of all sins, and from that faith obedience and service must follow. Faith comes first and works follow; it is not that one obtains the righteousness of God or pleases God by works.

The person who seeks the glory of men cannot believe in God

In verse 43 Jesus said that the Pharisees *"love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces."* The best seats in the synagogues were the seats that were easily seen by people and where respected people sat. Being greeted in the marketplaces means that people recognized their office and their piety and showed them respect.

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What Jesus rebuked was the heart that loved high seats and the recognition of people. The Pharisees regarded how they looked to people as more important than what kind of people they were before God, and they made their religious office and pious appearance a means of obtaining their own glory rather than the glory of God.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit brings down such human boasting. A person is not saved by his own piety and merit. He is saved because he passed all his sins on to Jesus and Jesus was judged on the Cross. What the saved person can boast of is not his own office and works but only the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who gave life to sinners.

Jesus was the Son of the highest God, but He humbled Himself in order to save sinners. He received baptism from John the Baptist and took all the sins of sinners upon Himself, and He died in the lowest place, the Cross. And God raised Him from the dead. The person who believes in this Jesus does not try to take a high seat for himself, but serves the gospel and his neighbors in the place God has entrusted to him.

In a grave that is not seen there is no gospel of life

In verse 44 Jesus compared the Pharisees to *"graves which are not seen."* A grave that is not seen is a grave that is level with the ground and cannot easily be recognized from the outside. People walk over it without knowing that it is a grave and become unclean. In the same way, the Pharisees looked outwardly like faithful and pious leaders, but inside they were full of sin and spiritual death.

Therefore the problem of the Pharisees did not end with the

hypocrisy of one person. People believed and followed them as holy leaders and thought that they could be made righteous by works. The people who had to believe in Jesus Christ and receive the remission of sins came to be bound to religious regulations and their own merit. Like walking over a grave that is not seen without knowing it, they could fall into spiritual death while accepting wrong teaching as the truth.

This word is also connected with the warning Jesus gave right afterward in Luke 12:1, *"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."* Just as leaven spreads through the dough almost unnoticed, hypocrisy and wrong teaching also seep into people's hearts. At first they look like pious instruction, but in the end they make a person rely on his own works rather than on the salvation of Jesus.

When the gospel of the water and the Spirit disappears from a church and only religious acts are emphasized, that community becomes a grave that is not seen. Even if worship and praise, prayer and service are active and many people gather, if it is not preached why Jesus received baptism in the Jordan River and what sins He was judged for on the Cross, sinners cannot receive the fundamental remission of sins. Hearing teaching that has no life, they come to mistakenly think that they are in the right faith.

The more frightening thing about a grave that is not seen lies in the fact that the person who walks over it does not know what he has come into contact with. It is the same with false teaching. Words that openly deny Jesus are easy to guard against, but teaching that uses the name of Jesus and Bible verses while leaving out the core of the gospel is hard to discern. If one speaks of the Cross of Jesus but leaves out the fact that He took the sin of the world upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, it does not become clear how sin passed on to Jesus.

Therefore every teaching must be discerned by the word of

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God, not by the fame of the leader or the size of the church. One must examine whether that teaching binds people to their own works and merit, or whether it leads them to believe the salvation accomplished through the baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection. What is important is not how famous and kind the leader is, but whether he leads sinners to the gospel of life.

The person who has received the remission of sins does not put forward his religious acts as righteousness. He believes the gospel that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself and judged them through His baptism and the Cross, and within that grace he lives following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He does not seek the praise of people and high seats, but serves the gospel and his neighbors in the place entrusted to him, and when he realizes his own wrong, he admits it before the word and corrects it.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit transfers us from spiritual death, which is like a grave, to life. Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with His baptism and died on the Cross carrying those sins, but on the third day He opened the tomb and rose again. The person who believes this gospel becomes not a religious person who is alive only outwardly, but a living person in whose heart the Holy Spirit dwells.

The living person keeps the more important justice and love of God without disregarding small acts of obedience. He does not make office and high seats his own glory, but accepts them as the responsibility of serving the gospel and his neighbors. He fears God even where it is not seen outwardly, and he does not bind others to their own works but delivers the salvation Jesus completed.

The lawyers, who blocked the way of salvation with the key of knowledge

"Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, 'Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also.' And He said, 'Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore the wisdom of God also said, "I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute," that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation. 'Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.' And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him" (Luke 11:45–54).

Earlier, Jesus rebuked the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. They made the outside of the cup and dish clean while harboring greed and wickedness in their hearts, and they thoroughly tithed small herbs while abandoning justice and the love of God. While enjoying being exalted by people, they were like graves that are not seen, harboring death and corruption inside.

One of the lawyers who was listening to this word protested, *"by saying these things You reproach us also."* Here the lawyer

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refers not to a lawyer of today who handles civil and criminal cases, but to an expert in the law who studied and interpreted the law of Moses and taught it to the people. The rules of life and the religious customs of the Pharisees also depended in large part on the interpretation and teaching of these men.

Hearing the rebuke of Jesus, the lawyer did not first examine whether that word was right. Rather than looking back to see whether he too had sins to repent of, he felt that the authority of himself and his colleagues had been damaged. Instead of trying to see his own true state before the word of God, he reacted by saying, "You have insulted me."

Jesus said, *"Woe to you also, lawyers!"* This was not a word acknowledging their religious authority, but a word declaring that at the end of the road they were walking lay the judgment of God. The lawyer took the rebuke as an insult, but Jesus did not step back; He exposed their sin and destruction even more clearly.

They loaded people with heavy burdens by the law and did not preach the gospel

The first sin of the lawyers was that they loaded people with burdens hard to bear while they themselves did not touch those burdens with one finger. The law of God tells us what sin is and exposes the human heart before God. But rather than teaching the word of God rightly so that sinners would seek God, the lawyers added countless detailed rules and human traditions and laid heavy burdens on the shoulders of the people.

They taught that one could become righteous by doing this and be accepted by God by doing that. Every time the people failed to keep all those regulations, they were gripped by a sense

of condemnation and fear. Yet the lawyers themselves did not have compassion on the people who carried that burden. Instead of raising up the fallen or showing sinners the way to come to God, they watched whether the rules were kept and used that to strengthen their own authority.

Even if a person learns much of the law and strives to do good works, he cannot by his own strength remove all the sin of his heart. The law makes clear what sin is, but it cannot take the sinner's sin upon itself in his place or receive the punishment for that sin. Therefore teaching that puts forward only the law and does not preach the gospel of the remission of sins ends up loading sinners with a burden they cannot bear.

But Jesus is not One who only loaded people with the burden of sin. Jesus took all the sins of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River. That the sinless Son of God received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, was the work of salvation in which He Himself took over the whole burden of sin that sinners had to carry.

Carrying those sins, Jesus went to the Cross, shed His blood, and died. The blood of the Cross shows that Jesus actually received the judgment of the sins He had taken upon Himself. Jesus died, was buried, and rose again on the third day, and so overcame the power of sin and death. In this way, the baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection are the salvation of God, in which Jesus carried in our place the burden of sin that sinners cannot carry by themselves and completely resolved it.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a teaching that demands of sinners, "Try harder and remove your sins." It makes them believe the fact that Jesus took sin upon Himself with His baptism and paid the price of that sin on the Cross. The person

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who believes this gospel receives the remission of all sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. And after receiving the remission of sins, he comes to practice the will of God following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in his heart. It is not that works become the condition of salvation; the fruit of obedience comes out of the faith that has been saved.

They built the tombs of the prophets and rejected the living word

In verses 47–48 Jesus rebuked the lawyers for approving the deeds of their fathers who had killed the prophets, while building the tombs of the prophets. They showed an appearance of honoring the dead prophets, but they rejected the living word of God that rebuked their sins. The outward act of building the tombs of the prophets did not cover their unbelief.

When the prophets whom God had sent rebuked sin, their fathers hated and killed the prophets. And when Jesus exposed their sins, the lawyers too did not repent but opposed Jesus. They were repeating exactly the unbelief their fathers had shown toward the prophets. They said that they honored the prophets by building tombs, but with their actual lives they were proving that the attitude of their fathers who killed the prophets was right.

A dead prophet is easy to honor because he does not directly rebuke one's present sins. Commemorating a person of faith who has already left this world and quoting his words may seem to be something that raises the dignity of one's own faith. But the living word of God exposes one's greed, pride, and wrong faith right now. That is why a person can exalt the prophets of the past while rejecting the truth being delivered to him in the present.

In verse 49 Jesus said that the wisdom of God would send

prophets and apostles. God kept sending His servants even though He knew that the people would reject the truth. This shows the fact that God spoke sufficiently and gave the opportunity to turn before abandoning sinners. At the same time, the true state of people's hearts is revealed through how they respond to the word of God.

The prophets and the apostles were not people sent to deliver their own thoughts. They were sent to deliver the word God had entrusted to them. Therefore hating and persecuting their words was not simply disliking a particular individual; it was rejecting God, who had sent them. The lawyers professed to know God best, but by opposing Jesus and the apostles, whom God had sent, they revealed that they were in fact rejecting God.

In verses 50–51 Jesus said that the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world would be required of this generation. Abel was the first righteous martyr recorded in the Bible, and Zechariah was a righteous man who was killed between the altar and the temple. The religious leaders of this generation followed exactly the unbelief of their fathers who had killed the prophets, and in the end they rejected the Son whom God had sent and even persecuted the apostles and the preachers of the gospel. Therefore they came to bear the responsibility for having repeated the sins of their fathers and the judgment for having opposed the righteous people of God.

Human unbelief reached its climax in nailing Jesus to the Cross. But before He was arrested, Jesus had already taken all the sins of mankind upon Himself with His baptism in the Jordan River. Carrying those sins, He shed His blood and was judged on the Cross, and He rose again on the third day and accomplished perfect salvation. The Jesus whom the people rejected is the very Son of God, who took all the sins of sinners upon Himself and saved them.

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They took away the key of knowledge and blocked the door of salvation

In verse 52 Jesus said that the lawyers had taken away *"the key of knowledge."* A key is the tool that opens a door and lets people enter. Since the lawyers held the position of studying and teaching the word of God, they had to help the people know God and enter the kingdom of God. Making clear the right meaning of the word so that sinners would seek God was the responsibility entrusted to them.

But they added human traditions and their own interpretations to the word of God. They used the word as a means of protecting their own authority and position, and they covered the way to come to God with complicated regulations and conditions of works. As a result, they themselves did not enter the kingdom of God, and they even hindered those who were trying to enter.

That they had taken away the key of knowledge does not mean that they had no Scriptures. They studied the Scriptures, memorized them, and taught them to others. But they did not believe the will of God to which the Scriptures testify, and they did not receive Jesus Christ, who is at the center of that word. They had much knowledge of the Scriptures, but that knowledge did not lead themselves and others to life.

One is not saved merely by knowing and teaching much of the Bible. One must believe the fact that Jesus Christ, to whom the Bible testifies, took the sin of the world upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and rose again. If one preaches only the Cross while leaving out the baptism of Jesus, one cannot know how sin passed on to Jesus, and a sinner cannot believe the perfect gospel that has him receive the remission of all sins.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth of life that guides sinners to enter the kingdom of God. The person who believes this gospel does not rely on his own works and merit but receives the righteousness of God that Jesus completed. He receives the remission of all sins and becomes a child of God in whom the Holy Spirit dwells.

A true worker of the gospel does not bind people to himself. He opens the Scriptures, shows the salvation Jesus accomplished, and helps each person hear and believe the word of God. He does not use the gospel to frighten people or to exalt his own authority, but delivers the perfect remission of sins Jesus accomplished to the person who suffers carrying the burden of sin. This is using the key of knowledge rightly.

Those who rejected the rebuke tried to catch Jesus in His words

Verses 53–54 show the reaction of the scribes and the Pharisees to the rebuke of Jesus. They did not repent or try to learn more of the meaning of the word. They assailed Jesus vehemently and threw many questions at Him, and they lay in wait to catch the words that came out of His mouth.

Outwardly it looked as though they were asking questions, but their purpose did not lie in wanting to know the truth. It was to find some expression in the words of Jesus to make an issue of and accuse Him. The heart that took the rebuke of Jesus as an insult eventually developed into hostility that distorted the words of Jesus and sought to remove Him. This reaction itself proved the word of Jesus that they were standing on the same road as their fathers who persecuted the prophets.

This section also teaches how we must receive the rebuke of

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the word. When we hear a rebuke, rather than immediately making excuses and attacking the person who delivered it, we must first look at ourselves before God. If the word exposes our sins and wrong faith, we must not regard that word as an insult but receive it as the loving warning of God.

Luke 11:45–54 shows the danger of a religion that has the Scriptures and yet fails to lead people to God. The lawyers loaded others with heavy burdens, rejected the living truth while building the tombs of the dead prophets, and did not enter the kingdom of God themselves while hindering even those who were trying to enter. In the end they tried to seize on the words of Jesus, who urged them to repent, and attack Him.

But Jesus is not One who came to load sinners with heavy burdens. He took our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism in the Jordan River, received the judgment of those sins by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and opened the way of eternal life by rising again on the third day. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit does not try to establish his own righteousness under the heavy burden of the law, but believes the salvation Jesus completed and receives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit. And he comes to live not as a person who only loads others with burdens, but as a person who preaches the gospel, carries the burdens of the weak together with them, and opens the door of the kingdom of God. ✉

Questions and Answers on Luke Chapter 11

[Question] 1. Explain the activities and the teachings of Jesus that appear in Luke chapter 11.

In Luke chapter 11 Jesus taught His disciples to pray, cast out a mute demon, and made clear that the kingdom of God had come. He also taught the blessedness of hearing the word of God and keeping it, the sign of Jonah, and the eye, the lamp of the body, and He rebuked the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the lawyers.

First, at the request of the disciples who had seen Him praying, Jesus taught them the content and the attitude of prayer.

"So He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.'" (Luke 11:2–4).

Prayer is not a means of fulfilling one's own greed; it is an act of faith that seeks the name and the kingdom of God first and relies on God for daily bread, the remission of sins, and protection from temptation. Then, through the parable of the friend who asked for bread at midnight, Jesus told them to ask, seek, and knock, and to seek the help of God.

Second, when Jesus cast out a mute demon, the mute spoke. The multitudes marveled, but some slandered Jesus, saying that He relied on Beelzebub, and others tested Jesus by seeking a sign

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from heaven.

"But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20).

Jesus compared Satan to a strong man and Himself to the stronger one who overcomes him. He who is not with Jesus is against Him, and he who does not gather souls with Him scatters. The word that the unclean spirit returns and the last state of the man becomes worse warns that fundamental salvation is not accomplished by outward tidying alone.

Third, to the woman who cried out that the womb that bore Him and the breasts that nursed Him were blessed, Jesus said that those who hear the word of God and keep it are blessed. True blessedness lies not in blood relationship of the flesh or religious background, but in hearing the word of God, believing it, and keeping that faith.

Fourth, Jesus rebuked the generation that kept seeking a sign and spoke of the sign of Jonah. The people of Nineveh repented when they heard the preaching of Jonah, but the people of that time did not believe even though they saw Jesus, who is greater than Jonah. The sign of Jonah points to the death of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead.

Fifth, Jesus compared the eye to the lamp of the body. If the eye is good, the whole body is full of light, but if the eye is bad, the body also becomes dark. A person must see the truth of God rightly, receive the word by faith, and make his heart and his life full of light.

Sixth, through the Pharisee who thought it strange that He did not wash His hands before the meal, Jesus rebuked the hypocrisy that makes only the outside clean while harboring greed and wickedness inside. The lawyers also loaded others with burdens hard to bear and took away the key of knowledge, blocking the way for themselves and others to come to God.

Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and, by rising from the dead, overcame the power of Satan and accomplished our salvation. Therefore we must not stay in signs and an outward religious life, but must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and live seeking the name and the kingdom of God.

[Question] 2. In Luke 11:2, with what words does the Lord's Prayer begin?

The Lord's Prayer begins with the words *"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come."* Jesus taught His disciples to call God Father and to seek the name and the kingdom of God first.

"So He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven" (Luke 11:2).

The address *"Our Father"* shows that prayer is not an act of making wishes to an unknown god, but a matter of a child of God trusting the Father who loves and cares for him and asking Him for help.

That the name of God is hallowed means asking that His name be honored among people as a holy and precious name. The saints must give glory to God with their words and their lives.

The ground on which we can call God Father lies not in our own works but in the salvation Jesus accomplished. The person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit becomes a child of God and can call on the Father in faith.

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Therefore we must seek the name and the kingdom of God before putting forward our own needs. And we must pray believing that God the Father knows our needs and will answer with what is most fitting.

[Question] 3. In Luke 11:2, what does the prayer *"Your kingdom come"* mean?

The prayer *"Your kingdom come"* is the prayer that asks that the salvation and the rule of God be established in people's hearts and lives, that the gospel of the water and the Spirit be preached widely and the people of God increase, and that the kingdom of God be completely fulfilled in the future.

"So He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven" (Luke 11:2).

The kingdom of God has already come in the work of Jesus, who came to this earth, overcame the power of Satan, and bestowed salvation on sinners. That Jesus cast out demons with the finger of God was the evidence that the kingdom of God had come upon them.

"But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20).

When a sinner hears and believes the word of the salvation Jesus accomplished, he turns from having made his own thoughts and greed his master and comes under the rule of God. The person who has received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit becomes one of the people of God and lives according to His word.

In this prayer is contained the meaning of asking that the gospel be preached, that saved souls increase, and that the

church serve God in the truth. The person who seeks the kingdom of God first puts the will of God and the salvation of souls before his own benefit.

The kingdom of God reveals its rule at present in the hearts of saved people and in the church, but it makes us look to the eternal kingdom that will be completely fulfilled when Jesus comes again.

A person cannot enter the kingdom of God by his own works. He becomes one of the people of God when he believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed by receiving baptism from John and taking the sin of the world upon Himself, being judged on the Cross, and rising from the dead.

Therefore we must ask that the rule of God be established in our own hearts and lives, and must pray and serve so that the gospel may be preached to our families, our neighbors, and the whole world.

[Question] 4. In Luke 11:3, how must the saints ask for the bread they need each day?

The saints must ask God the Father for the bread of the body needed to live each day, and for the bread of the spirit needed to hear the word and do the will of God.

"Give us day by day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3).

"Our daily bread" means first food and the help needed for daily life. The saints must honestly tell God, who knows their needs, and must believe the fact that the strength and the opportunity to work and the fruit of labor are also given by God.

The word to ask for bread day by day means to live relying on God from day to day. One must not make wealth and one's own plans the ground of one's security, but must believe that

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God, who has cared for today, will supply what is needed tomorrow as well.

The saints also need the bread of the spirit. They must hear the word of God steadily, keep the gospel of the water and the Spirit in mind, believe the word they have heard, and do the will of God. Preaching the gospel and serving souls also make the faith of the saints firmer.

Jesus had them pray for bread to be given to *"us,"* not to "me." Therefore we must not think only of our own needs, but must care for our families, the church, and neighbors going through hardship, and share what we have received from God with thanksgiving.

The ground on which we can call God Father and ask for bread lies in the salvation Jesus completed. The saint who has received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit must acknowledge that everything has come from God and give thanks, not only when he is in want but also when he has plenty.

Therefore the saints must ask in faith, while seeking the name and the kingdom of God first, that He supply day by day the bread needed for body and soul.

[Question] 5. In Luke 11:11–13, what parable did Jesus use to explain that God gives good things to the person who prays?

Jesus spoke the parable that there is no father who gives a stone when his son asks for bread, a serpent when he asks for a fish, or a scorpion when he asks for an egg. He taught that even an evil person knows how to give good things to his own children, and that the heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask.

"If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!'" (Luke 11:11–13).

This parable means that if even a father in the flesh tries to give his children what is beneficial instead of what is harmful, the good God the Father knows the needs of His people far better and gives what is truly good.

The best gift God gives is the Holy Spirit. When a sinner seeks the truth of salvation, God has him hear and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to the person who has received the remission of sins.

Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. When one believes this gospel and receives the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit dwells in that heart.

This word follows the parable of the man who asked for bread at midnight and the teaching to ask, seek, and knock. Prayer is not a technique for forcing God to move, but an act of faith that keeps asking, believing that the good Father will give what is needed.

Even the saint who has received the remission of sins must keep asking for the wisdom and strength to preach the gospel, the faith to overcome temptation, and the help the church and the saints need. He must not judge the answer only by visible results, but must believe that God will answer with what is best.

Therefore we must treasure the best gift, the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit, and serve the gospel and our neighbors with the grace and the help God has given.

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[Question] 6. In Luke 11:14–16, what three reactions did the crowd show when Jesus cast out the mute demon?

When Jesus cast out the mute demon, the crowd showed three reactions. The people marveled that the mute came to speak; some slandered Jesus, saying that He relied on Beelzebub; and others sought a sign from heaven in order to test Jesus.

"And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled. But some of them said, 'He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.' Others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven" (Luke 11:14–16).

The first reaction was amazement. The crowd marveled when they saw Jesus control the evil spirit and restore the man who had been suffering. But merely being amazed at a miracle did not mean that they believed in Jesus as the Savior.

The second reaction was slander. Some people did not accept what Jesus had done as the work of God and attributed the source of His authority to Satan. Jesus made clear that their claim did not make sense, since if Satan casts out his own side, he is bringing down his own kingdom by himself.

The third reaction was the demand for a sign in order to test Him. Even after seeing the mute demon go out and that man speak, these people did not believe in Jesus and demanded yet another proof. This was not because of a lack of evidence, but an attitude of unbelief that had closed its heart.

That Jesus cast out the demon with the finger of God was the evidence that the kingdom of God had come. Jesus is stronger than Satan and is the Savior who delivers people from the power of Satan.

Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the

world upon Himself, was judged on the Cross, and, by rising from the dead, overcame the power of sin and death. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and enters into the rule of God.

Therefore we must not slander the work of the salvation of God after seeing it, on the ground that it does not fit our own thoughts, nor endlessly seek other signs. We must confirm who Jesus is through the written word and receive Him in faith.

[Question] 7. In Luke 11:15, what being does the name Beelzebub refer to?

In Luke chapter 11, Beelzebub is a name that refers to the ruler of the demons, that is, Satan. Some people did not accept Jesus' casting out of the mute demon as the work of God, and slandered Him, saying that Jesus relied on Beelzebub.

"But some of them said, 'He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.' Others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven. But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls. If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub" (Luke 11:15–18).

Jesus answered by connecting the Beelzebub the people spoke of with Satan. If Satan were casting out the demons on his own side, he would be bringing down his own kingdom by himself, so their slander did not make sense.

Beelzebub is explained as meaning "king of the flies." The similar name Baal-Zebub in the Old Testament appears as a pagan god served by the people of Ekron, but the focus of Luke chapter 11 lies in the fact that Beelzebub refers to Satan, the ruler

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of the demons.

That Jesus cast out the demon with the finger of God was not evidence that He was on the side of Satan, but evidence that the kingdom of God had come. Jesus is not One who receives help from Satan, but the stronger One who breaks the power of Satan.

Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, was judged on the Cross, and, by rising from the dead, overcame the power of sin, death, and Satan. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and becomes one of the people of God.

Therefore we must not judge spiritual matters by some power or claim alone, but must believe, on the standard of the written word, that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior who has overcome Satan.

[Question] 8. In Luke 11:21–22, explain what the defeat of Satan means for the faith of the saints.

The meaning of Satan's defeat for the faith of the saints is that the saints do not overcome Satan by their own strength, but believe in and rely on the victory accomplished by Jesus, who is stronger than Satan..

"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils" (Luke 11:21–22).

In this parable the strong man is Satan and the stronger one is Jesus. A sinner cannot escape the power of Satan by his own wisdom, will, and good deeds alone, but Jesus can take away the armor of Satan and deliver the person held captive by him.

That Jesus cast out the mute demon showed that He has the power to break the power of Satan and set people free. Satan exercises strong power, but he is a creature, and he is defeated before the authority of Jesus.

Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and, by rising from the dead, overcame the power of sin, death, and Satan. Jesus removed sin, the ground on which Satan accuses people.

The saint who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit is not the possession of Satan, but a child of God and one of the people of the kingdom of God. The assurance of the saints lies not in their always being strong, but in the word that Jesus has removed sin and delivered them from the power of Satan.

Though Satan has been defeated, it is not that temptation and the fight of faith have disappeared for the saints. Since Satan tries to shake faith with lies, accusations, and fear, the saints must hold on to the word of the salvation Jesus accomplished and stand against those lies with the truth.

Therefore the defeat of Satan gives the saints not fear but assurance and responsibility. Relying on Jesus, who is stronger, they must stand in the word and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the people held captive by sin and falsehood.

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[Question] 9. In Luke 11:23, can there be a neutral attitude in the matter of believing in and following Jesus?

In the matter of believing in and following Jesus there can be no neutral attitude. For the person who is not with Jesus comes to stand on the side that opposes Him, and the person who does not gather souls with Jesus becomes one who scatters.

"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters" (Luke 11:23).

This is the word Jesus spoke, after casting out the demon, to the people who slandered Him by connecting Him with Beelzebub. The attitude of belonging to neither side between Jesus and Satan is not actually possible.

To be with Jesus does not mean to have a good feeling toward Him or not to oppose Christianity. It is to believe in Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah who saves from the power of sin and Satan, and to accept the salvation He accomplished.

Jesus saves the people scattered in sin and falsehood and gathers them as the people of the kingdom of God. Therefore the saints must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit together with Jesus and serve so that souls may return to Jesus.

Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, was judged on the Cross, and, by rising from the dead, saved us from the power of sin and Satan. A person either believes this gospel and belongs to Jesus, or does not believe and remains under the power of sin and Satan.

Therefore we must not think that we are neutral while continuing to put off believing in Jesus. We must confirm and believe the salvation of Jesus through the written word, and after being saved, we must serve the work of the gospel, gathering souls together with Him.

[Question] 10. In Luke 11:24–26, what did Jesus say becomes of the last state of the man from whom the unclean spirit went out?

Jesus said that after the unclean spirit goes out, that spirit returns with seven other spirits more wicked than itself and dwells in that man, so that the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.

"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Luke 11:24–26).

After the spirit went out, the house was swept and put in order and was tidy on the outside. But the unclean spirit still called that place *"my house"* and returned. The fact alone that the outward condition has improved for a while and life has been put in order does not mean that fundamental salvation has been accomplished.

Even if one corrects bad habits and begins a religious life, if one has not received the remission of sins and does not believe the salvation Jesus accomplished, that cannot be called salvation. Here *"dry places"* refer to the places where the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not.

To receive Jesus is not merely to call on His name with the lips, but to hear through the written word and believe the salvation Jesus accomplished for sinners. Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, was judged on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead.

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The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins, and the Holy Spirit dwells in his heart. Unlike the state in which only the outward life has been put in order, he comes to live as a child of God, receiving the word and the rule of God.

The word that seven spirits came in shows that the rule of the evil forces has become far worse than before. If one does not believe in Jesus even though His power has appeared, and stays only in outward change, one's last state can become worse than the first.

Therefore one must not stop at a slight improvement in one's life or merely acquiring religious habits, but must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit. After being saved, one must abide in the written word, serve the gospel, and let one's heart and life come under the rule of God.

[Question] 11. In Luke 11:27–28, when Jesus heard the cry of the woman, whom did He say is blessed?

Jesus said that those who hear the word of God and keep it are blessed. A woman cried out that the mother who bore and raised Jesus was blessed, but Jesus taught that hearing the word of God, believing it, and keeping it is the true blessedness.

"And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!' But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'" (Luke 11:27–28).

Seeing the word and the power of Jesus, the woman exclaimed how blessed the mother who raised Him must be.

Through those words Jesus made clear that the faith that hears and receives the word of God is a more essential blessedness than blood relationship of the flesh.

Blood relationship of the flesh with Jesus, the experience of having seen Jesus in person, and the background of having been born into a family of good faith do not automatically save a person. Everyone must himself hear the word of God directly and believe it in his heart.

To keep the word does not mean to obtain salvation by the merit of good works. It is first to hear and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished and receive the remission of sins, and then to treasure that word in one's heart and live by faith.

Hearing the word does not end with accumulating knowledge of the Bible. One must receive it as the word God has given to oneself, lay down one's own thoughts, and respond with faith and obedience.

Therefore one must not substitute the faith of others or a customary religious life for one's own faith. One must oneself hear and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and live a life that keeps that word and bears the fruit of the gospel.

[Question] 12. In Luke 11:31–32, who will condemn the men of this generation in the judgment, and why?

Jesus said that in the judgment the queen of the South and the men of Nineveh will rise up and condemn the men of this generation. The reason is that the queen of the South came from the ends of the earth to hear the wise words of Solomon, and the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, but the

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people of that time did not believe even though they saw Jesus, who is greater than they.

"The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here" (Luke 11:31–32).

The queen of the South did not shrink from a long journey in order to hear the wisdom of Solomon. But the people of the time of Jesus did not believe even though One greater than Solomon was teaching the word of God and performing mighty works right before them.

The people of Nineveh heard the word of judgment Jonah preached and turned from their evil ways. On the other hand, the people of the time of Jesus closed their hearts and did not repent even though the Son of God, who is greater than Jonah, spoke to them directly.

The word that the queen of the South and the men of Nineveh will condemn this generation means that their zeal in seeking wisdom and their repentance in hearing the word and turning become the evidence that exposes the unbelief of the people who saw Jesus and yet did not believe.

Jesus is the One who has wisdom and authority greater than Solomon, and the Son of God and the Savior, who is greater than Jonah. The sign of Jonah points to the work of Jesus, who would die to save sinners and rise from the dead.

Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and completed our salvation by rising from the dead. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the evidence of the salvation

God accomplished to deliver sinners from judgment.

Therefore we must not put off faith while seeking more amazing signs, but must believe in Jesus as the Savior through the written word. Like the people of Nineveh, we must turn from unbelief and our own thoughts and receive the word of God.

[Question] 13. In Luke 11:34, how did Jesus explain the influence the eye has on the whole body?

Jesus compared the eye to the lamp of the body. He said that if the eye is good, the whole body is full of light, but if the eye is bad, the body also becomes dark.

"The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness" (Luke 11:34).

If the eye is sound, one can discern the things around one and the road one must take, but if the eye is bad, it is hard to discern the road rightly. Through this relationship Jesus taught the fact that how a person sees and receives the truth of God affects his whole life.

A good eye refers to a heart that sees the truth of God and the word of Jesus rightly and receives them by faith. A bad eye shows a heart that is held captive by its own thoughts, greed, and unbelief and does not receive the truth of God that has appeared before it.

In the time of Jesus as well, the people did not believe even after seeing the power of Jesus and sought other signs. It was not that the truth of God had not appeared; they did not lay down their own thoughts and so failed to recognize the Savior before them.

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The light of salvation that makes a person's heart full of light appears in the work Jesus accomplished and in His word. Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, was judged on the Cross, and saved sinners by rising from the dead. When one believes this gospel, one's heart and life become full of light.

To have a good eye is not a matter of thinking positively by one's own will, but of laying down one's own thoughts before the written word and believing the salvation Jesus accomplished just as it is.

Therefore the saints must examine what their eyes and hearts are directed toward. They must look to the word of God rather than to the greed and the worries of the world, and show the light they have received through the gospel in their words, their lives, and the preaching of the gospel.

[Question] 14. In Luke 11:37–38, what action of Jesus, whom he had invited to a meal, did the Pharisee think strange?

The Pharisee saw that Jesus did not wash His hands before eating and thought it strange. He had invited Jesus to a midday meal at his house, but when Jesus did not follow the custom of purification before the meal that the Pharisees regarded as important, he was surprised.

"And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner" (Luke 11:37–38).

The Pharisees regarded washing the hands in a prescribed manner before a meal as an important mark of religious purity.

That Pharisee closely examined the outward action of Jesus, but he did not look back to see whether there were greed and wickedness in his own heart.

"Then the Lord said to him, 'Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?" (Luke 11:39–40).

Jesus rebuked the hypocrisy that attaches importance to the form of making the outside clean while not turning from the greed and wickedness of the heart. God sees not only a person's outward appearance but even his heart and his motives.

The sin of the heart cannot be washed away by human effort and religious ceremony as one washes hands and vessels. Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, was judged on the Cross, and, by rising from the dead, completed the salvation that makes sinners clean.

The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and becomes a clean, righteous person before God. That cleanness is not obtained by boasting of outward conduct; it is the grace God gives to the person who believes.

Therefore the saints must not make their own habits of faith and their service the standard for judging others, but must first examine whether their own hearts are right before the word. Remembering the grace that saved them, they must serve God and their neighbors with an honest heart.

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[Question] 15. In Luke 11:51, who was Zechariah, and what happened to him?

The Zechariah of Luke 11:51 is mentioned, in the context explaining the history of the persecution of the prophets, as the man who was killed between the altar and the temple. He is not Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist.

"That the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation" (Luke 11:50–51).

The Gospel of Luke does not state the father or the detailed identity of this Zechariah, but on the basis of the place where he was killed and the nature of the event, he is generally understood in connection with Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest in 2 Chronicles chapter 24. Although the name is spelled differently in some translations, it is originally the same name.

After Jehoiada died, King Joash and the leaders of Judah forsook the house of the LORD and served idols. Moved by God, Zechariah rebuked their sin, but the people, following the command of King Joash, who had forgotten the kindness, stoned him to death in the court of the temple.

"Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people, and said to them, 'Thus says God: "Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He also has forsaken you."' So they conspired against him, and at the command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD" (2 Chronicles 24:20–21).

That Jesus spoke of the blood from Abel to the blood of

Zechariah points to the history in which the righteous and the prophets were continually persecuted. Jesus too was rejected by the religious leaders, but He received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, was judged on the Cross, and, by rising from the dead, saved sinners. Therefore we must not keep only the outward form of faith, but must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and humbly receive the word of God. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Prayer

< Luke 11:1-13 >

"Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.' So He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.' And He said to them, 'Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him"; and he will answer from within and say, "Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you"? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. 'So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father

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give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!'"

Let us pray that we may not enter into temptation

The Lord taught us to pray. He told us to pray, *"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come" (Luke 11:2)* and *"Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation" (Luke 11:3–4)*. To ask that we not enter into temptation is the word to pray that we may not fall into hardship.

These days the times are truly hard. We can see that the people who lead the nation are having a hard time. When the world economy is in difficulty, the price of raw materials rises sharply and prices rise with it, and even exports become difficult, the people who run companies cannot sleep at night for fear of going bankrupt, and they suffer. If it is this hard even to lead a church, would it not be hard to run a nation? So we must pray for this nation. Since He said, *"do not lead us into temptation"*, He is telling us to pray. He is telling us to pray that we may be kept from falling into temptation or hardship we cannot bear. We must pray for the leaders and the economy of the nation, that He would keep this nation and that its people may live well in peace. I hope that whenever you gather and pray, you will pray for this nation.

We are preaching the gospel to the world, and we must pray for that work as well. A while ago I saw on the news that a certain athlete, who had once been famous, went into business after retiring, went bankrupt, was pursued, and in the end killed some people and even took his own life. Who would have known that that man would end up that way? To pray, *"do not lead us*

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into temptation" (Luke 11:4), means exactly this. He told us to pray for ourselves, for our brothers and sisters, and for the preaching of the gospel, that we may not fall into such hardship and trouble.

In the last days it will become commonplace for people to harm people. The seed of man is originally an evil seed. Beasts, as a rule, do not bite their own kind to death, but people kill people and take what belongs to people. When the economy is running well, people speak of manners and morals, but when things become hard, the evil inside comes out instinctively and they try to harm and rob the other person. When we hear the stories of brutal murderers, once life became hard and they were no longer recognized by society, they did not hesitate to harm people who had no power at all. Human beings are originally such beings, and it is in order to live together that they set up manners, morals, and laws. That is why He tells us to pray that we may not enter into temptation, that we may not fall into hardship.

Prayer for the preaching of the gospel and for the church

We must pray. Evil people can also hinder the work of the church in preaching the gospel. So we must pray. "God, keep us. Stop the evil people. Let us not suffer hardship in preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Give us material things and give us health, protect us from the hands of evil people, and drive back our adversaries." We must pray like this. He is also telling you to pray and seek help so that you may not fall into circumstances in which you cannot live a life of faith, and that you may not become a person who opposes God. As He said,

"Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:31–32), when Satan the Devil tried to sift Peter as wheat and make him betray Jesus and leave, Jesus prayed for him. We too must pray for the preaching of the gospel, for the servants of God and the saints, and that He would stop those who want to harm this church that preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit; and we must pray for the nation and for one another.

The world is truly hard. As the years go by, the world will become more frightening. The closer the end comes, the more evil will rise up in the hearts of those who have nothing left but to be judged, and they will pounce on you and me, who are serving the gospel well, to torment us. We must pray also in order to stop such things—lest worthless people oppose and try to harm the servants of God who preach the gospel. We must pray for the servants of God in the church. When we gather, we must quietly seek help from God, pray, and work, and ask Him to keep us from danger. All we can do is pray. All we can do is pray for help. Then God keeps us and helps us. We must pray for the safety of the church as well. You cannot imagine how weak human beings are. Before danger strikes, we must look around and prepare, and we must pray for that as well.

He will give because of his persistence

Our Lord explained with a parable. A friend came in the middle of the night, knocked on the door, and asked to borrow just three loaves of bread, because a guest had come to his house and he had nothing to set before him. It is a bother to get up in

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the middle of sleep and lend bread, but if the friend does not go away and keeps knocking on the door and pleading earnestly, the man gets up and lends it, if only because he is bothered. What the Lord is saying here is that when someone makes a request after one has washed one's hands and feet and gone to bed, it is hard to grant it, but would one not get up and grant it because of that persistence with which he earnestly asks?

He is telling us to pray like this. If we earnestly ask the Lord for help, God hears us and gives us the Holy Spirit. He is saying, would He not give us the most precious thing? What is the best thing for us? It is to receive the remission of sins and become children of God. It is to receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished by receiving baptism from John and taking over all our sins, shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rising again. He is saying, would God not give us this best thing?

Since we have already received the remission of sins, if we pray for the preaching of the gospel, God will make the preaching of the gospel go well; if we pray that He would keep us, He will protect us; if we ask Him to stop our adversaries, He will stop them; and if we ask Him to raise up the economy of this nation, He will do so. He is telling us to pray. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He said, *"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (Matthew 6:9–13).* Since we can fall into evil things and can also go through hardship, He is telling us to pray that He would deliver us from evil.

Ask, seek, knock

"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Luke 11:9–10). Because the Lord is a righteous One, He said that if only we pray, He gives. But though He gives if we pray, we do not pray. Those who received the remission of sins long ago do not pray.

It can turn out that way because one regards prayer as something one has always done and done a great deal and knows well, and thinks that one is living a good life of faith. That is why the Lord said, *"Everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened"*. He is saying that even we who have received the remission of sins must not fail to ask, to seek, and to knock on the door. He is saying that it does not come for free. Because the Lord is a righteous One, He is fair.

We know that God is our Father and that He will help us, but even so we must pray. For it is only when we pray that God, who delights in helping us, helps us, and only then do we come to know that God helped us because we prayed. For if we obtain something and things go well without praying, we think things went well because we did well, and we become proud. That is why He tells us to pray.

We must pray for the business the church is doing, for the safety of the church, for the preaching of the gospel, for our coworkers overseas, and for all sorts of things. When we gather, we must pray, praise, learn the word of God, and believe and hold on to that word. When we work and when we preach the gospel, praying is a great work. Two thirds of the work is the power of prayer, and the rest we carry out in action. We must

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know how important prayer is. For prayer is the driving force by which we receive help. Because one receives help when one prays, the person who prays is a happy person and obtains great power. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

He will give because of his persistence

< Luke 11:5-8 >

"And He said to them, 'Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him"; and he will answer from within and say, "Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you"? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs."

When we ask persistently, the Lord answers

Today's word is the word that if we keep asking strongly without ceasing, laying a certain problem before the Lord, the Lord hears that prayer and answers it. We human beings, too, when we receive a request, often let it pass as long as we can, or just answer that we understand and leave it at that. But if the other person asks strongly and asks again, we cannot help settling it quickly, if only because we are bothered. Today's text is saying exactly that. When our saints pray before God, there are times when, though a certain thing absolutely must be accomplished, they try a few times and then give up when there is no answer. To such people as us the Lord said, "*though he*

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will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs" (Luke 11:8). He is saying that if we ask strongly, the Lord cannot help answering.

Even when we ask for the same thing, asking strongly and asking in a take-it-or-leave-it way are different. The Lord also handles the prayers of us saints in that way. As for the things that may or may not be granted, He simply says that He understands, so that no answer sometimes becomes the answer. But even for something that does not seem so necessary from the Lord's side, if we ask strongly like this from our side, the Lord grants that request. Therefore we have prayer topics. We pray for the souls of our families. This absolutely must receive an answer before God. Yet there are very many prayers that we simply give up on when they are not answered after we try a few times.

Ask persistently for the souls of your family

Our Lord is speaking of exactly that point. He is saying that if you speak strongly and ask again and ask yet again, He cannot help answering, if only because He is bothered. Therefore we must ask persistently for the salvation of the souls of our families. We must ask God strongly to save them. In the sight of God, in fact, all are the same. Whether it is a soul going to hell or the souls of the families of our brothers and sisters, the point of view from which God sees them is the same. To us they are our own flesh and blood, but before God all are the same. Before God there are only the righteous and sinners. That is why, if we ask strongly that He would have mercy on them and ask strongly that He would save them, God hears us. If there is something we truly desire in our hearts, let us ask the Lord strongly.

The way for our families to obtain salvation is clear. Jesus received baptism from John and took all the sins of the world upon Himself, shed His blood on the Cross and died, receiving the judgment of those sins, and rose from the dead. If one believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit, one receives the remission of sins and is saved. Therefore we must ask God persistently that our families may believe this gospel and be saved.

Hannah, who asked persistently for a child

When we look at 1 Samuel chapter 1, Hannah and Peninnah appear. Hannah asks God strongly to give her a child. We can see that when she asked so strongly, God heard that prayer and answered it. In the same way, if you have a desire in your heart, I hope you will ask God strongly. Then you will surely receive an answer.

Our Lord said this: *"And He said to them, 'Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him"; and he will answer from within and say, "Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you"? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs" (Luke 11:5–8).*

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When we ask strongly, the Lord surely answers

What is this text saying? Two people were friends, and another friend came to visit one of them. But he had nothing to set before him. So he went to his friend and asked, *"Friend, lend me three loaves"*. He is saying, if one asks like that, would the friend not get up and give? At that time the door was already shut, the night was late, and he was sleeping with his children, so it was hard even to wake the children. So he tells him to come tomorrow morning. Even an ordinary friend can give if the other person asks earnestly. Even between friends, one may not get up because it is a bother. But if that friend asks very strongly, knocking outside the door and pleading strongly, "Look, friend, you must give it to me. Not tomorrow morning—you must give it to me right now," then he cannot help getting up and giving him as many as he needs. And so the word is that he can receive as many as he needs and solve his problem.

The Lord explained it with one example. We too have many prayer topics when we pray before God. But how strongly are we asking? As the word of the text says, if we ask strongly, the Lord surely answers. He gives us as many as we need. Some prayers we offer carelessly. Just as, when asking a person, there are things to ask for weakly and things to ask for strongly, so among the same prayers we offer to the Lord there are things we must ask for strongly. Therefore we must believe this word and ask strongly. The salvation of our families is not something that may or may not be received. If it is something that absolutely must be accomplished, we must ask God strongly. Then God accomplishes it. This is a promise. God tells us, when we pray, to ask strongly for what is absolutely necessary and what absolutely must come to pass, so that it comes to pass. He is telling us to ask strongly.

Through this word we come to know that we must ask strongly for salvation, and that we must also ask strongly for the things needed to live by faith in our life of faith. We must ask Him to give us faith, union with the church, and the spiritual heart that we absolutely need right now. And we must ask very strongly that He would let us live by faith before God. This word is exactly such a word. In short, you and I must know what we absolutely need and ask God persistently for it. In the daytime we shared the word about faith, that is, about believing in God. What we must know this evening is to pray strongly before the Lord that He would save our families.

Ask persistently for what you truly need

And what else do you need? Must we not truly live by faith in union with the church? Must we not ask strongly for faith so that we may live by faith? We must make such persistent requests. The prayer topics we must ask for strongly are not many, but there are three or four of them. We must become people who ask strongly for the salvation of our parents, for the salvation of our families, that He would let us live by faith, that He would let us live spiritually, and that He would make us people who follow the will of the Lord. Must we not ask such prayers persistently? I know that we ought to do so.

A life of faith that asks persistently in faith

Truly, as we live our life of faith, there are many things that do not go as we would have them by our own strength. But even if they do not go by our own strength, if we ask strongly, God

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cannot help hearing our prayers because of that persistence. Just as it is with people, the Lord too has a personal character, and so He hears the prayer that asks strongly. I hope that you will live your life of faith like this. There may be prayers that you have prayed in faith but have not yet received an answer to. But try asking strongly. God answers. I hope that you will live a life of faith that asks persistently in faith. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Live by the faith that prays and takes hold; the Lord answers

< Luke 11:5-12 >

"And He said to them, 'Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him"; and he will answer from within and say, "Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you"? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. 'So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?"

The parable of borrowing three loaves from a friend

In the word we read today, the Lord speaks about prayer. A

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certain man had a friend, and he went to that friend at midnight and asked like this: *"Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him" (Luke 11:5–6).* A friend who was on a journey had come to him, and he had nothing to set before him, so late at night he knocked on the door of his friend's house and asked him to lend him just three loaves.

But the friend inside answers like this: *"Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you" (Luke 11:7).* He is saying, what do you mean by asking to borrow bread, knocking on the door at this late hour so that the children all wake up? But the Lord goes on to say, *"though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs" (Luke 11:8).*

He gives because of persistence

By the duty or the courtesy between friends alone, one might not get up and give at that late hour. But because the friend asks so earnestly, because of that persistence, one gets up and gives as much as is needed. If he keeps knocking on the door and pleading earnestly, saying, "I am sorry, but a guest has come to my house and I have nothing to set before him, so please lend me just three loaves," then because of that pleading, the word says, one lends him as much as he needs.

This is the word that if we pray before the Lord, the Lord answers that prayer and hears it. It is not the kind of prayer that asks once or twice and says, give or not, as You please. It is that if we earnestly ask, seek, and knock, saying that this is absolutely necessary for me, He surely gives. This is the promise

of the Lord.

Therefore the Lord said this: *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Luke 11:9–10).* He is saying that if we ask, He gives as we ask; if we seek, He lets us find; and if we knock, He opens.

I believe this word. There are times when we cannot pray much. But if we believe and earnestly ask before the Lord for the situation of the nation, for the hardships we go through personally, for the desires of our hearts, and for what is needed for the preaching of the gospel and for our business, the Lord surely answers. The Lord wants us to pray in faith, and to ask for what we need even when our faith is lacking. We must know this.

I hope that the Lord will help us in everything we need. I hope that He will bestow grace also on the needs of our families, bless the business we do and the preaching of the gospel to the world, keep us in health, and protect us from every danger. If we ask God for what we truly need, God gives it. I believe this word. As we live, how many things do we meet that cannot be solved by human strength? That is why we must believe in the Lord and pray.

Prayer is making requests to God

When we pray, we need to check once whether we are really praying according to the will of God. We must think about whether what we are doing now is for our own lusts, or for preaching the gospel widely and for us too to live well. If it is something our church needs and something all of us absolutely

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need—whether business, material things, health, or the blessing and protection of God—if we ask God for it, God surely gives it. Therefore we must ask earnestly even if it seems shameless. God wants us to pray earnestly. He said that though He would not give because of friendship, He gives because of that pleading.

Prayer is making a request. It is asking earnestly. "Please do this. Lord, please take charge of it. Soften the hearts of people and soften the hearts of evil people, open the way ahead, make this business go well, give this nation peace, and prevent war." Making requests like this is prayer. So at every meeting we must come before God with an earnest heart, bringing our requests, and ask. Each time we do, we will experience answers to prayer and taste the blessing of God.

He told us to trust in the LORD in all our ways and acknowledge Him. I believe that if we ask and make requests before God in faith, God gives. That is why we all pray together at every meeting time. Praying is never a vain thing. When we pray, we must make our requests concretely. We must plead, "This matter must be done in this way."

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"

Yet He did not tell us to ask only for our flesh; He said, *"seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"*. He is saying that we must think of the work of God first and ask, hoping that the work of God will be accomplished first. Therefore we must pray with that attitude of heart, with faith, and with pleading.

I know that you and I each have prayer topics we earnestly want to ask for. Every time we pray for them, we must come before God and ask, and above all we must make requests in

faith for the work the church is doing now. And we must gather our hearts into one. If we do not unite and each fights separately, nothing comes of it. That is striving desperately alone without using faith, and it never works.

We must understand the word *"first"* and the word *"seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33)*. The word *"kingdom"* is very important. A kingdom has order. When a kingdom is established, there is a king and there are officials under him, and they must gather their hearts into one according to the word of the king and accomplish the work without a hitch. Joshua told the people of Israel not to take the accursed things, but Achan went and took some of them, and because of that Israel lost the battle at Ai, and because of that Israel lost the battle. We are building the kingdom of God, and we are soldiers within that kingdom. Therefore we must seek His kingdom and His righteousness.

We must testify to people of the rightness of God and of His right love. We must ask for what is needed for that work. We must ask for material things, ask for health, and ask for blessings, and make requests for our brothers and sisters and the servants of the Lord, and for everything that is needed. This is exactly what prayer is. As we live, we must ask Him to keep us from danger, and ask for everything we need. This is the point in which the person who believes in Jesus differs from the people of the world. We have a Father, but the people of the world have no Father. Because we have a Father, He hears us when we make requests.

Even if one does not do it aloud, earnestly making requests in one's heart is also prayer. What matters is to whom one makes the request, so if one is making that request to the Lord, that too is prayer.

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"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"

As we live, we must always have prayer topics. We must become people who pray for this and that, people who know how to pray. We must become people who know how to ask and receive, people who challenge in faith and take hold in faith. Through such things the church must learn the faith of the people of faith who went before us. Even when nothing is visible to the eye and we seem to have nothing, we must see and learn how they challenged in faith and accomplished things.

I ask before the Lord because everything is needed for the church, for all of us, and for the preaching of the gospel. Then does the Lord answer or not? He answers. It actually comes to pass. He said, *"faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1)*. Even if it is not visible to the eyes of the flesh, if we make a request before God for what we hope for in our hearts and that request is proper, God surely answers.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for. It means that what we hope for in our hearts is accomplished actually, materially, and visibly. It is also the evidence of things not seen. It means that even if it is not visible to the eye now, if we make a request before God and believe, the evidence surely appears and visible fruit is borne. This is exactly what faith is. That is why we pray, why we live a life of faith, and why we preach this gospel to the whole world.

If I really tried, there would be far too many stories to share. When I was in a certain province, though I wanted to preach the gospel, there was no proper dwelling where I could bring people and preach the word. Passing by, I saw a decent house and prayed like this: "God, give that house to me. I really need it." I

asked like that every time I passed by, and before long He actually gave me that house. It was not that I bought that house, but by paying a certain amount I gained the right to use it for a year or two. That is exactly what the content of prayer is and what the answer to prayer is.

In everything, seek the righteousness of God first, seek God first, and ask for what is needed to accomplish the will of God. Then God supplies it. This was the promise of God. Therefore, if we gather our hearts into one and pray for what we really need and what is proper according to the will of God, God answers. We must believe this and we must also experience it.

The Father gives what His children ask for

If a child asks his parents for something whole and right, something absolutely necessary, would they not answer? They surely answer. If even parents in the flesh answer, would the Lord, our Father in heaven, not answer? He surely answers. He said, *"If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion" (Luke 11:11–12).* He never does so. I hope you will know this fact and believe it.

As it says, *"faith is the substance of things hoped for"*, if what I plan and hope for is not proper in the sight of God, it will not be accomplished, and if it is proper, God will bless us. Since it is the work the church of God does in order to preach the gospel, we must make requests with our hearts. The Lord, who knows the center of our hearts, answers, and when we gather, we must ask, seek, and knock more concretely with our voices. When we make requests in faith, God hears and answers.

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The person who has received the remission of sins is qualified to pray

The person who has received the remission of sins is qualified to pray. But the person who has not received the remission of sins is not qualified to pray. What a person who has not received the remission of sins asks of God is nothing more than a religious ceremony. It is only a ceremony performed without any connection to God. But for those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, it is not a ceremony but reality. They actually ask.

Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, shed His blood on the Cross and died, receiving the judgment of those sins, and rose from the dead on the third day. If one believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit, one receives the remission of all sins and is saved. The person who has received the remission of sins in this way has become a child of God, and so he is qualified to pray. Even though he cannot see Him with his eyes, he knows and believes that God exists and actually asks, and God actually answers. This is exactly what fellowship with Him is.

Even if one has faith as small as a mustard seed, faith as tiny as a speck, the person who has received the remission of sins is qualified to pray, and when he prays, He surely answers. The person who has not yet received the remission of sins must first pray like this: “God, save me from sin. Let me believe this word the Lord has spoken.” And when he believes the word of the Lord in his heart, is saved, and becomes a child of God, then he is qualified to pray. Then, when there is something he needs, he must know how to ask the Lord for it. When we make requests, God hears. Make your requests more earnestly. It depends on how earnest it is for us and how much we need it.

Pray, asking for what you need

I hope that you will know this fact well and have a heart that asks God. Let us pray once more and finish. As you live, I hope that you will pray and ask for the things you need, and ask for all the things you need personally as well. At this time, let us have a time to pray before God that He would give His blessing on all the work the church is doing, and also to ask for what we need personally. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Ask, and it will be given to you

< Luke 11:5-13 >

"And He said to them, 'Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him"; and he will answer from within and say, "Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you"? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. 'So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!'"

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The Lord, who taught us to pray

I went to a revival meeting this time, and quite a number of souls came. I hope that many souls, both in this country and overseas, will be saved.

After the Lord taught His disciples the Lord's Prayer, He spoke of why we must pray and of the fact that He wants to give to the one who prays. The Lord spoke with a parable. He said, *"Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him"; and he will answer from within and say, "Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you"? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs" (Luke 11:5–8).*

The friend did not want to give, out of bother, merely because he was a friend, but because the man asked earnestly, he gives. A friend who was on a journey came to a certain man. But since he had nothing to set before him, he went to another friend at midnight and asked him to lend him just three loaves. He pleaded, saying that he was sorry, but please lend him some.

But the man inside is bothered. He says that he has already gone to bed with his children, so do not knock on the door; if he wants to borrow something, come tomorrow; what is the matter at this hour of the night? But still the man outside asks so earnestly. Look, friend, he says, lend me just three loaves. From inside he is told to come tomorrow morning. Still he says he needs them right now, so give them. In the end the man inside gets up and gives, not because he is truly his friend, but if only because he is bothered.

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Ask, seek, knock

That the Lord spoke this parable means the following. He said, *"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Luke 11:9–10).*

Even the friend who was bothered finally got up and gave in the face of earnest, persistent pleading. How much more would the Lord, who loves us, give to the one who earnestly asks, seeks, and knocks? Everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it is opened. He Himself said that if we earnestly seek, the Lord gives.

The Father, who gives good things to His children

The Lord went on to say, *"If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (Luke 11:11–13).*

Even a father in the world does not give a serpent when his child asks for a fish, and does not give a scorpion when he asks for an egg. No matter how evil a person is, he knows how to give good things to his child. How much more will our Father in heaven give good things to those who ask?

The best thing God gives is the Holy Spirit

The most important thing for us is the Holy Spirit. What God most wants to give us is also the Holy Spirit. Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, shed His blood on the Cross and died, receiving the judgment of those sins, and rose again from the dead. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of sins and is saved. To the person who believes this gospel, God gives the right to become a child of God, gives the remission of sins, and gives the Holy Spirit.

In this way the Lord wanted to teach us to pray. He said, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you; for everyone who asks receives. He said that if we seek earnestly, the Lord gives.

Let us seek the help of the Lord in everything

I feel that we must do domestic mission work as well. If we only make up our minds and simply hand out newspapers or leaflets as we did before, the souls in this country will be saved. But in doing all this work, we need the help of the Lord.

The Lord said, *"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Luke 11:9–10).* He is saying that if one asks earnestly, even if it seems unreasonable, he is bound to give. Today we too must actually receive the help of the Lord. The work of the gospel we do and our life of faith cannot go on without the help of the Lord. Must the Lord not help us? I believe that even when we work, if we ask before the

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Lord and the Lord helps us, everything goes well and we receive the blessing of God.

We have the Lord. We have God the Father, and we have the Holy Spirit. The Lord is always with us, and He said that if we knock, He opens. Therefore we must seek the help of the Lord in the work we do. Even for the things we know well, we must ask before the Lord. We must always earnestly ask before God for overseas missions and for all the work of the gospel we do. Just as we received the Holy Spirit after receiving the remission of sins, we must ask Him to bless us in both spirit and body, for the work of the gospel, for health, and for overseas missions. We must pray. When we pray, He grants it, so we must not just work among ourselves without praying. We must pray. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The one who desires from the Lord receives the best thing

< Luke 11:5-13 >

"And He said to them, 'Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him"; and he will answer from within and say, "Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you"? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. 'So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!'"

The word we read today is a word we know well. From verse

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5 to verse 8, the Lord gave a parable and told us what He wanted to say, likening it to something that commonly happens in the world.

Long ago a certain man had a friend. A guest who was on a journey came to that man's house, but he had nothing at all to set before him. So he went to his friend at midnight and asked him to lend him something to eat. *"Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him" (Luke 11:5–6).* He is saying, I will pay you back later, so lend me what you have for now.

But the friend who was asked for help was already in a state where, it being late at night, he had put all the children to sleep, locked the door, and lain down. So at first he answers like this: *"Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you" (Luke 11:7).*

In verse 8 the Lord explains the core of this parable like this: *"I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs"* Though he will not rise and give because he is his friend, because the man knocks on the door all night and does not withdraw and pleads earnestly, because of that persistence he rises and gives as much as is needed. He gives not because he is a friend, but because of that tenacious pleading, if only because he is bothered.

Ask, seek, knock

From verse 9 to verse 13 the Lord says what He wanted to say. *"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who*

knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

It was in order to speak the word of the last verse, verse 13, that the Lord first gave, as an example, something that can happen in the world. There will be no one among us who reads this word and does not understand it. Everyone will have heard at least that God gives when we pray. But does this word really mean that? What the Lord made the core here is the word "*If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him"*

The Lord grants everything His people ask. If they say they have nothing to eat, He gives them something to eat; if they say they have no job, He gives them a job; if they say they have no house, He gives them a house; and if they say they have lost their health, He gives them health too. But among all these, God wants to give us the best thing. If a child asks his parents for something, even the parents give good things; how much more, then, will the good heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit?

The best thing God gives is the Holy Spirit, that is, the remission of sins

What, then, is the best thing here? The best thing for a person is to receive the Holy Spirit. That is, it is to receive the remission of all sins. That He gives the Holy Spirit is the word that He remits our sins.

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God gives us human beings the four seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, gives us air, gives us sunlight, and gives us all things. But what God wants to give to people as the best thing is the Holy Spirit. All other things He gives just for the asking, but for this best thing He told us to plead until it is bothersome and to pray earnestly. That best thing is exactly the remission of sins, by which He removes our sins.

Ask most persistently for the remission of sins

There are many things a person needs. But while He gives all other things if we ask, there is one thing for which we must pray without ceasing. That is to ask Him to remit our sins. This prayer—wash away my sins, make me a person without sin—must be offered without ceasing. When a person gets older, the problems of food, clothing, and shelter are usually solved, but what one must ask God for most persistently until the last is this remission of sins.

For if we pray to be given the remission of sins, God gives it. God makes us know and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and has us receive the remission of sins. Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, shed His blood on the Cross and died, receiving the judgment of those sins, and rose again from the dead. If one believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit, one receives the remission of sins and is saved. That He gives the Holy Spirit as a gift in the end means that He gives the remission of sins, and the person who has received the remission of sins receives the Holy Spirit in his heart and becomes a child of God.

When we are in the church, we commonly hear the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is so easy. Nevertheless,

the person who does not ask God to receive the remission of his own sins cannot receive the gift that is given freely. If we do not ask from our side, we cannot receive. For if one does not receive the remission of sins, that life is a failure. Even if one has much money, becomes rich, and achieves everything, if one dies without having received the remission of sins before dying, that is a failed life.

Because we live in an age in which this gospel overflows like a flood, we do not know well how precious it is. Among the blessings we receive from God, the greatest is the remission of sins. The person who receives the remission of sins is a blessed person, but the end of the person who does not receive the remission of sins is, as we well know, to go into the fire and suffer forever.

The Holy Spirit is not received by pestering

Yet people think that one receives the Holy Spirit by praying, and they borrow this word to say so. *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Matthew 7:7–8).* On the basis of this word, they conclude that if one prays earnestly to be given the Holy Spirit, one receives the Holy Spirit.

But the Holy Spirit is not received by praying earnestly. There is a separate way to receive the Holy Spirit. He comes as a gift when we hear and believe the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which God removed our sins, and receive the washing of sin. Yet many Christians today do not know this principle.

This is a story about a certain evangelist. Wanting to receive

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the gift of tongues himself, he went up a mountain and prayed for hours at a time and fasted for many days, striving hard, but no matter how much he prayed, tongues did not burst forth. Other people received tongues and made strange sounds, but he, an evangelist, could not speak in tongues, so he thought he had to say that he had received tongues, yet he had not actually received them, and in the end he devised a trick. Thinking that Koreans would not understand Greek, he recited the Lord's Prayer in Greek, which he knew well, rattling it off as if he had received tongues. Since the people beside him could not understand Greek, they acknowledged that he had received tongues.

Then one day an elderly deaconess called him and told him that she had the gift of interpreting tongues, so he should speak in tongues. He felt that he was in trouble, but he could not bring himself to tell the truth, so he again recited the Lord's Prayer in Greek. After listening for a while, that deaconess interpreted it as God having said, "Just beware of women," so that interpretation too was false. That evangelist realized that all the fuss about speaking in tongues in the church was false, and he resolved that he would never again strive to speak in tongues, and that even if he spoke only a single word, he would pray clearly in normal speech.

People today think that if they pester God with this text, they receive the Holy Spirit. That evangelist too fasted for many days and prayed to be given the Holy Spirit, but it did not work, and in the end he devised a trick. The Holy Spirit is not one who comes like an object just because we ask for Him. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and is God. He comes only upon the person who has received the remission of sins.

If one does not receive the Holy Spirit, a demon comes upon him

What happens if we do not receive the Holy Spirit? When we believe in our hearts that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself once and for all by receiving baptism from John, was crucified and died, and rose from the dead and saved us, we receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit. Everyone who believes receives Him. But if one does not receive the Holy Spirit, one receives a demon. A person is a vessel, and he is bound to receive one of the two: either the Spirit of God or an evil spirit.

Since we have read up to verse 13, let us look from verse 14. *"And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled. But some of them said, 'He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.'" (Luke 11:14–15).* He was a man who normally spoke well, but when a mute demon entered his body, he became unable to speak. But when Jesus cast out the mute demon, that man spoke. Then the people around said of Jesus that He cast out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. Beelzebub means king of the flies, so they slandered Jesus, saying that He cast out demons by borrowing the power of the king of the flies.

So Jesus says that even demons try to establish their own kingdom, and if they fight one another like that, how can that kingdom stand? And He says that if you too cast out demons by My name, the kingdom of God has come upon you, and He goes on to say this: *"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. He who is not*

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with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters. 'When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, "I will return to my house from which I came." And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.'" (Luke 11:21–26).

Demons enter an unclean heart

When we are guarding ourselves well, demons cannot enter a person. When do demons come upon a person? It is when a person has many unclean thoughts and evil thoughts and does many evil deeds. Demons are like dung flies; wherever there is filth, they are sure to go. Even if a person does not live a religious life at all, if his heart is clean, a demon cannot enter that heart; but if his heart becomes unclean and he does unclean deeds, a demon enters that person.

People who live a religious life wash away the uncleanness of their hearts from time to time by offering prayers of repentance or doing good deeds. But since they become unclean again, that state is not maintained. If one has not received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit does not rule that person's heart, in the end a demon enters that heart. When one receives the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit comes upon the heart, so that even when we are lacking, the Holy Spirit leads us and God guards our hearts. But otherwise a demon enters that heart and makes the person plan all kinds of evil things and carry them out in action. Then one demon comes in at first, and later even a legion of demons comes in, until at last the person can no longer

move his body or his mind as he wills.

Therefore the remission of sins is not something one may or may not receive; it is something one must receive. If one does not receive the remission of sins, the Devil becomes that person's master and rules his thoughts and rules his body. He comes to hate even people he should not hate, and even tries to kill them, so when a demon comes upon a person, it is truly frightening. Some people suffer their whole lives because of crime and die, and some people are seized by demons and take their own lives or end up in a psychiatric ward. If one does not receive the remission of sins, one ruins one's life in this world too, and in the world to come one suffers in the fire that is never quenched.

Because this remission of sins is so precious, so precious that it cannot be converted into money, it is given freely. *"As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).* The Lord loved us and came to this earth clothed in human flesh in order to remove our sins. The person who accepts that Jesus took our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, was crucified and received the judgment of those sins, and rose again from the dead and became the true Savior becomes a child of God, and the Holy Spirit comes upon his heart. But as for the person who does not accept it, the Devil takes control of that person.

This is a story about a famous entertainer. He ended up becoming a shaman. His body hurt terribly and he could sleep only about ten minutes a day, and even during those ten minutes of sleep, he said, a tiger appeared in his dreams and licked his neck and a mountain spirit struck him with a staff. Thinking that he must have been afflicted by a spirit, he went to a place where shamanic initiation rites are performed, put on a shaman's

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clothes, and tried jumping, and after a little while an unknown power came upon him and he jumped and leaped by himself without any effort. When the people asked who he was, he tried to say his own name, but out of his mouth came the words, "I am the Bodhisattva Gwanseeum." Then the people beside him were startled and bowed down, and he says that he was thus initiated and has been serving the spirit ever since. If a person does not receive the remission of sins, the one who rules that person in the end is the Devil.

Will you become a person of the Devil, or a person of God?

Either a small devil enters that person's body and rules him, or a big devil enters and rules him, or the Holy Spirit, who is holy, comes into our hearts and rules us—it is one of these three. This is not a matter that one may or may not believe; it is something one must believe. We must believe that Jesus took our sins upon Himself and washed them away by receiving baptism from John, that He was crucified and died and rose from the dead—that is, that God the Father actually saved us through His Son. When we do, we become people of God.

Whether one becomes a person of the Devil or a person of God depends on the decision of you and me. Only when one becomes a person of God does one receive every blessing. If one becomes a person of the Devil, one is used and then goes to hell, and a curse comes upon him. What has one gained by that? What has been added to one's livelihood? There is nothing so pitiful as regretting too late, saying, "I should have believed." Whatever occupation one has in this world, what every person absolutely must believe is the fact that Jesus Christ, the only Son

of God the Father, has saved you and me through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

This is for your benefit, not for my benefit. I sincerely hope that you will hear the word like this and believe it just as it is. Will you believe only after seeing a terrible sight and being cursed, and then regretting it? When one is seized by a demon, one cannot believe even if one wants to, so one must believe while one is in one's right mind. Once a demon enters a person's heart and begins to rule, he cannot control his own heart, his thoughts, or his actions as he wills.

The one who desires receives the best thing

It is not settled just by someone casting out the demon. If the person himself does not desire it, he does not receive the remission of sins, and even if the demon is cast out, more demons go back in. The person himself must desire it and plead earnestly. Did the Lord not speak in a parable? When a guest came and the man had nothing to set before him, he went to his friend's house and asked him to lend him something; and the friend gives, not because he is a friend, but because the man knocks on the door all night and pleads earnestly, if only because he is bothered. If we truly desire to receive the remission of sins, the Lord teaches us the way to receive the remission of sins. That is exactly believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receiving the remission of sins.

Receive the remission of sins. Only when one desires to receive the remission of sins does one receive the remission of sins. If one sits still and says, "I will not believe," then no matter how much it is spoon-fed to him, if he spits it out, that is the end. A person's happiness and curse depend on himself, and that is

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not fate. No one was born in order to be cursed. We are all people who were born on this earth in order to receive the love of God, to receive the remission of sins and become children of God, and to live enjoying eternal blessedness in the kingdom of heaven.

Therefore we must desire it. If the person himself does not desire it, it is of no use no matter how much an evangelist preaches to him or brings him books. Look at the people who have come to give their testimonies to us. Do not people who truly desired to receive the remission of sins, even after attending church for decades, read a single book and come having received the remission of sins? But for some people it does not work even if they read a book a hundred times, because they do not desire the remission of sins and desire only to be made rich and to be made healthy in body. The best thing one must truly desire is to receive the remission of sins, receive the love of God, and live forever in blessing—that is, to become a child of God.

Do you desire it? Believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Think about what the Lord has done for you in it, meditate on it, treasure it in your heart, accept it, and hold on to it. Then the Lord becomes your Savior.

When the gospel is preached like this, people think it is too easy and regard it as if it had no value. But if one does not accept it, a curse follows and demons chase after one. Do you not commit sin every day? Then why do you not seek to receive the washing of those sins? Only when you believe in Jesus do you receive the washing. Jesus is the Savior; He took over all your sins when He received baptism from John, and by being nailed to the Cross and receiving the judgment for those sins, He saved us. Desire to receive the washing of sin. Then you will receive the washing of sin. He said, *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9).*

There are times when we do not receive the best thing God wants to give because we do not desire it. Everyone who desires receives the best thing from God. Say this in your hearts: "Lord, I desire to receive the remission of sins. I desire to become a child of God. I desire to become a person without sin. I desire to receive and enjoy all the blessings God gives on this earth too, and to receive and enjoy even more blessings forever in the eternal kingdom of God as well." Only the one who desires can have the blessing of God. You desire everything that is on earth, so why do you not desire this best thing? Desire it. If you desire it, what you desire will become yours.

This word that I preach must not sound to you merely as "the white is paper and the black is letters." No matter what, unless one receives the remission of sins, one does not know what this word is talking about.

I hope that you will truly desire the remission of sins and the best blessings that God gives. God also wants to give them to you. First you must have something you desire. I hope that God will soften the hearts of you and me and make us desire, have us ask before God and receive, and so let us live well in blessing on this earth as well. I hope that God will give you such blessings. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

What we must ask for in prayer

< Luke 11:5-13 >

"And He said to them, 'Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him"; and he will answer from within and say, "Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you"? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. 'So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!'"

God, who gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask

I would like to share the word on the basis of the word we

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read today. The Lord spoke the word that He gives the Holy Spirit to the one who prays to God. When we look at the word, from verse 5 to verse 7 He explains with an example why we must pray. It is the natural word that if a certain man, for some reason, has a guest come to his house and has nothing to set before him, and tells his friend to lend him three loaves, would not anyone get up and give? In verse 8 He said, *"I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs"* Though he would not get up and give because he is his friend, since the man asks strongly and keeps coming and asking him to lend it, he cannot help getting up and giving, if only because he is bothered. And then the Lord said to us, *"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Luke 11:9–10).*

And this is the word from verse 11 on. *"If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:11–13).* This word is the core. He is saying, if he is a father, would he give a serpent when his child asks for a fish, or a scorpion when he asks for an egg? A scorpion is a creature that lives in the desert and stings with a poisonous sting, and if one is stung, one can even die. This word—if you, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask—is the core. Though the Bible seems to be telling a general story, God speaks with the purpose of

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teaching us something. He answers prayer as well, but the core is that He gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask. Then does one receive the Holy Spirit if one prays? We have a question about that part. Since the word is written like this, this word is not a lie; then we must look up the word about how one receives the Holy Spirit and share it.

"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name"

Let us read Luke 11:1 and 2. *"Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.' So He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven."* The disciples of Jesus asked Him to teach them as John also taught his disciples to pray. Then Jesus told them, when they pray, to pray that the name of the Father would be hallowed. He is telling us to pray that when people see us living our life of faith calling on the name of God the Father, they would come to know, 'Truly the name of God is holy. He is a truly holy One.' This is the core content of the Lord's Prayer.

If we keep praying that the name of God the Father would be hallowed, what is the meaning of the content of that prayer? It is the word to pray with the purpose that, as our hearts spiritually receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit and we become the people of God, the people of the world would see us and give glory to God the Father, saying, 'Truly God is a holy One. He is the One who removed our sins, and the One who gave the Holy Spirit to our hearts and made us His children. Seeing the people of God, they are worthy of being the children of God.'

It is not telling us to recite the Lord's Prayer. The one who prays to God prays for bread, prays for illness, and prays for what he needs, and God grants it all; but the most central and best thing is that He gives the remission of sins to our hearts and lets us receive the Holy Spirit. It is the word to pray that He would give us the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit as a gift in our hearts, so that the people of this world would come to know what kind of One God is and what blessing those who have become the children of God have received.

The very first thing to pray for is that He would remove the sin of our hearts. As for how, it is not a prayer of repentance or a prayer that lists our sins every day; we must pray that we would know how God has removed our sins and believe it, and so receive the remission of sins. Long ago I published a book on the Lord's Prayer. People recite the Lord's Prayer. The person who does not know how to pray prays with the Lord's Prayer. But one must know the content of the prayer and pray for that; He is not telling us to pray as if reciting an incantation. In a certain religion they write out an incantation in Chinese characters on a sheet of paper, and have people put it in front of them and keep reciting it and bowing. Long ago my parents too were bound to such a religion and did that. It is not to be done as one recites an incantation in a religion; He is telling us to know this content and pray. He is saying, "If you ask for what you need while you live on this earth, I will grant it, but is not the best thing for you that the sin of your hearts be removed? Is it not to become My children and My people? Only when you become My people are you qualified to pray and able to enter and live in the kingdom of God; if, with sin in your hearts, you pray only for things that will disappear day by day, is it not useless? What your hearts need most is the remission of sins."

And in order to become the people of God, the Holy Spirit

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must be in our hearts. Therefore He tells us to pray that we would receive the remission of sins so that the Holy Spirit would come. If we pray, seek, ask, and knock for that, God delivers this gospel to us through those who believe the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and makes us know the truth that Jesus came to this earth, received our sins passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, and, by being crucified, dying, and rising again, removed all our sins. When we know the truth, we receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, and so we come to be able to call God Father. That is what He is saying.

"Your kingdom come"

The second is *"Your kingdom come" (Luke 11:2)*. It means that we must pray that the kingdom of God would come to our hearts. What is the kingdom of God? It is the kingdom of God being formed in the hearts of those who have received the remission of sins. When the Spirit of the Lord dwells in our hearts and our souls receive the remission of sins and become the people of God, we become the people of the kingdom of God. When we become the people of God, we become people who can enter the kingdom of God and live there. That is, He is telling us to pray that we may become people who can dwell in the church of God on this earth. When we believe the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins, the church of God is formed. Believers gather, there are a leader and the word there, they praise and worship God and know the will of God the Father, and because they have become the people of the kingdom of God, they live within it praying and living for the expansion of the kingdom of God. And as we

spread the gospel throughout the whole world in this way, when the time comes, the Lord comes and takes us to live in the kingdom of God that is in heaven.

We must also pray every day for our daily bread. Do we not need something to eat? We must pray for that as well, but what is daily bread for those who have received the remission of sins? Hearing the word of God also becomes daily bread, but doing the work of God every day is the daily bread God gives us. When we look at John chapter 4, the Lord delivered the word to the Samaritan woman, and when the disciples told Him to eat since He must be hungry, the Lord said that He had food to eat of which they did not know, and that His food was to do the will of Him who sent Him.

Doing the work that God the Father wants becomes the bread of life in our hearts. Also, we must forgive those who have sinned against us. Since the Lord has removed all our eternal sins once and for all, it is right that we too forgive one another the wrongs done between people. Since the Lord has saved us from sin, we must live in harmony with one another on that foundation. And since we too are human and can go through any hardship on this earth, we must live praying that He would protect and keep us so that we do not fall into great temptation and flounder and die. Finally, we must live preaching the gospel to the whole world until we meet the Lord. He is telling us that we must live for that and pray for that.

"Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins"

Then let us look up the word about receiving the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 and 39 is the word to receive the remission of sins by

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believing that Jesus received our sins passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again. *"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.'"* How must we believe in Jesus? We must believe that Jesus received our sins passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, that He carried those sins to the Cross and received in our place the punishment for our sins and went to His death, and that He rose from the dead and became our Savior. The person who believes that is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. He is baptized as the evidence of this faith, that the Lord received all my sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John in the Jordan River, died on the Cross, and rose again and became my Savior.

After Jesus rose from the dead and before He ascended to heaven, He said, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen" (Matthew 28:19–20).* Why did He tell them to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit? Because the Triune God planned our salvation and, when the time came, sent the Son to this earth, had Him receive our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, had Him nailed to the Cross, and raised Him from the dead, and so saved us.

Because Jesus received our sins passed on to Him, His death and resurrection, and even the rapture we will meet in the future, are all related, and that is why His baptism, the starting point, is

so important. It is not that the baptism we receive saves us; we are baptized because we believe. He told them to make disciples of all the nations, but how does one make disciples? He is telling us to preach to all the nations the fact that, by believing the baptism Jesus received from John, I have received the washing of my sins, and by believing that I died and rose again together with Jesus Christ, I have been saved.

When we preach the gospel, there must be a core. The Son of God came to this earth and, at the age of thirty, received baptism from John and received my sins and the sins of all mankind passed on to Him—I believe that. And He was crucified and rose from the dead, and so received all my punishment and judgment and raised me again from death—I believe that. Therefore you too must believe that Jesus received all your sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John—so we testify to the word of Matthew chapter 3. The Cross is within the baptism; the Cross alone without the baptism is a religion of the world. That is a religion made by man. This is extremely important.

Then does one receive the remission of sins by being baptized? No. The word *"be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38)* means to receive the remission of sins by believing that Jesus came to this earth and received your sins passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John, by believing that He died on the Cross, and by believing His resurrection. It is translated like this in our language, but even when we look at the original language, it is precisely this meaning.

People are baptized as a sign that they believe in Jesus, but if one is baptized without knowing the meaning of baptism, it is of no use at all. The question is whether you believe that Jesus received our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and whether you believe that He carried

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those sins and was nailed to the Cross and died, received all the judgment for your sins, and rose again and became your Savior. If Jesus had not received baptism from John, there would have been no need for Him to die on the Cross, nor any need for Him to die and rise again. If one does not know that meaning and only performs the ceremony of baptism, it is of no use. The baptism that the religious people of the world receive without knowing its meaning is of no use at all.

At the same time as the remission of sins, He seals us with the Holy Spirit

To repent is to turn from the wrong way one has been going. Because Jesus received our sins passed on to His own body once and for all and forever through the baptism He received from John, and was crucified and received all the judgment and punishment for our sins once and for all, and rose again and became our Savior, when we obtain the remission of sins by the faith that believes that baptism and that death on the Cross, we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. This is not a word spoken only to those people of long ago; it is the same for all who believe in Jesus today as well. That is why those who believe in Jesus, with the gospel of the water and the Spirit as their foundation, are baptized as a confession that they believe this content, become brothers and sisters, become workers of God, live for the Lord, do the work of expanding the kingdom of the Lord, give glory to God, and must go before the Lord.

The Lord said in Luke 11:13, would He not give the Holy Spirit to those who ask, and in verse 2 He said, *"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name"*. In order for the name of God the Father, in whom we believe, to be hallowed by the people of

the world, we must first receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit and live according to the will of God, so that when the people of the world see us, they come to know, 'Truly, those are the people who believe in God.' He is saying that we must live a life that gives glory to God by living as befits the people of God, and that we must have such faith. People who live a religious life do not know how far they are from the word of Jesus. Saying, did He not say that He gives the Holy Spirit too to the one who prays, they go off to pray on mountains, fast and pray, and offer prayers of repentance. They do it thinking that they will receive the Holy Spirit that way. But one must know the content and know the truth. It says, *"you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).*

Our believing in Jesus does not come about by memorizing the written word; we must know what this word is talking about. What He said from verse 5 to verse 13 is in order to fulfill the word of verse 2 that precedes it. "Ask Me for this and ask Me for that, and I will give you all of it. But is not what you really need most the remission of the sins of your hearts? Is it not receiving the Holy Spirit in your hearts? Is it not becoming My people? Is it not living as befits My people and entering the eternal kingdom of heaven?" He is telling us to pray for that. So when we believe in Jesus, we must know that first of all, and we must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit first of all. And we receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit in our hearts freely. After that we live according to the will of God. The remission of sins and receiving the Holy Spirit happen at the same time.

When we know the fact that the Lord came to this earth and received our sins passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John, went to the Cross and received the judgment and punishment for sin, and died and rose again and became our

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Savior, and say, ‘Jesus has become my Savior! I believe,’ then at the same moment as the sin in our hearts disappears, the Holy Spirit comes and seals us. He says, “You are My people.” When the Holy Spirit is in our hearts, Satan the Devil cannot easily knock us down and plunder us. For God is in our hearts. That we have become the people of God means that the Spirit of God is with us. One does not become one of the people of God by saying that one believes in Jesus or by attending church; at the moment one believes according to the truth, the remission of sins is accomplished, and at the same time the Holy Spirit comes upon our hearts and says to us, “You are My people.”

Only when that happens is the kingdom of God at last established in our hearts, and outwardly the church of God is built up, and that place becomes the very kingdom of God. This church must be expanded. So we must preach the gospel to the whole world, and people must come into the church and hear the word and grow, unite in the will in which God delights and work, receive blessing from God on this earth as well, and receive from the people of the world such praise as, ‘Those people are truly not evil people but the holy people of God’—such a church of God becomes the kingdom of God. He is telling us to pray for that. And if we have received the remission of sins, we must be forbearing. Just as the Lord received our sins passed on to Him and was judged and saved us, so those people too are saved if they believe. God has removed all their sins as well; it is only that they do not know, so we can teach them and wait. We can forgive them in our hearts. Deacon Stephen too, as he was martyred, prayed that He would forgive them, since they did not know what they were doing. This is what the true people of God do.

The difference between religion and faith

We must pray in order to receive the remission of sins as well, but it is not that one receives the remission of sins by praying, nor that one receives the Holy Spirit by praying. We receive the remission of sins by believing that work by which the Lord came to this earth and saved us, and when we receive the remission of sins, we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. We must know that our sins are remitted and that we receive the Holy Spirit by the faith that believes the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection, and we must live together with the church of God. This word says that clearly. The word of the Bible is the truth. It means that it is fact. It is not a lie.

The person who has been born again and the person who has not been born again are different. As soon as I met the Lord through the word, when I read the word of the Bible, I knew what the word meant. I do not remember all the things like the history of the world, and I am not ashamed of that. Those things can be looked up. I also watch the sermons of other people. When I see someone preaching on a broadcast, I think, that person is stifled; that person is a religious person; he is talking about something he himself does not know. He tells people to receive the Holy Spirit, and says, let us pray for the Holy Spirit in the evening. Does the Holy Spirit come if one offers prayers of repentance asking for the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit comes only when one receives the remission of sins in one's heart. So it is stifling. Religion and faith are completely different. A person of faith looks up to what God has done. Seeing what God has done as it is recorded in the Bible, and seeing that God did it this way, that He removed my sins this way, that He removed the sin of the world this way, and looking up to God and

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believing—that is the life of faith. The religious life is taking doctrines that one has made oneself, or that another person has made, and believing them just as they are. If one does not believe that way, one's whole body aches and one falls ill—the religious life is like a person bound to drugs who keeps looking for drugs.

Treasure the traces of your faith

So how thankful we should be! Though it is a word heard in a short time, how clearly He is speaking! There are many people who throw away the notes they took while listening to sermons at church, and there are also many who, when moving somewhere else, throw away and leave behind the Bible they used in their life of faith. I think that it is exactly the same as that person throwing away and leaving behind all his best memories and recollections, faith and love. The sermon notes one has written down while living a life of faith in the church after being born again are something very precious for one's whole life. When one enters into temptation and has a hard time in one's life of faith, if one takes out one's sermon notes and looks at them, it all comes flooding back—in what place one was worshiping when one heard this sermon, which brother was sitting where at that time, and what the church was doing at that time. They are not dead writing but living writing. The faith you held as you listened to the word is all recorded in them.

Even when a Bible is worn out, it must be kept. In it there are the marks you have made on Bible verses, the lines you have drawn, and the notes you have written, so that "I heard this word at that time," "I realized this word at that time" piles up and piles up, and later you become a person of faith. Without knowing the truth there is no feeling, and without feeling the will does not

rise either. Therefore the experiences you have, the word of the Bible, your notes, the word and the faith you have heard at this very time, and what you are serving are all precious.

As for the precious records left by the forerunners of faith long ago, the persecutors seized those forerunners and killed them and burned everything, wiping them out without a trace. If only those had remained, we could have known that what we believe is exactly the same as what the apostles and the saints of the early church believed.

Let me sum up at this time. In order to receive the Holy Spirit, one must receive the remission of sins, and in order to receive the remission of sins, one must have the faith that believes the baptism Jesus received from John and His death on the Cross and His resurrection. And one is baptized as the sign of that faith. One is baptized as that confession, because one believes that Jesus received my sins passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again and became my Savior. If a believer wants a baptism ceremony, he can go to a place where he can be immersed in water and where it is not dangerous, and have it done. But the baptism ceremony does not remove sin; it is proclaiming that I believe the baptism Jesus received from John. Confessing to one's brothers and sisters, "As you believe, so I too believe," is the meaning of baptism. It is the confession of faith, "I too believe like this." ✉

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CHAPTER

12

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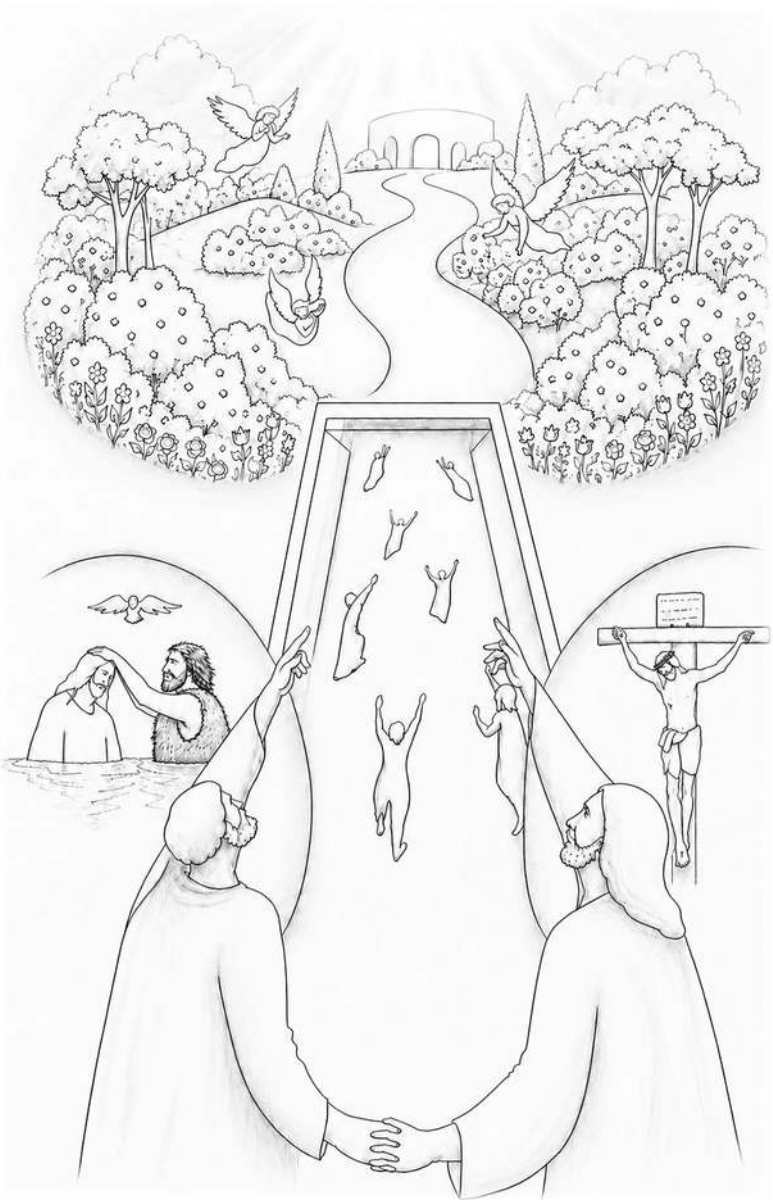

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Luke Chapter 12

Part 1. Understanding the text passage by passage and its gospel-based interpretation

Luke chapter 12 deals with the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the fear of man, covetousness and worry, the responsibility of the steward who waits for the second coming, and the faith that discerns the time of salvation. Jesus teaches us to fear God and seek His kingdom first rather than material things and the evaluation of people, and to live faithfully the life entrusted to us.

1. Beware of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (12:1–3)

"In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops."

General interpretation of the text

Jesus tells us to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, that is,

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hypocrisy. Just as leaven spreads through the whole lump of dough, hypocrisy secretly affects the individual and the community.

Hypocrisy here means the attitude of showing people a godly appearance different from what one actually is inside. It is more important to live honestly before God than to receive a good evaluation before people.

Jesus says that what is hidden will be revealed in the end. Not only hidden sins and lies, but also the gospel that the disciples heard in secret will be proclaimed publicly in the future.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—We must beware of hypocrisy, the leaven of the Pharisees

The leaven of the Pharisees does not mean only moral hypocrisy, in which words and deeds differ. It is also hypocrisy to act outwardly like a godly person while not believing the word of God in the heart, and to teach by adding human thoughts and religious teachings to the word of God.

Even today, if one speaks of the Cross of Jesus but leaves out the meaning of the baptism Jesus received from John, one cannot explain how sin passed on to Jesus. Then a person remains a religious person who still has sin in his heart even while saying that he believes in Jesus.

A person can hide his heart and his sins from other people, but he cannot hide them from God. The word that everything hidden will be revealed is not meant only to plunge people into fear. It is the word telling us to examine our sins and our faith honestly, to confirm how Jesus settled all sins with His baptism and the Cross, and to receive the perfect remission of sins.

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2. Fear God rather than man (12:4–12)

"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! 'Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. 'Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. 'And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. 'Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.'"

General interpretation of the text

Jesus tells us not to fear people who can do no more after they have killed the body, but to fear God, who governs even the judgment after death.

However, God is not only a fearful Judge. He does not forget even a sparrow of little value, and He cares for the disciples so attentively that He counts even the hairs of a person's head. Therefore the disciples can trust the sovereignty and the love of God even in persecution.

The person who acknowledges Jesus before people is

acknowledged before God as well, but the person who denies Jesus comes to be judged. The sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit can be understood not as a momentary doubt or mistake but as a stubborn attitude of deliberately and continually rejecting the saving work of God revealed through the Holy Spirit.

When the disciples are dragged before those in power, the Holy Spirit will teach them the words they need. This does not mean that they should make no preparation at all; it is the promise that even in the moment of persecution the Holy Spirit does not abandon the disciple.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—We must fear God rather than man and confess Jesus

People can harm or kill the body of a saint, but they have no authority to judge his soul. The One who judges the body and the soul is God. Therefore a saint must not deny the gospel of salvation because of the slander and persecution of people.

However, the word to fear God does not mean that God is a being who only judges the saints with indifference. God does not forget even a small sparrow, and He is counting even the hairs of a saint's head. God is the Judge and at the same time the Father who protects His own people who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

To confess Jesus before people is not merely to say the name of Jesus. It is to believe and testify that Jesus is the Savior who took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead.

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Neither must the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit be regarded as the same as a slip of the tongue that comes from momentary doubt or weakness. To know the salvation of the water and the Spirit that God accomplished through Jesus and yet deny it deliberately, and to keep opposing and hindering the preaching of the gospel and the people who believe the gospel, is to blaspheme the work of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, when one comes to stand before those in authority because of the gospel, the Holy Spirit gives the words and the wisdom needed.

3. The parable of the rich fool (12:13–21)

"Then one from the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' But He said to him, 'Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?' And He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.' Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?" So he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" 'So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'"

General interpretation of the text

A man asks Jesus to command his brother to divide the inheritance. Instead of directly judging the property dispute, Jesus tells them to beware of all covetousness. This is because a person's life is not guaranteed by having many possessions.

The rich man in the parable, having obtained a great harvest, plans to build bigger barns, store up all his possessions, and live comfortably for a long time. But God says that He will take his life away that very night.

The reason the rich man was rebuked is not the abundant harvest or saving itself. He believed that his wealth guaranteed his future, and he stored it up only for himself, without any thought of giving thanks to God or sharing with his neighbors.

The person who is "rich toward God" is the person who regards what he has as a gift from God, trusts God, and shares with his neighbors. Wealth can be a tool for life, but it cannot be a guarantee of life or its ultimate purpose.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—We must become people who are rich toward God

At the center of the man who asked Jesus to divide the inheritance was covetousness for material things. Jesus said that a person's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions, and told the parable of the rich fool.

Here the rich man does not mean only a person who has much property. He represents a person whose heart is rich, who thinks that the possessions of the world and his own ability are enough, and who neither seeks nor believes in God. Such a

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person is high-minded and proud, and does not realize the fact that he needs the remission of sins and eternal life.

The rich man in the parable stored up much grain and told his soul to take its ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But he did not think about who the Master of his life was. When God takes his life that night, the wealth he has stored up cannot save his soul.

On the other hand, the person who is rich toward God is not a person who has offered many material things. He is a person who knows and believes in his heart how Jesus settled our sins, and has obtained the remission of sins and new life. We must become not people who are rich toward the world and poor toward God, but people who are rich toward God by possessing the salvation Jesus accomplished.

4. Do not worry, but seek the kingdom of God (12:22–34)

"Then He said to His disciples, 'Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? 'And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an

anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. 'Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

General interpretation of the text

Jesus tells us not to worry excessively about what to eat and what to wear. This is because God, who feeds the ravens and beautifully clothes the flowers of the field, cares for people all the more.

This does not mean that we should not labor or prepare for the future. It means that we should not try to control everything by worrying, but should trust God, who knows our life and our needs.

What the disciple must seek first is the kingdom of God. Since God is pleased to give the kingdom to the disciples, the *"little flock,"* they can share with the poor without clinging to wealth.

The word *"where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* means that where a person uses his wealth shows what he regards as most important. The disciple must lay up eternal treasure in the kingdom of God rather than wealth that disappears.

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The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—We must seek the kingdom of God before the worries of life

The word not to worry about what to eat and what to wear does not mean not to work or not to take any responsibility for one's livelihood. It is the word telling us to know the fact that however much a person worries, he cannot make or hold on to his own life by himself, and to rely on God, who gives life and the circumstances we need.

God feeds the ravens and also clothes the lilies of the field. How much more, then, does He know what is needed by the saints who have become the children of God by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore the saints must not have their hearts entirely taken up by the problem of making a living, but must first seek the kingdom of God and the work of the righteous gospel.

Where the treasure is, there the heart is also. If the treasure of a saint is only in material things and worldly success, his heart also comes to stay there. But if the Lord, the gospel, and the kingdom of God are his treasure, he comes to use his material things, his time, and his ability for the work of saving souls.

Such service is not a price paid to obtain salvation. Jesus has already accomplished salvation with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. Offering material things and labor to the gospel is the fruit of faith that the person who has received the remission of sins bears out of thankfulness for that grace.

5. The watchful and faithful servant (12:35–48)

"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.' Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming," and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

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General interpretation of the text

Jesus tells His disciples to be ready like servants who wait for their master to return. Since they cannot know when the master will return, the servants must keep their lamps burning and be able to open the door at once.

When the master finds the servants watching, he rather has them sit at the table and serves them. This shows the amazing grace of Jesus, who exalts and serves His faithful disciples.

To be watchful is not to give up daily life and only calculate the time of the second coming. It is to carry out faithfully the responsibility entrusted to us now, so that we can receive the Lord whenever He comes.

The faithful steward gives the members of the household the food they need at the proper time, but the unfaithful steward thinks that the master is late, abuses the other servants, and lives dissolutely. In particular, the authority given to a leader is not for ruling over people but for caring for and serving them.

Greater responsibility follows for the person who knows much and has received much. God judges each person according to the knowledge, the opportunity, and the responsibility he has received.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—We must become watchful and faithful stewards

The Lord told us to be like servants who have their waists girded and their lamps burning and wait for their master to return. To be watchful is not to go without sleep or to calculate the date of the second coming. It is to believe in the Lord who will come

again and to carry out faithfully the work of the gospel entrusted to us now.

A steward is not a person who uses his master's possessions as he pleases. He is a person who looks to his master's will and rightly manages the people, the goods, and the work entrusted to him. In particular, the steward who gives the members of the household their food in due season must supply souls with the word of God and the gospel of the remission of sins that they need.

The office of the church and the knowledge of the gospel must not become a means of oppressing people or asserting one's own rights. The person who goes ahead must protect the weak, nurture them with the word, and help them carry out well the work entrusted to them.

The person who has received much has much responsibility. The person who knows the gospel of the water and the Spirit and has received the remission of sins must not keep that gospel to himself and hide it. He must faithfully serve the gospel, the church, and souls, so that whenever the Lord comes, he may receive Him while doing the work entrusted to him.

6. Fire, baptism, and division (12:49–53)

"'I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.'"

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General interpretation of the text

Jesus says that He came to send fire on the earth and that He has a baptism to be baptized with. The fire here can be understood as representing the judgment and purification of God, or the decisive change that arises through the ministry of Jesus.

The baptism Jesus has to be baptized with refers to the suffering and the death on the Cross that He will undergo. Jesus goes forward on the road of suffering in order to complete the plan of salvation of God.

Jesus says that division may arise even within a family because of His coming. This does not mean that Jesus came for the purpose of conflict and the destruction of families. It means that an actual clash may occur between the person who accepts Jesus and the person who rejects Him.

The peace Jesus gives is not a superficial peace that covers over every conflict regardless of the truth, but the peace that begins in a right relationship with God.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—The baptism of Jesus and the gospel divide faith from unbelief

The word that Jesus came to send fire on the earth does not mean that we should stir up fleshly violence and strife. It means that when the salvation of God is preached, the person who believes and the person who does not believe, the word of God and the religious thoughts of man, are clearly divided, and the standard of judgment is revealed.

Jesus said that He had *"a baptism to be baptized with."* This does not mean that He would receive yet another baptism at the

Jordan River to take sin upon Himself again. Jesus had already received baptism from John the Baptist and taken all the sins of the world upon Himself. Now there remained the work of receiving judgment and death on the Cross because of those sins. The Lord was distressed until He completed that work of salvation.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit can cause division even within one family. This is because one person believes in the baptism and the Cross of Jesus, while another may hold on to religious tradition or his own thoughts. But a saint must not hate his family or fight with them in a fit of temper. He must not hide the truth in order to keep human harmony, but must clearly preach the gospel in love so that the soul may receive the remission of sins.

7. Discern the time and be reconciled (12:54–59)

"Then He also said to the multitudes, 'Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, "A shower is coming"; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, "There will be hot weather"; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? 'Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite.'"

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General interpretation of the text

People predicted the weather by looking at the clouds and the wind, yet they did not discern the time in which they were living. Even while seeing the teaching and the miracles of Jesus, they did not accept the fact that the kingdom of God had come near.

To discern the time does not mean to force a connection between every event and the signs of the end. It is to realize what God is doing through Jesus and to respond with repentance and faith.

Jesus tells us to be reconciled while on the way to the judge with our accuser. This is wisdom telling us to admit our responsibility and be reconciled before an actual dispute reaches judgment, and it is also a spiritual warning to repent before the judgment of God comes.

When the invitation of God is given, we must not keep putting off our decision, but must set right our relationship with God and with our neighbors before it is too late.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—We must be reconciled to God while we are alive

People discern the weather by looking at the clouds and the wind, yet they do not discern the time in which they are living and the opportunity for salvation. They can be sensitive to the circumstances of the world while being indifferent to whether there is sin in their hearts and how they will stand before God after death.

Jesus told them to judge for themselves what is right. The faith of other people or religious authority cannot take the place

of an individual's faith. Each person must examine and judge whether Jesus took all sins upon Himself with His baptism, whether He received all the judgment on the Cross, and whether this salvation accords with the word of the Scriptures.

The one who accuses a person represents the law, which exposes sin, and the judge represents God. The law accuses a person, saying that he has sin and must be judged. Therefore we must be reconciled to God before arriving before the judge, that is, while we are alive.

A person cannot pay the price of his sins one by one with his good deeds and prayers of repentance. Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with His baptism, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead. When we know and believe in our hearts this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we are reconciled to God and obtain the perfect remission of sins. Since salvation cannot be chosen again after judgment has been passed, we must settle the problem of salvation now.

Conclusion of Part 1—The gospel of the water and the Spirit that Luke chapter 12 conveys

Luke chapter 12 teaches us to become not hypocritical religious people but people who have true faith before God. We must not fear or rely on people and material things, but must fear God, who governs life and the soul.

A sinner must first know and believe in his heart the fact that Jesus took all sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of sin on the Cross, and rose from the dead. This is the way to become rich toward God and to be reconciled to God.

The saint who has received the remission of sins must not have

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his heart entirely taken up by the worries of life and the treasures of the world. He must make the Lord and the gospel his treasure and live as a faithful steward who gives out the food of life in due season. To wait for the Lord who will come again and to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit without fearing people is the watchful faith that Luke chapter 12 teaches. ✉

Part 2. An expository sermon
following the text passage by passage

A life that seeks the kingdom of God and waits watchfully

Beginning the sermon

In Part 1 we examined each passage of Luke chapter 12 side by side from the general interpretation of the text and from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Now, following the flow of the same text, we will examine in detail the faith that abandons hypocrisy and fears God, the life that escapes from covetousness and worry, and the responsibility of the steward who waits for the Lord who will come again.

The warning about the leaven of the Pharisees, the parable of the rich fool, the word about the ravens and the lilies, and the parable of the watchful servant and the faithful steward are not teachings separate from one another. All these words show what a person must fear, what he must make his treasure, and whom he must serve as master.

The expository sermons that follow examine, while following the flow of the text, how the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus took the sins of mankind upon Himself with the baptism He received from John and completed salvation with the Cross and the resurrection—is testified in each passage.

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Fear God rather than man

"In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. 'And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! 'Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. 'Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. 'And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. 'Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.'" (Luke 12:1–12).

The leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy that rejects the salvation of God

Luke chapter 12 is directly connected with the events of the previous chapter. When Jesus rebuked the hypocrisy and the wrong teaching of the Pharisees and the lawyers, the scribes and the Pharisees did not repent but assailed Him vehemently, trying to catch Him in His words. Just then a crowd of tens of thousands gathered together, so that they trampled one another.

Though the number of people following Jesus had grown, Jesus did not boast to His disciples about the size of the crowd. Rather, He first warned the disciples, *"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."* The hypocrisy of the Pharisees was not a sin that could arise only among the religious leaders who opposed Jesus. The disciples who followed Jesus could just as easily face the same temptation in a situation where they were recognized by people and large crowds gathered.

Leaven spreads through the whole lump of dough even in a small amount. Hypocrisy, too, looks like a small compromise at first. When one hides the truth a little out of regard for what people think, says that one believes what one does not believe in the heart, and acts differently inside and outside, and this is repeated, it comes in the end to rule the whole person. Later one cannot even discern whether one truly believes in God or is only acting in order to look like a believer to people.

The hypocrisy Jesus rebuked is dressing up a faith one does not have in the heart as if one had it. It is acting like a righteous person outwardly while having sin in the heart and not believing the gospel, and using godly words and religious forms in order to receive the respect of people. Judging only other people while hiding one's own sin and unbelief is also hypocrisy.

Because the Pharisees thought that they were living

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righteously and well, they did not accept Jesus, the Son of God, and the work of salvation He did. They set their own traditions and interpretations in the same place as the word of God, and in the end they opposed Jesus and the gospel. Outwardly they had a form of godliness, but in their hearts they did not have the gospel of life that removes sin.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit sets people free from hypocrisy. The fundamental reason people act hypocritically is that they try to hide the fact that they are sinners and to look righteous to people. But if one believes the fact that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself, there is no longer any need to dress up one's own righteousness.

Jesus took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, at the Jordan River. Then, carrying those sins, He went to the Cross and received the judgment of sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying. He was buried, and by rising again on the third day He overcame sin and death. The baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection are the salvation of God that completely settled our sins.

The person who believes this gospel does not pretend to be righteous by hiding his sins; he confesses that he has become righteous because Jesus took his sins upon Himself. He believes that he has no sin not because he has many righteous deeds, but because Jesus removed all his sins with His baptism and the Cross. Therefore the faith of the saved person is not hypocrisy that boasts of one's own deeds, but faith that boasts of the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished.

In verses 2–3 Jesus said that what is covered will be revealed and what is hidden will be known. However much a person hides his heart and dresses himself up with a godly appearance, he

cannot hide before God. God knows not only a person's words and deeds but also the motives of those deeds and the thoughts of his heart.

Before the judgment of God, a person's hidden faith and unbelief, truth and falsehood, are all revealed. The things done in the dark to secretly deceive people and hinder the gospel are revealed, and the true faith and faithfulness that were not known to people are also brought to light before God.

At the same time, the gospel the disciples heard in secret was to be preached publicly to the world. At that time there were words Jesus taught His disciples separately, but later the disciples received the power of the Holy Spirit and preached that word to the whole world. Just as the word heard in the ear in inner rooms is proclaimed on the housetops, the salvation Jesus accomplished became a gospel that could not be kept hidden.

We must fear God rather than man and confess Jesus

The hypocrite hides the truth because he fears the evaluation of people. He worries that he will suffer a disadvantage if his faith is revealed, and he can be ashamed of the gospel he believes for the reason that it differs from what many people believe. That is why, right after warning against hypocrisy, Jesus taught whom we must fear.

In verse 4 Jesus called His disciples *"My friends."* Though He knew that the disciples would face persecution and the threat of death in the future, He comforted them by calling them friends. Though they could be hated and rejected in the world, Jesus acknowledged them as His own friends.

Jesus said, *"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do."* People can take away

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another person's property and freedom and harm his body, and they can even kill his life. But they cannot rule over his soul after that or determine his eternal destiny. The power of the world ends in the face of the death of the body.

God, on the other hand, governs not only the life of the body but also the judgment after death. Therefore the One whom a believer must truly fear is not people or the powerful of the world, but God. To fear God means the reverence that acknowledges God as the Creator and the Judge, exalts the word of God above the commands of people, and lives honestly before God.

If one fears people excessively, one comes to act hypocritically. In order not to be rejected by people, one can say that one believes what one does not believe, or deny the gospel one believes in the heart. On the other hand, if one fears God, one does not forsake the word of God even when the reaction of people is frightening.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit knows that God is the One who surely judges sin, yet he comes boldly to God in Jesus. This is because he believes the fact that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with His baptism and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. He fears the justice of God and at the same time believes in the perfect remission of sins bestowed in Jesus.

The resurrection of Jesus shows that people killing the body cannot be the end of a believer. People nailed the body of Jesus to the Cross and killed Him, but God raised Jesus from the dead. The saint who is united with Jesus and believes in His baptism, His death, and His resurrection is also not a person for whom everything ends with the death of the body. Because he has the hope of eternal life, he can fear God more than the threats of people.

In verses 6–7 Jesus spoke of the sparrows that were sold cheaply. God does not forget even one sparrow, which looks insignificant in the eyes of people. How much less could God forget the believers whom He made in His own image and saved with the life of Jesus Christ.

The word that God has numbered even the hairs of our head means that God does not know us vaguely but knows us in great detail. God knows all the circumstances and needs of the believer, his fears and pains, and the misunderstanding and persecution he has received from people. Even when people do not recognize him, God knows, and He does not forget even the faith and the labor that are not visible to the eyes of people.

Therefore the saints must fear God but must not fear the threats of people and the world. People can kill the body, but they cannot take away the eternal life God has given. God, who has the authority to judge, regards the saints who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit as more valuable than sparrows and holds them fast to the end.

In verses 8–9, to confess Jesus is to believe in the heart that Jesus is the Son of God and our Savior, and to confess it before people. It is to confess that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism at the Jordan River, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross and died shedding His blood, and rose again on the third day, and so saved us from sin and death.

To confess that there is now no sin in my heart because Jesus took away all my sins is the faith that confesses the Lord. This confession is not a human merit for obtaining salvation, but the fruit of a heart that has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. A saint must not be ashamed of the perfect salvation Jesus accomplished for fear of the ridicule or the loss people may bring, nor deny the Lord at the decisive moment.

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We must not speak against the perfect salvation to which the Holy Spirit testifies

In verse 10 Jesus said that the person who speaks a word against the Son of Man can receive remission, but the person who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit cannot receive remission. Even a person who spoke against Jesus because he did not know who Jesus was can receive the remission of sins if he later hears the gospel, realizes his ignorance, and believes in Jesus as his Savior.

The Holy Spirit testifies to the fact that Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, died on the Cross shedding His blood, and completed our salvation by rising from the dead. Therefore, to know this gospel of the water and the Spirit and yet deny that Jesus took all sins upon Himself, and to hinder the salvation of God, is the sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.

To claim that Jesus removed only original sin and left actual sins behind, or that He took the sins of some people upon Himself but not the sins of others, is to limit the salvation Jesus accomplished with His baptism and the Cross. Also, to oppose this gospel deliberately while knowing that it is the truth, and to persecute the saints who preach the gospel so as to make them leave the faith, is to go against what the Holy Spirit has done.

It is not because the atonement of Jesus is insufficient that the person who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit does not receive remission. Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself and fully paid the price of those sins on the Cross. But the person who rejects to the end the only gospel of the remission of sins, to which the Holy Spirit testifies, remains in the state of not accepting that remission himself. Therefore we must believe in our hearts the baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, and

the resurrection, to which the Holy Spirit testifies.

In verses 11–12 Jesus said that the disciples would be brought before the synagogues and the political authorities. This means that the time would come when the faith of the disciples would have to be testified before people, not only kept in their private hearts. They could be put on religious trial and public interrogation for the reason that they believed in Jesus.

At that time, Jesus said, they should not worry about how to answer and what to say. This is because the Holy Spirit would teach them in that very hour what they ought to say. The disciples are not people who defend the gospel only with their own eloquence and logic. The Holy Spirit who dwells in them brings the word of God to their remembrance and gives them the boldness to confess Jesus even in the midst of fear.

The Holy Spirit comes as a gift to the person who has received the remission of all sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes us believe the salvation Jesus accomplished, and helps the believer hold on to that gospel even in tribulation and testify of Jesus when it is needed.

The saints must hear and learn the word of God in ordinary times and keep it in their hearts. The Holy Spirit brings to remembrance the word planted in the heart when it is needed, and holds the saints so that they boldly testify to the salvation Jesus accomplished even before the powers of the world.

Luke chapter 12 verses 1–12 teach us not to fear people but to fear God, and to confess before people the salvation Jesus accomplished. People can harm the body of a believer, but they cannot take away eternal life. God does not forget even one cheap sparrow, and He numbers even the hairs of the children who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and knows all their circumstances.

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Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with the baptism He received at the Jordan River, received the judgment of sin with the blood of the Cross, and rose from the dead and opened the way of eternal life. The person who believes this gospel escapes from the hypocrisy that dresses up his own righteousness and confesses the righteousness of Jesus. He does not hide the gospel in order to be recognized by people, but testifies of Jesus with the wisdom and the boldness the Holy Spirit gives.

Therefore the saints must neither pretend to believe in order to win the praise of people, nor deny Jesus in order to avoid the criticism of people. They must examine their hearts honestly before God, believe firmly in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and live with the faith that God knows and cares for them. The person who has that faith can beware of the leaven of hypocrisy and, even amid threats, boldly confess Jesus Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Be rich toward God

"Then one from the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' But He said to him, 'Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?' And He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.' Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?" So he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'"

But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" 'So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'" (Luke 12:13–21).

Covetousness binds the soul to wealth

Earlier Jesus taught His disciples to beware of hypocrisy, to fear God rather than man, and to confess Jesus before people. It was the word telling them to prepare for the salvation of their souls, thinking of the fact that they would stand before the judgment seat of God in the future. But one person in the crowd listening to that word suddenly brought up his own matter of inheritance. His interest was not in the judgment and the salvation of the soul but in the property he had to divide with his brother.

That man asked Jesus, *"Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."* He sought Jesus not as the Christ who saves from sin and death, but as someone who would solve his property problem. But Jesus did not judge which of the brothers was right; He exposed the covetousness that had settled deep in their hearts.

Taking one man's request as the occasion, Jesus said to everyone, *"Take heed and beware of covetousness."* The words *"Take heed"* carry the meaning of watching and examining oneself, because covetousness easily enters the heart. Covetousness does not refer only to outwardly visible theft or fraud. The heart that thinks it can be at ease only by having more even though it already has much, the heart that wants to make even another person's share its own, and the heart that tries to exalt itself with money, honor, power, and recognition also

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belong to covetousness.

Receiving and enjoying with thankfulness what God has allowed is different from the covetousness that tries to force into one's own hands what God has not allowed. When the heart comes in that is not content with what has been entrusted to it and tries to take even the property, position, and honor of others, that covetousness makes one lose thankfulness for the grace of the remission of sins and holds the heart captive to the world. Therefore the saints must firmly drive back all covetousness that enters the heart.

Jesus said, *"One's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."* Wealth is necessary for living and enables us to do many things. We can buy food, obtain a house, treat illness, and also help neighbors in need. But wealth does not produce life itself. However much money one has, one cannot extend one's life as much as one wants, nor wash away sin, nor escape the judgment of God, nor raise the dead.

People think that if they have much wealth, even their life and happiness will become secure. But both a person's physical life and eternal life are in the hands of God. Property can make the body comfortable for a while, but it cannot give life to the soul that is dead in sin, nor can it prevent one from standing before the judgment seat of God after death.

"This night your soul will be required of you"

To explain this fact, Jesus told the parable of a rich man. That rich man had succeeded so greatly that the yield of his ground was plentiful and he lacked room to store his crops. In the eyes of people he must have looked like a diligent and wise man whose future was secure.

But before that plentiful yield he did not give thanks to God. In the parable the rich man keeps saying *"I," "my barns," "all my crops," "my goods," "my soul."* In his thinking there was neither God nor neighbor. He did not think of God, who made the harvest possible, nor did he look around to see whether there was anyone near him who was hungry or in need of help. He regarded everything as his own possession and thought only of using it for himself.

He said, *"Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years."* There are two great delusions here. The first is that he thought that many years naturally remained to him, and the second is that he thought that material things could satisfy his soul. Grain can feed the body, but it cannot settle the sin and the fear of the soul. A barn can protect grain, but it cannot protect the soul from the judgment of God.

The rich man said to his soul, *"Take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry."* He did not try to obtain peace from reconciliation with God, but tried to satisfy his soul with the goods he had stored up. But a soul that has sin cannot be at peace even with much wealth. True peace can be obtained only when sin disappears and one is reconciled to God.

Until then, all the words heard in the parable were the rich man's monologue. He planned within his own heart and spoke to his own soul. But in verse 20 the word of God is suddenly heard. There was no God in that man's calculations, but God was watching that man's life and all his plans. People speak of their plans as if they were the final decision, but the last word belongs to God, the Master of life.

God called him *"Fool!"* He may have been shrewd in farming and in managing his property, but he was ignorant about the most important thing, his own soul. While he calculated exactly how much he possessed, he did not know how much time

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remained to him. He calculated the grain that would go into the barn, but he did not calculate that he would stand before God after death. He knew how to succeed in the world, but he did not know the way for his soul to receive the remission of sins.

God said, *"This night your soul will be required of you."* The word *"will be required of you"* shows that the Master of life is not man but God. People think of their body and their life as an eternal possession, but life is something God has entrusted to them for a while. When God takes life back, the wealth a person has stored up cannot hold his soul.

The text begins with a request to divide an inheritance and ends with the question, *"Whose will those things be which you have provided?"* The first man tried to get his share from another person's inheritance, and the rich man in the parable thought that everything was his own. But when a person dies, even the property he so insisted was his own passes to other people. Even if one becomes an enemy of one's brother because of property, in the end no one possesses it forever.

Jesus concluded, *"So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."* The problem lay not simply in having laid up wealth, but in having laid it up *"for himself."* The problem was that he gathered wealth without giving thanks to God or looking after his neighbors, with only his own security and pleasure as the goal.

The person who believes in Jesus Christ is rich toward God

The person who is rich toward God is the person who has the word of God and faith in his heart. He is the person who knows and believes in his heart what Jesus Christ has done for him. The

person who knows and believes how God, who created the whole universe, sent Jesus and removed all our sins, and how He made us the sinless people and children of God, is the person who is truly rich.

This rich man had an abundance of grain and goods, but he had no righteousness to wash away his sins. However much property one offers, one cannot remove a single sin. A sinner must receive by faith only the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished.

Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. The covetousness and the self-centered desires in the human heart are also included among the sins Jesus took upon Himself. Carrying the sin of the world in this way, Jesus was hung on the Cross and received the judgment of sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying. Then He was buried, and by rising again on the third day He overcame sin and death and opened the way of eternal life.

Therefore the true peace of the soul does not come from a great barn or much property. When a sinner believes the fact that Jesus took my sins upon Himself with His baptism, paid the price of those sins with the blood of the Cross, and completed salvation with His death and resurrection, he is reconciled to God. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of all sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and obtains eternal life. This is the heavenly richness that wealth can never buy.

The rich man commanded his soul to be at ease, but because he could not remove his own sins, he could not give it true peace. But because Jesus Himself took upon Himself the judgment a sinner must receive, He gives real peace to the person who believes. One can be at peace not because one has much property,

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but because one's sins have disappeared before God, God has become one's Father, and one has received the eternal kingdom as an inheritance.

The person who has received the remission of sins uses wealth according to the will of God

The attitude toward wealth of the person who has believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit also changes. Before, he thought of everything as "mine," but now he comes to know that life, talents, time, and wealth have all been entrusted to him by God. While responsibly caring for his own needs and those of his family, he can use material things to help neighbors in need, to preach the gospel, and to fulfill the will of God. Material things become not the master but a tool for serving God.

No one, rich or poor, is saved by his own possessions. Even if one has much wealth, if one's heart is held captive by wealth, one is poor toward God; and even if one has little, if one believes the salvation Jesus accomplished and is content with that grace, one is rich toward God. The saints must thankfully enjoy what God has entrusted to them, but must not lay it up only for themselves; they must use it in serving their neighbors and the gospel.

The church, too, must examine itself before this word. If it makes having a large building and abundant finances, many saints and wide influence the absolute standard of success, it can fall into the same trap as the great barn of the rich man. The finances and facilities of the church are tools for preaching the gospel and serving the saints and the neighbors. If the gospel of the water and the Spirit disappears and only size and possessions are boasted of, the church may be rich toward the world but poor

toward God.

The word *"This night your soul will be required of you"* is a solemn warning to turn from wrong thinking and believe the gospel now. The rich man expected many years, but God said, *"This night."* We must not put off the remission of sins and the salvation of the soul until after we have gathered enough wealth and finished all the affairs of the world. While we are alive, now, we must hear and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

Therefore the wise person prepares not only his barn but his soul. He does not rely on his own merit and wealth, but believes the fact that Jesus took all sins upon Himself with His baptism, received the judgment with the blood and the death of the Cross, and gave new life with the resurrection. The person who has obtained the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life by believing this gospel of the water and the Spirit is the person who is truly rich toward God.

That person does not exalt wealth above God even if he has much, and he does not despair like a person who has lost God even if he has little. He believes that God is the Master of life, does not lay up the time and the material things entrusted to him only for himself, and uses them in serving his neighbors and the gospel. The barns of the world are emptied someday, but the righteousness of God and the eternal life obtained through the gospel of the water and the Spirit never disappear.

Do not worry, but seek the kingdom of God

"Then He said to His disciples, 'Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body,

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what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? 'And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. 'Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:22–34).

This word is directly connected with the parable of the rich fool that comes before it. Jesus began verse 22 with the word *"Therefore."* The rich man had so much wealth that he tried to build bigger barns, and the disciples worried about what they would eat and wear in the future. One side tried to be at ease because of abundance, and the other side was anxious because of lack. They look like opposites, but the root of the two hearts is the same. Both think that material things determine their life and their security.

Because the rich man had laid up goods for many years, he thought that his soul was secure. Because the disciples had not

laid up enough, they could think that their future was insecure. To the rich man who sought peace in much wealth, Jesus spoke of death; to the disciples who worried because of lack, He spoke of the care of the heavenly Father. Whether one has much wealth or little, life depends not on possessions but on God.

Jesus spoke this word especially *"to His disciples."* The disciples were people who, having received the call of Jesus, had left behind the familiar life of the world and were following the Lord. They had realistic worries about how they would make a living in the future. The word *"do not worry"* was a promise given to the disciples who followed Jesus while carrying practical problems of livelihood.

God, who gave life and the body, also supplies what is needed

Jesus said, *"Do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on."* It is the word telling us not to have our hearts taken up by the problem of eating and clothing and forget God, the Master of life, and the work He has entrusted to us. We must not put off the kingdom of God and the work of saving souls while thinking only of the needs of the world.

Jesus said, *"Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing."* God first gave life and the body. Food and clothing are the means of maintaining the life and the body already given. God, who gave the greater things, life and the body, is not a being who does not know or does not care about what is needed to maintain them.

While striving to obtain food and clothing, a person can actually lose the life that is more precious than food and the body

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that is more precious than clothing. In order to earn more money, one can overwork the body, lose sleep because of worry, and even break one's relationship with one's family. The means of maintaining life must not become instead a master that harms life.

Jesus said to His disciples, *"Consider the ravens."* The ravens neither sow nor reap and have no barn to store grain, but God feeds them and raises them. Just as the ravens do not live by their own effort alone but live by finding and eating what God has prepared in nature, all the conditions by which people can live, and the strength and the opportunity to work, are also prepared by God.

People may think that they live by their own labor alone. But however hard a person works, he cannot make by himself the sunlight and the rain, the land and the seed, health and opportunity, and relationships with other people. Even the strength and the wisdom to work must be granted by God. People labor, but the One who grants the conditions of life so that their labor bears fruit is God.

Jesus asked, *"Of how much more value are you than the birds?"* God does not forget to feed even the ravens; He does not forget the children whom He saved from sin by sending His only begotten Son. God knows what is needed by the saints who have become His people by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and He cares for their lives.

We must abandon worry and believe in the care of God

In verses 25 and 26 Jesus spoke of the powerlessness of worry. The Scriptures say, *"Which of you by worrying can add*

one cubit to his stature?" (Luke 12:25). However much a person worries, he cannot lengthen his body and his life as he pleases. Worry has no ability to give life or to control the future.

People can plan and labor, but they cannot make life and every outcome according to their own will. If one only keeps repeating worry, the heart comes to look at the problem as bigger than God. The saints must not hold on to their own calculations and worries, but must believe in God, who saved them and supplies what they need.

Jesus said again, *"Consider the lilies."* The lilies neither make thread nor weave cloth, but God clothes them beautifully. In the eyes of people they are no more than small flowers that bloom for a while and disappear, but God gives even that one flower color and shape, fragrance and vitality.

Jesus said that even Solomon in all his glory was not like one lily. Solomon was a king who enjoyed great wealth and glory in the history of Israel. But however splendidly people adorn themselves with much wealth and skill, they cannot fully produce the beauty of the flower that God has fashioned through life. Human glory does not surpass the creation and the care of God.

The grass of the field had so short a life that it was in the field today and thrown into the oven tomorrow. Even so, God clothes the grass of the field beautifully. Jesus said, *"How much more will He clothe you."* If God cares even for the grass that is here for a while and then disappears, He could not leave in indifference the people He saved with the life of His Son.

Jesus called His disciples *"O you of little faith."* They had received salvation by believing in Jesus, but in the matters of daily life they could not easily believe in the care of God. Even the saints who have received the remission of sins can have their hearts taken up by material things while worrying about what to

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eat and how to live. Therefore the person who has believed the gospel of salvation must rely on God and live by faith in actual life as well.

The nations of the world seek what to eat and drink as the most important matter of life. But the disciples have a Father who already knows everything they need. God knows not only spiritual matters but also the needs of His children, including food, clothing, and shelter. When the saints seek the kingdom of God and the gospel first and go forward in faith, the Father supplies what is needed.

We must seek only the kingdom of God and His righteousness

In verse 31 Jesus said, *"But seek the kingdom of God."* The word not to worry is the word telling us to turn the heart that was full of the worries of the world toward the hope of and the interest in the kingdom of God. Instead of seeking eating and drinking as the highest goal, we must seek the rule and the salvation of God.

To seek the kingdom of God is first for oneself to enter that kingdom through Jesus Christ. A person whose sin remains as it is cannot enter the kingdom of God. Nor can he wash away his sin with his own good deeds or wealth. Therefore God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, in order to save sinners.

Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. He took upon Himself even our covetousness and unbelief, the sin of relying on material things rather than God, and all the sins of failing to trust God in the midst of worry. Carrying those sins, Jesus was hung on the Cross and received the judgment of sin in

our place by shedding His blood and dying.

The death of Jesus shows that the price of sin was paid completely, and the resurrection of Jesus shows that sin and death were defeated. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished with His baptism, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection, receives the remission of all sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. He is no longer a sinner under the wrath of God, but becomes a child who calls God Father.

The relationship of calling God Father is not made by human effort. It is a relationship made possible because Jesus took sin upon Himself and reconciled God and us. The person who has received the remission of sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not ask a strange god who does not know his needs; he entrusts himself to the Father who saved him.

To seek the kingdom of God is to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the people who do not yet know the gospel, so that they may receive the remission of sins. It is to use one's time, talents, and material things in the work of saving souls and expanding the kingdom of God in union with the church of God. The saints must not worry only about what to eat and drink, but must think about how they can preach the gospel to more souls.

To the person who seeks the kingdom of God, Jesus promised, *"All these things shall be added to you."* When the saints think first of the work of saving souls, in which God delights, and serve it in faith, God supplies what is needed for their lives and holds them so that they go on living and serving the gospel.

In verse 32 Jesus said, *"Do not fear, little flock."* The disciples who followed Jesus in the world seemed few in number and weak in strength. But they had a Shepherd and a Father. It is not the number of people and the power of the world that

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guarantee their safety; the Lord, their Shepherd, keeps them.

God is pleased to give the kingdom to that little flock. The kingdom of God is not a reward that a person purchases by piling up merit. It is a gift the Father gives His children with joy. The saints must believe the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished and the good will of the Father, and must regard as precious the kingdom of God given to them.

Where the treasure is, there the heart is also

In verse 32 He said that the Father is first pleased to give the kingdom, and then in verse 33 He said to sell what we have and give alms. It is not that we offer property in order to obtain the kingdom of God; the person who has received the kingdom as a gift is not bound to the wealth of the world and shares it. Giving alms is the fruit of faith that appears in the person who has received grace.

The word *"Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old"* calls for actual sharing. We must not say only with our hearts that we love our neighbors while turning away from the people who need help. At times we must be able to help people in difficulty even by disposing of what we have. The person who has received the remission of sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not think of all his possessions as his alone, but looks on them as what God has entrusted to him.

Jesus said that such a life of sharing is providing *"money bags which do not grow old."* The money bags of the world grow old, property disappears, and goods can be stolen or rot. But the fruit of faith borne by loving God and serving one's neighbors does not disappear. For one soul to hear the gospel, receive the

remission of sins, and obtain eternal life has an eternal value greater than any property of the world.

The word of verse 34, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,"* makes us diagnose our hearts. People use their time, their thoughts, and their money on what they regard as most precious. One can say with one's mouth that one loves God most while one's heart keeps chasing only wealth, position, and the recognition of people. If we examine what we spend the most time and effort to obtain, we can know where our treasure is.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit changes our treasure. Before, we tried to prove ourselves with money and success, but now the fact that Jesus took my sins upon Himself with His baptism, received the judgment with the blood of the Cross, and gave eternal life with the resurrection becomes the most precious treasure. Since we have obtained the remission of sins and the kingdom of God in Christ, we escape from the fear of losing the things of the world.

The saints must align even the purpose of earning and using material things with the kingdom of God. What they have obtained by honest labor they must use for their own needs and those of their families, and offer for the preaching of the gospel, the salvation of souls, and the serving of neighbors in need. Even if one has no property, one can offer one's body, time, and talents to God and serve the gospel. When our hearts are in the preaching of the gospel, material things become not the master but a tool for serving the kingdom of God.

This section does not end only with the command *"do not worry."* Jesus gave us the grounds for overcoming worry. God is the Creator who feeds the ravens and clothes the grass of the field, and the Father who knows our needs. Above all, His only begotten Son saved us with His baptism, the Cross, and the

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resurrection, and God is pleased to give us the eternal kingdom.

The food, the clothing, and the property of the world are necessary, but they are not eternal. But the salvation Jesus accomplished with the water and the Spirit, the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of God and eternal life, are eternal. The person who has made this gospel the treasure of his heart does not entrust his soul to what rots and passes away. He thankfully uses what the Father has given and shares it with his neighbors, and lives by the faith that seeks first His kingdom and the salvation of souls.

Keep your lamps burning and wait for the Lord who will come again

"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Luke 12:35–40).

Earlier Jesus said to His disciples, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* He told them not to have their hearts taken up by the wealth of the earth, but to provide money bags which do not grow old and a treasure in the heavens. And

right after that He told them to have their waists girded and their lamps burning. The two words are not separate from each other. The person whose heart's treasure is in heaven comes to wait for Jesus, the Master of that kingdom, and the person who has laid up treasure in the world has his heart taken up by the circumstances and the possessions of the world rather than by the Lord.

We must gird our waists and prepare for the work of the gospel

The person who believes the salvation Jesus accomplished and has received the kingdom of God as his treasure lives believing that the Lord who saved him will come again. He does not live as he pleases as if there were no master; he does the work the Lord has entrusted to him and prepares to receive Him.

In verse 35 Jesus told them to have their "*waist be girded.*" The long garments people wore at that time made it hard to move quickly or to work if they were left hanging loose. When they worked or set out on a journey, they tucked up the hem and girded their waists with a belt. Therefore to gird one's waist means the state of being ready to move at any time and carry out the work entrusted to one.

The faith that waits for the second coming of the Lord is not an attitude of sitting still and only gazing at the sky. The word to gird our waists is the word telling us to be ready at any time to carry out the work of preaching the gospel that the Lord has entrusted to us. The saints must faithfully carry out the work assigned to them where they are, and use that labor, time, and material things so that the gospel may be preached and souls may be saved.

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Jesus went on to tell them to keep their *"lamps burning."* A lamp lights the way in the darkness and lets us see inside the house. If the lamp goes out, we cannot recognize the master even when he returns, and we cannot go quickly to the door. To keep the lamp burning is to be alert without falling asleep, and it means not forgetting that the master will return.

The servant who stands with his lamp burning is the person who keeps the word of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart and stays awake. The darker the world becomes, the more clearly he shines the light of the gospel, and he delivers the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ accomplished to the souls who have not yet received the remission of sins.

Jesus took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. Then, carrying those sins, He went to the Cross and received the judgment of sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying. Jesus, who had been buried, rose again on the third day and overcame sin and death. The person who believes the salvation accomplished with the baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection receives the remission of all sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

In the heart of the person who has received the Holy Spirit by believing this gospel, the lamp of salvation is burning. He relies not on his own deeds or merit but on the righteousness of God that Jesus completed. The grace of the remission of sins does not put the saints to sleep; it becomes the strength that makes them serve the Lord with thankfulness and preach the gospel.

The Lord Himself serves the watchful servant

In verse 36 Jesus said that the disciples must be like *"men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately."* The servants do not know the exact time the master will return, but they know that he will surely return. So they wait so that they can open to him without delay when he knocks at the door.

The words *"open to him immediately"* carry the meaning of being prepared from ordinary times. It is not a matter of hurriedly putting on clothes, looking for a lamp, and tidying up the house only after the master has arrived at the door. The servant who loves his master and waits for his return already lives in a state of readiness. Preparation for the second coming of Jesus, too, is not hastily doing a few religious acts at the last moment. It must be a life of believing the gospel and walking with the Lord in ordinary times.

When Jesus, the Master, first came to this earth, He served sinners from the lowest place. The sinless Son of God came in the likeness of sinful flesh, took the sins of mankind upon Himself by receiving baptism, and gave up His own life on the Cross. Jesus, who rose again and ascended to heaven, will surely come again. Therefore the One whom the believer waits for is not a strange judge but the Lord who saved him with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

To the person who does not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the second coming of the Lord cannot but be a fearful day when the sins he had hidden are revealed and judged. But to the person who believes that Jesus took all those sins upon Himself and received the judgment in his place, the second coming of the Lord is the day he meets face to face the Lord who

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saved him. This difference does not arise from a person's good deeds or office, but depends on whether he has believed the gospel Jesus accomplished.

Verse 37 shows a very amazing promise. He said that when the master returns and finds the servants watching, those servants are blessed. Up to this point it is not hard to understand. But then Jesus said that the master himself will gird himself, have the servants sit down to eat, and come and serve them.

Ordinarily it is the servant who must gird his master's waist, seat his master at the table, and set out the food. But in this parable the master seats the servants and serves them. This shows how great the grace and the glory are that the Lord will bestow on the believers who have been watchful and faithful. The labor a believer has done for the Lord is nothing compared with the grace of the Lord, but the Lord does not forget that labor and acknowledges it as blessed.

This scene also makes us think about how Jesus has already served us. Jesus did not merely command us to wash away our sins; He Himself received baptism and took our sins upon Himself. He did not merely demand that we pay the price of sin; He gave up His own body on the Cross and died shedding His blood. He did not tell us to escape from death by ourselves; He rose again and gave the believer new life and the hope of resurrection. Salvation is not a reward a sinner obtained by first serving God, but the grace by which the Lord first served the sinner.

The service and the faithfulness we render while waiting for the Lord are the fruit of faith that comes from the grace of salvation we have already received. The Lord remembers that labor; He helps the person who serves the gospel on this earth as well, and in the future He will let him take part in the glory of the kingdom of God.

A life that seeks the kingdom of God and waits watchfully

The *"second watch"* and the *"third watch"* of verse 38 show the servant who keeps his post even when the waiting grows long. Even when the promise of the Lord seems slow to be fulfilled and the world seems to go on unchanged, the saints must not put out their lamps, but must believe the gospel and keep doing the work entrusted to them.

The joy of the time when one first received the remission of sins can, as time passes, be obscured by the worries of daily life and the desires of the flesh. At such times all the more, the saints must take hold again of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that saved them, and serve to the end the work of the gospel the Lord has entrusted to them. This is the faith of the servant who is watching even in the second and the third watch.

We must be ready for the Lord, who will come at an hour we do not expect

In verse 39 Jesus told the parable of the master of the house and the thief. Just as a thief comes without warning, the second coming of the Son of Man also takes place at a time people do not expect. Therefore the saints must not have their hearts taken up with calculating the hour of the second coming, but must always be ready so that they can receive the Lord even if He comes today.

To prepare for the second coming is not to abandon all the affairs of the world and only wait for the end. It is, because one believes that the Lord will come again, to live the life entrusted to one today all the more faithfully, and to use the time, the material things, and the talents given to one for the preaching of the gospel and the salvation of souls.

In verse 40 Jesus concluded, *"Therefore you also be ready."*

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The parable of the servants and the parable of the master of the house both gather into this one command. Jesus will surely come again, but people do not know the hour. Therefore preparation is not something to begin on some day in the future, but something to do today.

The preparation we must make first of all is to believe the gospel that Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him and that the judgment of those sins ended on the Cross. Even if one has much religious zeal and service, office and good deeds, if sin still remains in the heart and one does not believe the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished, one cannot receive the Lord with joy. The person who holds on to his own deeds cannot be bold before the judgment however hard he tries.

But the person who believes in his heart that Jesus took upon Himself even all the sins of his whole lifetime with the baptism He received at the Jordan River, died on the Cross shedding His blood because of those sins, and rose again on the third day, receives the remission of all sins. God counts that faith as righteousness and gives the Holy Spirit. This person is the one born again of water and the Spirit, and the one prepared to be able to wait for the Lord.

The saint who has been born again of water and the Spirit lives believing the grace of salvation and following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When he realizes his faults, he turns from them; he renews his heart with the word of the gospel, and serves in love the people and the work God has entrusted to him.

All the labor done at home, at work, and in the church can also become precious work that serves the gospel. The saints must not regard the work assigned to them lightly, but must give their whole heart so that through that labor the preaching of the gospel is supported and other souls can hear the word of life.

If the heart is taken up by the news and the worries of the

world, wealth and success, and the evaluation of people, the heart for the gospel can grow cold. At such times, rather than holding on only to one's own resolve, one must return to the gospel that Jesus took my sins upon Himself with His baptism, was judged on the Cross, and gave eternal life with the resurrection. With this gospel the Holy Spirit awakens our hearts and makes us live according to the will of the Lord again.

What we need is not the knowledge to calculate when the Lord will come, but the faith that can receive Him with joy even if He comes today. We must look back at whether we have received the remission of sins through the baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, whether we have set our hearts on the kingdom of God rather than on the treasures of the earth, and whether we are faithfully doing the work of the gospel entrusted to us.

The word that Jesus will come at an hour we do not expect is not a declaration of despair to the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the word of hope that he can meet at any time the Lord who saved him. The saint who has received the remission of all sins by believing in the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus keeps the lamp of the gospel burning, receives the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and faithfully does the work entrusted to him today. To the person who waits for the Lord in this way, the second coming of Jesus is not a day of judgment he wants to avoid, but a blessed day when he receives with joy the Master he has long waited for.

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The steward who gives out the food of life in due season

"Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming," and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:41–48).

Earlier Jesus told His disciples to be like servants who have their waists girded and their lamps burning and wait for their master to return. It was the word telling them always to be awake and ready, since they could not know when the master would return. Peter, who heard this word, asked, *"Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?"*

Peter's question contains the desire to know whether this warning was given only to leaders like the twelve disciples, or to everyone who heard the word of Jesus. Jesus did not answer simply, "I said it only to you" or "I said it to everyone alike." Instead He told the parable of the faithful and wise steward.

The faithful and wise steward gives out the food of life

The command to be watchful was given to everyone, but it applies all the more weightily to the person who has been entrusted with the gospel and with souls. However, the responsibility of the steward does not rest only on pastors or leaders. All the saints who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are stewards who use the life, the time, the material things, and the talents they have received from the Lord according to the will of the Lord.

In verse 42 Jesus spoke of the *"faithful and wise steward."* A steward is not the master who rules his own house. He is a person who has been entrusted with the master's possessions and household affairs and manages them according to the master's will. The house, the food, and the servants are not the steward's possessions. The steward has only been entrusted with what belongs to the master, and he must surely report to the master the results of his management.

It is the same for the person who has been entrusted with the work of God. The church and the saints, the gospel and material things, are not the possessions of any individual or leader. If a pastor makes the saints his own people, uses the finances of the church like his own property, or acts as if he were the absolute master of the church, he has stepped outside the position of a steward. The true Master of the church is Jesus Christ.

Jesus said that a steward needs both faithfulness and wisdom. If one has wisdom but is not faithful, one can manipulate people by using one's knowledge and ability. On the other hand, even with good intentions, if one lacks wisdom, one may fail to supply people with suitable food. Wisdom is discerning the master's will and each person's circumstances, and faithfulness is

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carrying out the work entrusted to one without change, for the master's will and not for one's own benefit.

The important mission of the steward is *"to give them their portion of food in due season."* The steward of a household had to keep well in the storehouse the grain and the food received from the master, and give them out suitably at the needed time so that the servants would not go hungry. He was not to eat the food alone, pile it up until it rotted, or give it all to certain people only.

This food also includes the actual food that keeps a person's body alive and the care that is needed. God looks after not only a person's soul but also the circumstances of his body. Therefore the church must not merely preach words to a hungry person and send him away; it must care with practical love for the sick and the poor, the lonely and the weak.

However, in view of the fact that Jesus spoke these words to His disciples and to those who would be entrusted with the word in the future, the most important food to be given out in due season is the word of God that gives life to the soul. The person entrusted with the word of God must not feed people his own philosophy or success stories. He must deliver not teachings meant to make people submit to him, but the word of the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished.

The food a soul needs first of all is the word of God, which makes one realize the fact that one is a sinner, and the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which removed all those sins once and for all. Jesus took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. Then, carrying those sins, He went to the Cross and received the judgment of sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying. Jesus, who had been buried, rose again on the third day and gave new life to those who believe.

The true steward preaches that salvation was completed with the baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection. The person who has believed this gospel receives the remission of all sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. The steward entrusted with the word must nurture the saints so that they stand firmly on this gospel and share the food of life they have received with other souls in turn.

We must preach the word in due season and be faithful to the end

The word that the food is given out *"in due season"* is also important. To the person who has just heard the gospel, sin and salvation must first be explained clearly. To the person whose assurance of salvation is shaken, the righteousness Jesus completed must be shown again. The person who has fallen into the desires of the flesh needs the word of rebuke and turning, and the person who is discouraged needs the word of comfort and hope.

To preach in due season does not mean to change the truth into words people like to hear. It means to supply rightly the same gospel and the same word of God according to each person's spiritual state. One cannot force hard food on a small child, nor keep feeding only milk to a grown person. The true steward looks at the state of the saints and supplies the word they need.

In verse 43 Jesus said that if the master, when he returns, finds the steward still giving out the food, that servant is blessed. What matters is not a record of having once worked hard. It is whether one is faithfully doing the work entrusted to one even at the moment the master returns.

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A person may work hard when he first receives an office, and then, as time passes, assert his own rights. At first he may serve souls, and later turn his attention to gaining the respect of people and wealth. But the faithful and wise steward does not change even at the time when the master seems not to be there. Even when people do not recognize him, he keeps doing the work the Lord has entrusted to him.

In verse 44 Jesus said that the master will make the faithful steward ruler over all that he has. This does not mean that the steward takes the master's property and it becomes his own. It means that the master entrusts greater responsibility and glory to the person who has been faithful in a small responsibility. The master acknowledges the faithfulness of that steward and lets him take part in his own rule and joy.

The greatest blessing the Lord gives is to receive the acknowledgment of the Lord and take part in the glory of the kingdom of God. The Lord supplies what is needed to the servant who serves the gospel on this earth as well, and when He comes again, He remembers the labor of the faithful servant and gives him a reward.

The faithfulness of the believer does not pay the price of salvation. It is not because we have worked faithfully that Jesus takes away our sins. When we had no merit at all, Jesus first took our sins upon Himself with His baptism, gave up His life on the Cross, and completed salvation with the resurrection.

Therefore salvation is received by grace, and faithfulness appears as thankfulness for that grace. The faithful and wise steward is not a person who gives out food in order to receive salvation, but a person who, thankful for the grace of having already received the food of life, shares it with others as well. Because the Lord first gave Himself as the food of life, the believer also gives himself to the work of giving life to other souls.

The servant who thinks his master is delaying harms people

In verse 45 a completely different kind of servant appears. He thinks in his heart, *"My master is delaying his coming."* With his mouth he may acknowledge the master, but in his actual heart he acts as if the master would not return. Since he does not believe in the return of the master, instead of serving the people entrusted to him he beats them, and he eats and drinks and gets drunk with the master's property.

The thought *"My master is delaying his coming"* is not a simple mistake in calculating time. It is distrust and contempt toward the master. It is thinking that since the master is not in sight right now, there is no one to call him to account either. He regards what belongs to the master as his own, and uses the people he ought to serve together with as tools for satisfying his own desires.

The faithful steward gives out food, but the wicked servant beats the servants. This contrast clearly reveals the identity of the person entrusted with the work of God. The true leader feeds people and gives them life, but the false leader rules people with fear and violence. The true steward shares what belongs to the master, but the wicked servant takes what belongs to others and satisfies his own desires.

Using the name of God and the gospel to threaten people and make them submit blindly to oneself is also beating the servants entrusted to one. The gospel and the office are not tools for binding people under one's own power. The true steward does not regard the saints as his own possession; he cares for them as souls belonging to Jesus Christ, feeds them the word of life, and leads them to serve the Lord freely.

The office of the church is not a privilege of sitting in a

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higher seat than others. It is the responsibility to give out food to more people and to serve more. One may boast of the fact that one knows much and has been entrusted with much, but before the Lord that is the reason one must receive a stricter evaluation.

In verse 46 the master returns on a day that servant does not expect and at an hour he does not know. The wicked servant's denying the return of the master does not mean that the master does not come. The master's delay only gives the servant time to reveal his true heart; it does not cancel the master's promise.

Jesus said that the master *"will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."* This is not a light caution or a temporary loss. It is the stern judgment brought down on the servant who said he belonged to the master but in reality did not believe in the master and abused people.

This servant had been entrusted with the master's house and people, but thinking that the master was delaying, he beat the people entrusted to him and pursued his own desires. His conduct revealed the unbelief and the unfaithfulness of one who did not actually believe in the master and forsook the gospel and the souls entrusted to him. In the end the Lord put him in the portion that *"the unbelievers"* receive.

This warning is not a matter of having done a little less work. It is the word that the Lord sternly judges the person who knows the gospel of the water and the Spirit and has received the grace of the Lord, yet defies His will to the end, harms the souls entrusted to him, and pursues only his own desires. The person who turns away to the end from the gospel and the responsibility he has received from the Lord comes to be put in the portion that the unbelievers receive.

From the one who has received much, much is required

Verses 47 and 48 show the fact that the judgment of God is carried out precisely according to the knowledge and the responsibility a person has received. The servant who clearly knew his master's will and yet did not prepare and did not act is beaten with many stripes. The servant who did wrong without knowing his master's will exactly is beaten with few.

The fact that one did not know does not exempt one from all responsibility. Even the servant who did not know is judged, because he committed *"things deserving of stripes."* But God does not mechanically judge the person who heard much of the word and yet deliberately defied it in the same way as the person who did wrong without knowing enough. He judges by reckoning exactly the light, the opportunity, and the responsibility each person has received.

The words *"beaten with many stripes"* and *"beaten with few"* mean that the judgment of God is carried out justly according to the knowledge and the responsibility each person has received. The more clearly a person knew his master's will and yet deliberately defied it, the heavier his responsibility and his judgment become.

This principle is very stern for the person entrusted with the gospel. The person who has never once heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the person who clearly knew the meaning of the baptism and the Cross of Jesus and even taught it to others do not bear the same responsibility. The person who has received a clearer truth has received a greater responsibility to believe, preach, and keep that truth.

The word *"For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed,*

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of him they will ask the more" means that we must not think of the great grace we have received only as a privilege. The greater the grace received, the greater the thankfulness and the responsibility. To have received the remission of all sins and the Holy Spirit by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the greatest grace a person can receive. Therefore the person who has received that gospel also has the responsibility to believe and keep that grace and to share it with others.

Jesus took our sins upon Himself with His own body, paid the price of sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again and gave eternal life. He also gave the Holy Spirit and the authority to become children of God. The service of the saints is the work of sharing with other souls the life and the grace they have received so abundantly.

This text makes especially the person entrusted with the word and with souls look back at what he is feeding them. He must examine whether he is leading people to Christ by preaching the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus, or binding them under his own authority with works and fear. The authority entrusted to him must be used not for lording it over people but for feeding souls and giving them life.

Parents and teachers, the workers of the church and each person in charge, must also treat the people entrusted to them as belonging to the Lord. They must not regard them as objects to be moved as they please, but must supply the word they need and practical help at the right time, and serve them so that they grow in faith within the gospel.

Therefore we must first believe in our hearts the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished, and receive the remission of all sins. After that, we must not clutch the life, the time, the material things, and the gospel we have received from the Lord as if they were our own, but must use them faithfully

according to the will of the Lord. When we have done wrong, we must turn before the word and do the work entrusted to us again.

Luke chapter 12 verses 41–48 clearly show what the believer who waits for the second coming of the Lord must do. To wait is not to calculate dates or to hide away from the world. It is to share the food of life received from the Lord with the people who need it, to use the authority entrusted to one in serving, and to live truthfully even at the times when the master seems not to be there.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not monopolize the salvation he has received. He shares with other people the news that Jesus took sin upon Himself with His baptism, received the judgment with the blood and the death of the Cross, and gave new life with the resurrection. He also does not merely preach the gospel in words while turning away from people's actual pain; he cares for the soul and the body together.

When the Lord comes again, the blessed servant is not the servant who lorded it over people, but the servant who gave out food in due season. He is not the servant who took possession of many things, but the servant who used what belonged to the master according to the master's will. He is not the servant who made his own name great, but the servant who revealed the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ and gave life to souls. We must stand before the Lord as such faithful and wise stewards.

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The gospel of the water and the Spirit divides faith from unbelief

"'I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.'" (Luke 12:49–53).

Earlier Jesus said that there would be a stern judgment on the servant who knows his master's will and yet does not do it. The servant who thinks as if the master would not return, beats the other servants, and satisfies only his own desires comes to be put in the portion that the unbelievers receive. Following that word, Jesus declared that He had come to send fire on the earth.

Jesus came to send the fire of salvation and judgment

The fire of verse 49 is the spiritual fire that begins through the coming of Jesus and the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This fire is the fire of the gospel that saves sinners, and at the same time the fire that exposes and judges the unbelief that rejects the salvation of God. Before the gospel it is clearly revealed whether a person will believe in Jesus and receive the remission of sins, or reject that salvation and remain in his sins.

In the word of Jesus, *"How I wish it were already kindled!"* is contained His desire that the gospel of salvation spread to the

whole world and that the souls bound in sin receive the remission of sins and become the people of God. The Lord wanted to take back the souls who had been deceived by Satan and had left God, cleanse them with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and transfer them into the kingdom of God.

People are born having inherited sin from Adam, and by their own strength they cannot escape from that sin and its judgment. Even though there is in the human heart the thought of wanting to live a good life, in reality people commit sin and oppose God. Therefore every person absolutely needs the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished.

In order to save sinners, Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth clothed in human flesh. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River He took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body, and carrying those sins He went to the Cross and received the judgment of sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying. Then He rose again on the third day and overcame sin and death.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins by believing that Jesus took all sins upon Himself and was judged for him. But the person who hears the same gospel and does not believe rejects the salvation Jesus accomplished and remains under his sins as he is. Right here the division caused by the gospel begins.

The fire Jesus sent does not let people stay in a middle ground. It reveals whether one believes or does not believe that Jesus saved him with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The hypocrisy of saying with the mouth that one believes in Jesus while rejecting in the heart the salvation He accomplished and trying to live as one pleases is also exposed before this fire of the gospel.

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He had to accomplish the baptism of the suffering of the Cross

In verse 50 Jesus said, *"I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!"* Jesus had already received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River when He began His public ministry. Through that baptism He received the sins of all the people of the world passed on to Him.

Therefore the *"baptism to be baptized with"* spoken of here does not mean that He would receive water baptism again at the Jordan River; it refers to His going into the suffering and the death of the Cross carrying the sin of the world He had already taken upon Himself. With the baptism at the Jordan River He took sin upon Himself, and now He had to receive the judgment of that sin on the Cross.

Jesus knew how horrible the suffering He would undergo would be. The sinless Son of God had to take all the sins of the world upon Himself and receive the judgment of the curse, the shame, and death. But Jesus did not avoid that suffering. Because of His love that sought to save us, He obeyed the will of the Father to the end.

The word *"how distressed I am till it is accomplished!"* expresses the deep pain and burden that Jesus, who had taken the sin of the world upon Himself, felt until He completed the judgment of the Cross. Jesus had to accomplish the salvation of mankind completely with the baptism He received at the Jordan River, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection.

The Cross was not an accidental failure that befell Jesus. Jesus knew beforehand the suffering and the death He would receive, and He accepted them as the mission He had to accomplish in order to save sinners. The baptism of Jesus, His

death on the Cross, and His resurrection are not separate events but one gospel that completed the righteousness of God.

After this salvation was completed, the disciples received the Holy Spirit and began to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Wherever the gospel was preached, people who received the remission of sins arose, and people who rejected and opposed the gospel also appeared. The fire Jesus sent began to be kindled in the world through the preaching of the gospel.

The gospel causes division even within the closest relationships

In verse 51 Jesus asked, *"Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth?"* and said, *"Not at all, but rather division."* The coming of Jesus was not meant to bring about a peace in which everyone gets along vaguely while turning away from the truth.

The true peace Jesus gives is that a person receives the remission of sins and is reconciled to God. But in order to obtain this peace, sin and unbelief must first be exposed, and the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must be divided from the unbelief that rejects that gospel. Therefore, without passing through the spiritual war that leads to salvation, one cannot obtain true peace.

In verses 52 and 53 Jesus said that five in one house will be divided, three against two and two against three. Even between the closest family members, such as father and son, mother and daughter, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, division arises when their responses to the gospel differ.

Salvation is not given automatically along bloodlines or family relationships. A child is not born again by itself because the parents believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, nor

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are the parents automatically saved because a child has received the remission of sins. Each person must believe in his own heart the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus.

The person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the person who is still in sin differ in the master of their hearts and the purpose of their lives. In the heart of the person born again the Holy Spirit dwells and makes him live according to the will of God, but the person who does not believe the gospel lives according to his own thoughts and the desires of the flesh. This difference causes a clash even between the closest family members.

This spiritual war is not a war of hating one's family or fighting physically. It is the fight of clearly telling that person how Jesus took his sins upon Himself and removed them, so that he too may believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins. Delivering the truth in order to give life to a soul is the spiritual war the saints must fight.

Getting along well with one's family on a human level is important. But if one does not preach the gospel to that soul in order to keep an outward harmony, one does not truly love that person. To stay silent while knowing that the person one loves is going to judgment without having received the remission of sins cannot be a love that gives life to that soul.

Therefore the saints must not hide the gospel of the water and the Spirit even if their family opposes them. In season and out of season they must tell them that Jesus took even that person's sins upon Himself at the Jordan River, paid the price of those sins on the Cross, and rose again and gave eternal life.

As a result of preaching the gospel, the family may oppose and difficulties may arise in the relationship. But we must not deny the salvation Jesus accomplished or give up preaching the

gospel in order to keep an outward peace with people. We must clearly judge whether Jesus is right or the thoughts of man and religious tradition are right, and stand on the side of faith.

The saints must stand against false faith and the desires of the flesh with the gospel

Even within the church, not everyone believes the same gospel just because everyone speaks of Jesus. Some people speak only of the blood of the Cross and do not know why Jesus received baptism at the Jordan River. Some people hear of the baptism and the Cross of Jesus and yet believe that their own deeds and prayers of repentance must be added for sin to be washed away.

When the gospel of the water and the Spirit is clearly preached, it comes into conflict with such false faith. The saints must clearly testify through the Scriptures that Jesus took the sin of the world upon Himself with His baptism, received its judgment on the Cross, and completed salvation with the resurrection. To break people's wrong faith with the gospel and lead them to the true remission of sins is spiritual war.

The saints themselves also have a spiritual fight. Even after receiving the remission of sins, the flesh chases after the world and wants to live as it pleases. But the Holy Spirit who dwells in the heart leads us to believe the word of God and follow the will of the Lord. The saints must deny the desires of the flesh and follow the Lord by the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

In this fight there is no middle ground. It is one of two things: either believe the gospel and follow the will of God, or hold on to one's own will and oppose the gospel. If a person says he

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believes in Jesus but rejects to the end the preaching of the gospel and the will of God, his faith is a faith that has stayed at the level of knowledge. The person who truly believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit follows the guidance of the Holy Spirit, serves the gospel, and takes part in the work of saving souls.

The word that Jesus came to send fire teaches the saints not to avoid spiritual war. They must preach the gospel to the souls who have not yet received the remission of sins, drive back false faith and unbelief with the word of God, and lead people to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and become the people of God.

Luke chapter 12 verses 49–53 teach the fact that the salvation of Jesus clearly reveals the hearts of people. Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism at the Jordan River, entered into the baptism of the suffering of the Cross and died shedding His blood, and rose again on the third day. The person who believes that completed salvation receives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit, and enjoys true peace with God.

But because there are people who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and people who reject it, spiritual division arises in the home, in the church, and in the world. The saints must not hide the gospel in order to keep a false peace with people, but must clearly deliver the truth so that the souls they love may receive the remission of sins. The fire Jesus sent is the fire of God that saves souls with the gospel, divides faith from unbelief, and judges the sin of rejecting the gospel to the end.

Discern the time of salvation

"Then He also said to the multitudes, 'Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, "A shower is coming"; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, "There will be hot weather"; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? 'Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite.'" (Luke 12:54–59).

Earlier Jesus told His disciples to be watchful, and taught that the steward must carry out faithfully the work entrusted to him before the master returns. He went on to say that faith and unbelief would be revealed through the fire He sent, and that division would arise, even within families, according to people's response to the gospel.

Now Jesus speaks not only to the disciples but to the multitudes gathered there. The people listening to the word of Jesus had to judge who the One standing before them was. Though the Son of God had come as the Savior, they were not realizing the meaning of the time in which Jesus had come.

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We must discern the time of salvation rather than visible signs

In verse 54 Jesus said that when people see a cloud rising in the west, they say that a shower is coming soon. Since the Mediterranean Sea lay to the west of Israel, when clouds gathered from the west there was a high likelihood of rain. Through experience, people looked at the direction and the shape of the clouds and expected rain.

The south wind of verse 55 refers to the wind blowing from the hot, dry regions to the south. People knew that when the south wind blew, the weather would become very hot. Jesus did not rebuke them because their weather observation was wrong. In fact the rain came and the heat arrived just as they expected.

People observe very well the visible changes of nature. They study how the weather will change, how the economic situation will move, and what to prepare in order to gain a benefit. The farmer watches the seasons and the rain, the merchant watches the changes of the market, and the office worker watches the trends of his field. This wisdom in itself is not wrong.

The problem is that people are very sensitive to the changes related to the life of the flesh, yet indifferent to their own souls and the eternal judgment. They know well that rain is coming, but they do not recognize the fact that the Son of God has come as the Savior; they prepare for the coming heat, but they do not prepare for the judgment of sin.

In verse 56 Jesus called them *"Hypocrites."* It was not that they could not believe in Jesus because there was no evidence. They had heard the word of Jesus and had seen the signs of the sick being healed, demons departing, and the dead being raised. John the Baptist also had prepared the way for Jesus to come and had testified of Him.

Even so, people did not accept Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior. The religious leaders boasted that they knew the Scriptures, but when the Christ to whom the Scriptures testify came before their eyes, they rejected Him. Their problem lay in the unbelief of the heart rather than in a lack of knowledge.

Hypocrisy is appearing outwardly to serve God while in one's actual heart not believing the word of God. Even if one reads the Scriptures, attends worship, and keeps religious regulations, if one does not accept the salvation Jesus accomplished, it can be a faith that has only the outward form. Jesus did not regard their spiritual ignorance as a simple mistake, but rebuked it as hypocrisy.

In the word *"how is it you do not discern this time?"* the words *"this time"* mean first of all the time when Jesus had come among them and was preaching the word of salvation. The Son of God had come to His own people clothed in flesh, the preparation for salvation had been made through John the Baptist, and Jesus was now going toward the Cross. They had to discern that very decisive time of salvation.

The most important fact we must discern today is that Jesus Christ has already come to this earth and accomplished salvation, and that now is the time when everyone must believe that gospel. We cannot know the day when Jesus will come again or the day when each person will die. Therefore now is the time not to put off the problem of one's sins but to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished.

Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. John the Baptist, as the representative of mankind whom God had appointed, gave baptism to Jesus, and through that baptism Jesus took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body. The sinless Son of God received the sins of sinners passed on to Him.

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Jesus went to the Cross carrying those sins He had taken upon Himself at the Jordan River. By dying on the Cross shedding His blood He received the judgment of sin in our place, and He was buried and rose again on the third day, overcoming sin and death. With the baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection, the salvation of mankind was completed.

This work of salvation is the very time of God that people must discern. People must not judge what age they are living in only by the changes of politics and science. They must know the fact that they are living in the age when the gospel is preached that Jesus took all sins upon Himself and ended the judgment.

We must judge for ourselves what is right by the word of God

In verse 57 Jesus asked, *"Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right?"* God has given people the responsibility to hear the word and judge right and wrong. We must not follow unconditionally because a religious leader says so, or think that something must be the truth because many people believe it.

People must examine for themselves before the word of God. Whether I am a sinner, whether there is a judgment of sin, by what method Jesus saved me, whether my sins really passed on to Jesus through the baptism of Jesus, and whether the price of those sins was completely paid on the Cross—these we must judge through the word.

To judge for oneself means to decide one's own salvation with the word of God as the exact standard. We must confirm by the word whether Jesus took away all my sins, and if so, how much

of them He took away. Since no one else can believe on our behalf, each person must believe in his heart the salvation of Jesus.

A child is not automatically saved because the parents believe, nor does a church member automatically receive the remission of sins because the pastor believes. A long record of attending church and an office cannot take the place of an individual's faith. Each person must believe in his heart the fact that Jesus took my sins upon Himself and was judged for me.

If the Scriptures say that Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself, we must believe that word more than our own experience. We must not stop at knowing the baptism and the Cross of Jesus only as knowledge, but must believe that that salvation is a fact accomplished for me, and lay down our own righteousness and religious merit.

We must be reconciled to God before standing at the judgment seat

In verse 58 Jesus speaks of two people on their way to court. A person who has a debt or a fault has been accused, and he is on his way to the magistrate together with the person who accused him. While they are still on the way, there is a chance to come to an agreement and be reconciled. But once they arrive before the magistrate and the verdict is handed down, the situation changes.

This word expresses the spiritual urgency that a person must be reconciled to God while he still has the chance. People are carrying the debt of sin and heading toward the judgment seat of God. While alive they must settle the problem of sin by believing the gospel, and after the judgment has been handed down, the verdict cannot be reversed.

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Here what accuses the sinner is the law of God. The law makes clear that a person's thoughts and deeds have departed from the will of God and accuses him of being a sinner. Before arriving before God the Magistrate, one must escape from the condemnation of the law and be reconciled to God.

The law of God reveals that people are sinners. Before the words *"You shall not murder," "You shall not commit adultery,"* and *"You shall not covet,"* people discover their sins. If one examines not only outwardly visible deeds but also the hatred and the lust, the greed and the pride of the heart, there is no one who can say that he is righteous before the law.

The law exposes and accuses sin, but it cannot remove that sin. Therefore the word *"make every effort along the way to settle with him"* is an urging to receive the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit while we are alive.

But how can a sinner be reconciled to the holy God? A person cannot be reconciled to God by doing many good deeds or by trying not to sin. This is because the sins he has already committed do not disappear, and he cannot live perfectly in the future either.

Reconciliation with God is not something a sinner brings about by paying off the price of his sins little by little. God first sent Jesus Christ and opened the way of reconciliation. With the baptism at the Jordan River Jesus took all the sins and debts of sinners upon Himself, and by dying on the Cross shedding His blood He paid that price once and for all.

God made Jesus take upon Himself the debt of sin that we could not pay by ourselves. Because Jesus carried our sins and was judged and died, the person who believes that salvation is reconciled to God. This is the reconciliation accomplished through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jesus paid the debt of sin without leaving even the very last mite

The expression *"paid the very last mite"* in verse 59 means that even the smallest debt must all be paid. Before the judgment of God, it is not that only great sins are a problem and small sins are passed over. However small a sin may look in the eyes of people, before the righteous standard of God it must surely be dealt with.

A sinner cannot pay that debt by his own strength down to the very last mite. One sin already committed does not disappear because one has done one good deed, nor are the sins of the past erased because one has lived a religious life for a long time. Even after entering the prison of judgment, a person has no ability to pay the debt of his sins.

Only Jesus can pay the debt of sin completely. Jesus took upon Himself with His baptism not only the past sins of one person, but all the sins of mankind from Adam to the last person of the world. Since He received the judgment of those sins once and for all on the Cross, in the heart of the person who believes there remains no debt of sin to be paid before God.

To the person who has believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the word *"paid the very last mite"* is not a word that gives only fear. It becomes a word of thankfulness that Jesus completely fulfilled that very condition in our place. He did not merely reduce our sins somewhat; He removed them without leaving even one.

The saints must also guard against becoming sensitive to the changes of the world while growing insensitive to the state of their own souls. If one prepares in detail for property and health, for one's occupation and the future of one's children, yet does not know the gospel, one has missed the most important

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preparation. However accurately one predicts the future of the world, if one stands before the judgment without having been reconciled to God, that knowledge does not save one's soul.

Even the person who has already received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must look back at his life through this word. He must not stay only at the knowledge that he knows the gospel, but must discern that now is the opportunity to preach the gospel to others. If one keeps putting off endlessly the work of preaching the gospel to one's family and neighbors, the opportunity may disappear.

Luke chapter 12 verses 54–59 teach us to discern first the time our own soul is in, rather than the weather and the circumstances of the world. Jesus Christ came and took all sins upon Himself with the baptism at the Jordan River, died on the Cross shedding His blood, and rose again on the third day, and so opened the way to be reconciled to God.

While we are still on the way, that is, while we have the opportunity to hear and believe the gospel, we must accept this salvation. After we have stood before the judgment seat it is too late. We must not try to pay the debt of sin with our own good deeds, but must believe the fact that Jesus took all sins upon Himself with His baptism and paid the whole price of sin on the Cross without leaving even the very last mite.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all sins, is reconciled to God, and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. He believes that Jesus removed all those sins without leaving even the very last mite, and lives telling others as well of this perfect salvation. This is the faith that rightly discerns the time of salvation. ✉

Questions and Answers on Luke Chapter 12

[Question] 1. Briefly explain the main content of Luke chapter 12.

In Luke chapter 12 Jesus taught us to beware of hypocrisy, to fear God, and to confess Jesus before people. He also told us to abandon covetousness and worry, to seek the kingdom of God, and to live as faithful stewards who wait for the Master who will come again. Finally, He awakened us to the division caused by the gospel and to the responsibility to discern the time and prepare for the judgment.

First, Jesus told us to beware of hypocrisy, the leaven of the Pharisees. Since what is hidden will be revealed, one cannot merely put on a godly appearance before people. The disciples must fear God, who can judge even after death, rather than people who kill the body, and must confess Jesus even in persecution.

"In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Luke 12:1).

Second, Jesus said that a person's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. The rich fool laid up his plentiful harvest only for himself and regarded his wealth as guaranteeing even the peace of his soul, but when God took his life that night, he could take nothing with him. Therefore the saints must drive back covetousness and be rich toward God.

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"And He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.'" (Luke 12:15).

Third, since God feeds the ravens and clothes the lilies of the field, the disciples must not have their hearts taken up by the problem of eating and clothing. They must believe in the Father who knows the needs of their lives, seek the kingdom of God first, and use the wealth entrusted to them for their neighbors and the work of the gospel. This is because where the treasure is, there the heart is also.

Fourth, Jesus told the parable of the servants who wait for their master with their waists girded and their lamps burning. To be watchful is not to calculate the time of the second coming, but to be faithful, like the faithful and wise steward, giving out food in due season to the people entrusted to one even when the master is not in sight. From the one who has received much, much is required, and of the one who has been entrusted with much, much is asked.

"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'" (Luke 12:40).

Fifth, Jesus spoke of the baptism He would receive, that is, the suffering and death of the Cross. Between the person who believes the salvation Jesus accomplished and the person who rejects it, division can arise even within a close family. The saints must love their families, but they must not hide the gospel or deny Jesus for fear of conflict.

Sixth, Jesus rebuked the people who discerned the weather yet did not realize the time when God was accomplishing salvation. Jesus took the sin of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. We must believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, abandon

a faith meant to be seen by people and covetousness, and faithfully do the work entrusted to us until Jesus comes again.

[Question] 2. In Luke chapter 12 verse 1, to what did Jesus compare the hypocrisy of the Pharisees?

Jesus compared the hypocrisy of the Pharisees to leaven. This is because, just as leaven spreads through the whole lump of dough even in a small amount, hypocrisy also seeps into the heart and the life and affects even other people.

"In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Luke 12:1).

Luke chapter 12 verse 1 directly states that the meaning of the leaven is *"hypocrisy."* The Pharisees looked outwardly like godly and righteous people, but rather than believing in and loving God in their hearts, they sought the recognition of people and their own righteousness. Their words and deeds did not match inside and outside.

The parallel text also explains the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees as their doctrine. When a person who does not believe in his heart teaches his own thoughts and traditions as if they were the word of God, that teaching also spreads like leaven and leads other people into a formal faith.

Hypocrisy grows when one is more conscious of the eyes of people than of God. One dresses up godly words and deeds in order to receive the praise of people and tries to hide one's own sin and unbelief, but what is hidden is revealed in the end. God knows even what was said in the dark and what was said in the inner rooms.

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Worship and prayer, the study of the word, and good conduct are not in themselves hypocrisy. The obedience one renders while believing in God in the heart is different from putting on a godly appearance to be seen by people. The problem lies not in the form but in establishing one's own righteousness with that form and covering the unbelief of the heart.

God knows not only a person's outward appearance but also his heart and his thoughts. Therefore hypocrisy is not solved by dressing up one's religious appearance more elaborately. One must honestly admit one's sin and inability before God, and believe in the heart the salvation Jesus accomplished.

Being on guard against the leaven of the Pharisees is also connected with discerning teachings. One must not follow only the reputation or the outward appearance of the speaker, but must confirm what is actually written in the Scriptures. A teaching that makes human tradition and one's own deeds the basis of salvation blurs the faith of the gospel.

The person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit has no reason to pretend to be righteous by his own deeds. This is because he relies not on his own righteousness but on the righteousness Jesus accomplished. That faith appears not in a form that seeks the praise of people but in honest words and an honest life.

Therefore the saints must examine in the light of the word whether the faith they confess with their mouths matches their actual lives. When a fault is revealed, they must not hide it or make excuses but turn from it, and when they preach the gospel, they must honestly deliver the written word without adding human thoughts.

[Question] 3. In Luke chapter 12 verse 1, explain where the word *"hypocrisy"* came from.

The Greek word translated *"hypocrisy"* in Luke chapter 12 verse 1 is 'hypokrisis' (ὑπόκρισις). This word originally meant an answer or a reply, and later it came to be used to refer to the act and the manner of speaking of playing a role on the stage.

After that it came to mean hypocrisy and outward show, hiding one's inner heart and pretending to be someone else, as if acting a role different from one's real self. The related word 'hypokritēs' (ὑποκριτής) referred to an actor or an interpreter. That is why hypocrisy is often explained as 'faith wearing a mask.'

"In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Luke 12:1).

The hypocrisy of the Pharisees that Jesus warned against is also like this. They kept religious regulations and traditions and looked like righteous people, but rather than believing in God in their hearts, they regarded looking godly to people as important. Their outside and their inside were different from each other.

This is also the reason Jesus called hypocrisy the leaven of the Pharisees. When one person repeatedly plays a godly role, the people around him can also mistake it for true faith, and when human tradition is taught as if it were the word of God, a formal faith can spread widely.

People can deceive other people by dressing up their words and deeds, but they cannot hide their hearts from God. Hypocrisy is not simply keeping good manners or restraining one's emotions; it is the attitude of acting a godly role without true faith and establishing one's own righteousness.

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The way out of hypocrisy does not lie in acting a better role. One must believe the salvation Jesus completed by receiving baptism from John and taking sin upon Himself, being judged on the Cross, and rising from the dead. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not dress up a righteous appearance with his own deeds, but relies on the righteousness of Jesus.

Therefore, rather than first condemning other people as hypocrites, we must examine whether our own words and lives are an act put on to win the recognition of people. We must not cover our sins and weaknesses with a mask, but honestly admit them before God, and believe the written word and the salvation Jesus accomplished rather than human tradition.

[Question] 4. In Luke chapter 12 verse 5, what is the root of the word *"hell"*?

The Greek word translated *"hell"* in Luke chapter 12 verse 5 is 'Gehenna' (γέεννα). This word came from a place name of Hebrew and Aramaic origin meaning *"the Valley of Hinnom."* 'Ge' means valley, and *"Hinnom"* is a proper noun.

The Valley of Hinnom was an actual place to the south of Jerusalem. There the abominable practice of serving idols and making children pass through the fire was carried out, and King Josiah defiled that place in order to stop idolatry.

"And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech" (2 Kings 23:10).

Jeremiah also rebuked the sin of burning children there and prophesied that when the judgment of God came, that place would be called *"the Valley of Slaughter."* In this way the

Valley of Hinnom became a place that brought to mind idolatry, bloodshed, and the judgment of God.

"And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart. 'Therefore behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'when it will no more be called Tophet, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Tophet until there is no room" (Jeremiah 7:31–32).

In the New Testament, 'Gehenna,' which came from that place name, is used as the word that refers to hell, where sinners receive the final judgment of God. Jesus contrasted people, who can kill the body, with God, who can judge even after death.

Therefore 'Gehenna' in this verse does not mean merely the valley near Jerusalem or the death of the body. Jesus clearly warned that there is a judgment that God brings down even after a person's death.

"But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!" (Luke 12:5).

The warning of Jesus is the word telling us to fear God, who governs life and eternal destiny, rather than the threats of people. A sinner cannot escape the judgment by himself, but if he believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished, he receives the remission of sins and is saved from the judgment of hell. Therefore we must not deny Jesus out of fear of people, but must believe the salvation God has given.

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[Question] 5. In Luke chapter 12 verses 6–7, why do we not need to be afraid even in the face of the threat of death?

The reason we do not need to be gripped by fear even in the face of the threat of death is that God does not forget His own people and governs even life and the destiny after death. People can kill the body but can do no more after that, while God has the authority of judgment and eternal life.

"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!" (Luke 12:4–5).

Jesus did not say that the disciples would not receive threats or persecution. Persecutors can harm the life of the body, but they cannot take away the salvation of a saint and his relationship with God. Therefore we must not deny God out of fear of people.

The word to fear God and the word *"Do not fear"* do not contradict each other. When we fear God, who has the authority over life and judgment, we can avoid regarding the threats of people as greater than God. The faith that God regards His own people as precious overcomes the fear of people.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:6–7).

Sparrows were sold at a very low price, but God does not forget even one of them. God, who counts even the hairs of the head that seem trivial to people, knows in detail and cares for the circumstances and the sufferings of His own people, who are of

more value than many sparrows.

Even if a saint suffers the death of the body in persecution, he has not been forgotten by God. Since Jesus rose from the dead and gave eternal life to those who believe, the death of the body is not the end of everything.

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25).

This boldness does not come from a person's strong character or will. It comes from believing in the remission of sins and the eternal life that Jesus gave by receiving baptism from John and taking the sin of the world upon Himself, being judged on the Cross, and rising from the dead. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit knows that not even death can cut off that salvation.

Therefore the saints must wisely avoid danger and protect their lives, but must not deny Jesus or the gospel because of fear. Believing in God, who knows all our circumstances and keeps our eternal life, we must confess Jesus before people.

[Question] 6. In Luke chapter 12 verse 10, what is the sin that He said would not be remitted?

The sin that He said would not be remitted is the sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that the sin of speaking a word against the Son of Man can be remitted, but that the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not receive remission.

"And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven" (Luke 12:10).

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Blaspheming against the Holy Spirit is different from speaking wrongly out of ignorance of the matter or making a mistake out of momentary fear. It is the attitude of denouncing as evil the holy work of God that the Holy Spirit has done, and stubbornly opposing it.

In the context of Luke chapter 12, the matter of confessing or denying Jesus before people is set alongside this. The weakness of a human being who feels fear in persecution is not the same as the stubbornness of one who knows the work of salvation to which the Holy Spirit testifies and yet keeps rejecting and hindering it. Jesus also promised the disciples who would be dragged away that the Holy Spirit would teach them what they ought to say.

In the parallel text, the scribes saw Jesus cast out demons by the power of the Holy Spirit and yet said that He had an unclean spirit. They attributed what God had done to the work of the devil.

"'Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation'— because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'" (Mark 3:28–30).

The Holy Spirit testifies to the salvation Jesus accomplished. Jesus took the sin of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. To know this work of salvation and yet oppose it as a lie or an evil thing, and to hinder other people so that they cannot believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, is what blasphemy against the Holy Spirit looks like.

It is not because the salvation of Jesus is insufficient that this sin is not remitted. It is because one rejects to the end the way of

the remission of sins to which the Holy Spirit testifies. One cannot accept the remission of God while opposing His work of remitting sins as evil.

A person who seeks salvation does not need to despair over past mistakes or an irreverent thought that crossed his mind. The person who realizes his fault and seeks the remission of sins must hear the written word and believe the salvation Jesus accomplished. The purpose of this warning is not to push away the soul who seeks salvation, but to tell people not to stubbornly oppose the salvation of God.

Therefore the person who has heard the gospel must not judge or hinder the salvation of God with his own thoughts and religious tradition. He must believe, according to the written word, the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished, and honestly preach it so that other people too may hear this gospel and receive the remission of sins.

[Question] 7. In Luke chapter 12 verse 15, what is *"covetousness"*?

Covetousness is the endless desire that, without being thankful for what God has given, tries to have more and covets even what is not one's own share. It is also the attitude of believing that wealth and possessions will guarantee life, happiness, and security, and entrusting one's heart to them.

"And He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.'" (Luke 12:15).

This word was given after a man asked Jesus to command his brother to divide the inheritance with him. Seeing the greed hidden in the matter of property and the belief that life would

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become secure if possessions increased, Jesus told them to beware of all covetousness.

Seeking what is needed for living, working diligently to care for one's family, and preparing for the future are not covetousness. The problem lies in wealth becoming the master rather than a tool of life, in relying on money more than on God, and in trying to have more even to the point of harming the share of others.

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10).

If one loves money, one comes to forsake faith and conscience in order to gain more, worries about losing what one has, and pierces oneself through with many sorrows. Wealth is a tool that can be used for good, but if the heart loves and relies on it, it becomes a master that rules the person.

Covetousness appears not only in regard to money but also as the desire to make position and honor, power and recognition, and pleasure one's own. When one tries to obtain from these things the peace and satisfaction that one should receive from God, they take the place of God in the heart, and so the Scriptures say that covetousness is idolatry.

"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5).

The problem of the rich fool who follows also lay not in the plentiful harvest itself, but in laying up everything only for himself and believing that wealth would guarantee even the peace and the life of his soul. A person's life does not depend on the amount of his property, and true richness lies in believing in God, the Master of life.

A sinner cannot fundamentally solve covetousness by

making self-control and sharing his own righteousness. He must believe the salvation Jesus gave by receiving baptism from John and taking sin upon Himself, being judged on the Cross, and rising from the dead. The satisfaction obtained in that grace becomes the basis of the faith that does not make wealth absolute and can share it.

Therefore, whether we have little or much, we must be thankful for the share God has allowed. We must not serve wealth as our master, but must care for ourselves and our families and use it rightly in serving neighbors in need and the gospel, and so live a life that is rich toward God.

[Question] 8. In Luke chapter 12 verses 16–21, what kind of person was the rich man Jesus spoke of?

The rich man Jesus spoke of was a person who, when the yield of his ground was plentiful, built greater barns to store his crops and goods, and thought that with them he could give even his soul peace. He had much wealth, but he did not rely on God, the Master of life, and he was a foolish person who was not rich toward God.

"Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?" So he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have

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provided?" 'So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'" (Luke 12:16–21).

The act of obtaining a plentiful harvest and preparing a place to store the grain was not wrong in itself. His fault lay in regarding everything as his own possession without giving thanks to God or asking His will, and in laying it up only for himself without sharing with his neighbors.

In the thinking of the rich man the words *"my barns," "all my crops and my goods,"* and *"my soul"* appear again and again. He did not acknowledge as Master the God who had entrusted the great harvest to him, but regarded himself as the master of everything. Nor does the parable show any sign of his looking after the needs of the poor.

The greater fault was that he tried to satisfy his soul with material things. Grain can feed the body, but it cannot give life to the soul. With money one can obtain the conveniences of life and prepare for danger, but one cannot remove sin, prevent death, or buy eternal life.

God called him a *"Fool!"* While planning his life many years ahead, he did not think of the fact that God could require his life that very night. When death comes, all the wealth he has laid up becomes someone else's.

The person who is rich toward God first believes the salvation God has given, and acknowledges that God is the Master of his life and his possessions. He does not make wealth the basis of his life, but cares for his family and his neighbors and uses it for the kingdom of God and the work of the gospel.

In the world, a person who has gathered much property and prepared meticulously for the future may be called wise. But if he forgets God, the Master of the soul, he has failed to make the most important preparation. What comes before every plan is whether one could stand before God today as a saved person.

Jesus took the sin of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and gave eternal life by rising from the dead. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit obtains peace of soul not from having much or little wealth but from the salvation Jesus gave.

Therefore we must plan for the future and manage our wealth, but must not believe that material things will guarantee even our lives. We must acknowledge that everything has been entrusted to us by God, remember that we could stand before God even today, and live rich toward God.

[Question] 9. In Luke chapter 12 verse 33, what do the "*money bags which do not grow old*" mean?

The *"money bags which do not grow old"* is a figurative expression for a life in which one does not lay up the wealth of this earth only for oneself, but uses it to help neighbors in need and to serve the kingdom of God and the gospel, thus laying up a treasure in the heavens that does not fail.

"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:32–34).

Jesus first said that God the Father is pleased to give the kingdom to the disciples. The kingdom of God is not something a person buys with money or good deeds; the Father gives it by grace. A life of sharing one's possessions is the fruit borne by the person who has believed and received that grace.

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The money bags of this earth grow old, and wealth is not completely safe from thieves and moths. When we die we must leave it all behind, and we cannot remove sin or buy eternal life with wealth. But the labor of helping neighbors and serving the gospel according to the will of God is not in vain.

The word to sell what we have and give alms is a practical command not to be held captive by wealth but to use it as a tool of love. While responsibly caring for our families and preparing what is needed, we must not turn away from the needs of people in difficulty, but must willingly share the time, the strength, and the wealth God has entrusted to us.

The treasure in the heavens is not a transaction for getting back more material things. What matters is whose we regard our wealth as being and for what purpose we use it. Even a small thing shared in faith and love, and labor offered to fulfill the will of God, is not in vain before God.

The remission of sins and eternal life are not obtained as the price of almsgiving or offerings. Jesus completed salvation by receiving baptism from John and taking sin upon Himself, being judged on the Cross, and rising from the dead. The person who believes this grace does not rely on wealth as the basis of his life and can willingly share what he has received.

Jesus said that where the treasure is, there the heart is also. If one makes only property and the pleasures of the flesh one's treasure, the heart also is bound there; but if one regards God and the work of God as one's treasure, one's time, interest, and wealth also turn toward the kingdom of God.

Faith cannot be judged only by how much or how little one possesses. What matters is whether one clings to what one has only for one's own security and satisfaction, or whether one regards it as entrusted by God and can use it where it is needed. Even a little wealth, if used in love and faith, turns that person's

heart also toward the treasure in the heavens.

Therefore, to provide money bags which do not grow old means the life of faith that does not entrust one's life and security to wealth that will disappear, but uses what one has received from God for the work that has eternal value.

[Question] 10. In Luke chapter 12 verse 34, why must the saints lay up their wealth in heaven?

The most direct reason the saints must lay up their wealth in heaven is that where the treasure is, there the heart is also. According to where a person puts his wealth, his time, and his strength, his heart also regards that place as precious and follows it.

"Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:33–34).

If one makes only the wealth of the earth one's treasure, the heart is held captive by obtaining, keeping, and increasing it. If one believes in possessions as the basis of life and security, one easily comes to fear losing them and falls into the covetousness of wanting more. Moreover, the treasure of the earth is taken by thieves and damaged by moths, and when we die we must leave it all behind.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19–21).

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To lay up wealth in heaven does not mean to move money to a storehouse in heaven. It is to use the possessions God has entrusted to us in helping people in difficulty, preaching the gospel that gives life to people, and fulfilling the will of God. This labor is for the eternal kingdom of God, and so it is not in vain.

God the Father is pleased to give the kingdom to the disciples. Therefore almsgiving and offerings are not a transaction that buys salvation or the blessing of God, but the fruit of faith that the saved saints bear out of thankfulness for the grace they have received.

The One who gives the remission of sins and eternal life is not wealth but Jesus. When the saints believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus completed by receiving baptism from John and taking sin upon Himself, being judged on the Cross, and rising from the dead, they can use wealth as a tool for sharing grace without serving it as the master of their lives.

The saints must remember that they are not the absolute masters of their wealth but stewards who manage what God has entrusted to them. While caring for their families and preparing what is needed, they must be able to share according to the will of God without clinging to their possessions only for their own desires.

Therefore we must examine what our spending, our saving, and our plans regard as treasure. When we voluntarily share for neighbors in need and for the preaching of the gospel, our hearts also come to turn toward God and His kingdom.

[Question] 11. In Luke chapter 12 verses 37–38, how does the master treat the servants who are watching?

When the master returns, he calls the servants who are watching blessed, and he himself girds himself, has them sit down, and comes and serves them. Ordinarily the servant serves the master, but in this parable the master treats the servants who have waited faithfully like honored guests.

"Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants" (Luke 12:37–38).

The servants waited with their lamps burning and their waists girded so as to open the door whenever the master returned. Their keeping their posts even when the master returned in the second or the third watch, late in the night, shows unchanging faithfulness and trust.

The master's serving the servants means that he does not forget the labor of the faithful servants, gives them rest and joy, and greatly honors them. Jesus, who will come again, also delights in the saints who have waited in faith and done the work entrusted to them, and acknowledges their labor.

The word that the master returns at a late hour shows that the waiting may become longer than expected. Initial zeal alone is not enough. What is needed is continuous faithfulness that keeps the lamp burning and keeps one's post without the heart growing slack as time passes.

To be watching is not a matter of going without sleep or calculating the date of the second coming. It is to actually

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believe in the second coming of the Lord, to hold on to the written word so as to be able to receive Him whenever He comes, and to faithfully care for the people and the work entrusted to us.

The act of watching faithfully is not a merit that buys the remission of sins. A person who has become a member of the Lord's people by believing the salvation Jesus completed waits for and serves the Master out of thankfulness for the grace he has received. The promise that the master will himself serve the servants reveals the great grace of the master more than the merit of the servant.

The word that follows connects such a servant with the faithful and wise steward who gives out food in due season. Fulfilling one's responsibilities at home, at work, and in the church, preaching the gospel to the people who have not yet heard the word of salvation, and caring for the people who need help are the life of watching and waiting.

Therefore we must not be discouraged even when there is no praise from people or immediate reward. Believing that the Lord, who knows all our labor, will call the servant who has watched faithfully blessed and receive him with joy, we must faithfully do the work entrusted to us today.

[Question] 12. In Luke chapter 12 verses 42–44, what kind of person is the "*faithful and wise steward*"?

The faithful and wise steward is the person who has been entrusted by the master with the servants of his household, gives them their food in due season, and is still doing that work unchanged when the master returns. He does not use the people and the wealth entrusted to him as if they were his own, but

manages them according to the will of the master.

"And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has" (Luke 12:42–44).

The steward is not the master but a servant entrusted with the master's house, people, and property. Therefore his authority was given not for lording it over other people, but for fulfilling the will of the master and caring for the people entrusted to him.

The wise steward looks at the needs of the household and gives out food *"in due season."* While managing the resources entrusted by the master so that they are not wasted, he supplies what is needed to the people who need it at the right time.

The faithful steward does not work only where the master can see. Even when no one is watching, he does not forget his responsibility, and he does not use people and wealth for his own benefit. The fact that he is still giving out food when the master returns shows his faithfulness.

The food includes, together with actual food, the word of God and the gospel of salvation that the soul needs. We must share the food of the body with the hungry, preach the word of salvation to those who have not heard the gospel, and care for the saved saints according to each person's circumstances so that they live by faith.

The person entrusted with the responsibility of teaching the word and caring for the church must not give out his own thoughts or human tradition as if they were food. He must rightly deliver the written word, preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to those who are not yet saved, and supply the saints with the word they need so that they carry out by faith the work

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entrusted to them.

This responsibility is not limited to those who hold an office. Parents have their families, workers have the work assigned to them, and all the saints have been entrusted with time, talents, and material things. The more one has been entrusted with, the more one must remember the greater responsibility.

The saints first become people who belong to the Lord by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus completed. The faithfulness of the steward is not the price that buys salvation, but the fruit borne out of thankfulness for that grace. The clearer the salvation one has received, the more one can give oneself to fulfilling the will of the Master and giving life to others rather than asserting one's own rights.

The master said that he would entrust all that he has to the steward who has been faithful in this way. We too must remember that everything we have has been entrusted to us by God, must not oppress the weak, and must give out the food that is needed. The person who is doing the work entrusted to him whenever the Lord comes is the faithful and wise steward.

[Question] 13. In Luke chapter 12 verses 45–48, what kind of person is the wicked steward?

The wicked steward is the person who thinks in his heart that his master is delaying his coming, abandons the responsibility entrusted to him, beats the servants, and himself eats and drinks and gets drunk. He is an unfaithful servant who knows his master's will yet does not prepare, and uses the authority entrusted to him for his own desires.

"But if that servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming," and begins to beat the male and female servants,

and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:45–48).

His corruption began in his heart. When his awareness that the master would return and examine his work grew dim, his actual life also changed as if the master would not come. The attitude of saying that one knows of the second coming of the Lord while putting off the work entrusted to one is like this.

He beat the servants who had been entrusted to him to be cared for. He used the authority the master had given him not for giving out the food that was needed but for oppressing people. A position of responsibility is not given so that one may force one's own will on others or lord it over other people.

The word that he ate and drank and got drunk means that he turned away from the needs of the people entrusted to him, fell into his own pleasure and dissipation, and abandoned his responsibility. The faithful and wise steward gives out food in due season, but the wicked steward satisfies his own desires first.

The master returns on a day the servant does not expect and at an hour he does not know. The promise does not disappear because the coming of the Lord seems late. Since we cannot know the exact time, the saints must faithfully do the work entrusted to them so that they can stand before the Lord at any time.

The text says that the servant who knew his master's will and

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did not do it receives a greater punishment. Having received much of the word, office, talents, and material things is not a privilege to boast of but a responsibility to serve more.

The problem of the wicked steward does not lie in a lack of ability or in having made a mistake once. The problem is that while knowing his master's will, he abandoned his responsibility, continually abused the people entrusted to him, and used his authority to satisfy his own desires. The Lord holds leaders entrusted with people and wealth all the more heavily responsible for this.

The person who has received the remission of sins by believing the salvation Jesus accomplished must remember the grace of the Lord and care in love for the people entrusted to him. If one speaks of the gospel while oppressing people or using wealth for one's own pleasure, one's life contradicts one's confession. Saved faith must appear as the faithfulness that gives out food in due season.

Therefore we must not oppress people or use the wealth entrusted to us for our own desires. To fulfill our responsibility even when no one is watching, to care for the weak, and to give out the food that is needed in due season is the life of faith that avoids the way of the wicked steward.

[Question] 14. In Luke chapter 12 verse 50, what does the "*baptism*" Jesus was to be baptized with refer to?

The "*baptism*" Jesus was to be baptized with refers not to the baptism He had already received from John, but to the suffering in which He would carry the sin of the world, receive the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and die. Jesus spoke of His

going fully into the suffering and the death of the Cross by comparing it to a baptism.

"But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:50).

When He began His public ministry, Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River. With that baptism He took the sin of the world upon Himself, and now He had to go up on the Cross carrying the sin He had taken upon Himself and receive the punishment of sin.

The Scriptures use *"baptism"* not only for actual water baptism but also as a figure representing going fully into suffering and death. When Jesus spoke to the two sons of Zebedee of the cup He would drink and the baptism He would be baptized with, this also referred to the suffering that would come upon Him.

"But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So Jesus said to them, 'You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized" (Mark 10:38–39).

Therefore the baptism He received from John and the baptism of Luke chapter 12 verse 50 are distinguished from each other, yet they are connected within the work of salvation. With the baptism He received from John He took the sin of the world upon Himself, and with the baptism of the Cross He received the judgment and death for the sin He had taken upon Himself.

When Jesus said, *"How distressed I am till it is accomplished!"* it did not mean that He tried to avoid the Cross. It expresses that, though He knew the pain of receiving the judgment of sin, He carried the great and heavy mission until He fulfilled the will of the Father to save sinners.

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Jesus received to the end on the Cross the judgment of the sin He had taken upon Himself, and said, *"It is finished!"* He actually died, but He did not remain in death; He rose from the dead and overcame sin and death.

"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit" (John 19:30).

Therefore the *"baptism to be baptized with"* of verse 50 means the suffering, the judgment, and the death of the Cross that Jesus bore in order to save sinners. We must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus completed by receiving baptism from John and taking all sins upon Himself, being judged on the Cross, and rising from the dead.

[Question] 15. In Luke chapter 12 verses 51–53, what did Jesus say He had come to give to the world?

Jesus said that He had come not to give peace on earth but rather to bring division. This is because before the truth of the salvation Jesus accomplished, those who believe and those who do not believe are divided, and spiritual conflict arises even within the same household.

"Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.'" (Luke 12:51–53).

Jesus is the Savior who reconciles sinners to God. But the

peace Jesus gives is not the calm of getting along as if there were no problem while leaving sin and falsehood covered up. It is the peace that a sinner enjoys by believing the salvation of God, receiving the remission of sins, and recovering a right relationship with God.

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

Not everyone accepts this gospel. Some people believe the salvation Jesus accomplished, but some people hold on to their own thoughts and religious tradition and reject the gospel. Since the truth of salvation clearly reveals this faith and unbelief, division can arise even between the closest family members.

This division is not a fleshly fight that tells us to hate or attack people. It is the spiritual conflict and separation that arise because one believes the gospel and does not go along with false faith. The saints must not quarrel out of their own temperament and stubbornness, but must respect their families and fulfill their responsibilities.

Even when the opposition of the family arises, the believer must keep love and truth together. He must not hide the word of salvation, but must abandon the attitude of trying to win against the other person, fulfill his responsibilities in his life, and be patient for a long time. He must not make the pain caused by the gospel a reason for hating people, but must pray for the salvation of that soul.

Jesus took the sin of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and reconciled sinners to God by rising from the dead. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit enjoys true peace with God, but his faith and the purpose of his life come to differ from those of the person who rejects this gospel.

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Therefore we must not hide the gospel for fear of the opposition of family and neighbors. At the same time, we must not engage in arguments meant to win against the other person, but must deliver the word with the love that desires that soul to receive the remission of sins. To be patient for a long time and do good while not denying Jesus and holding on to the truth is the attitude of faith.

[Question] 16. In Luke chapter 12 verses 54–56, what was the rebuke Jesus gave to the hypocrites?

Jesus rebuked the hypocrites because, while they discerned the weather by looking at the clouds and the wind, they did not discern *"this time,"* when He had come and was accomplishing the salvation of God. They were sensitive to the changes of daily life, but they had closed their hearts to the time on which the salvation and the judgment of the soul depended.

"Then He also said to the multitudes, 'Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, "A shower is coming"; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, "There will be hot weather"; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?" (Luke 12:54–56).

People expected rain when a cloud rose in the west and knew that it would become hot when the south wind blew. Jesus pointed out the contradiction that, having this judgment, they did not realize the more important word of God and the time of salvation.

In the parallel text the religious leaders, even after seeing the things Jesus had already done, demanded another sign from heaven. Their problem lay not in the absence of evidence, but in

not accepting the word already given and the ministry of Jesus because these did not fit their own thinking their own thinking.

"He answered and said to them, 'When it is evening you say, "It will be fair weather, for the sky is red"; and in the morning, "It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening." Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times" (Matthew 16:2–3).

"This time" refers to the time when Jesus had come among them, was preaching the word, and was accomplishing the work of salvation. His healing the sick, casting out demons, and preaching the kingdom of God showed that the promised Messiah had come, but many people did not believe in Jesus because of their own thoughts and religious tradition.

Jesus went on to ask, *"Why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right?"* People had to judge what was right before the word of God and respond with faith, rather than merely watching for signs. Before the judgment arrives, one must believe the word of salvation and be reconciled to God.

To discern the time does not stop at the knowledge of putting names on the events of the world. It is to confirm through the word what God accomplished by sending Jesus, and to judge for oneself that that salvation is true and believe it. That judgment must lead on to choosing the life God desires.

That Jesus took the sin of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and rose from the dead is the fulfillment of the salvation God promised. The person who rightly discerns this time confirms this gospel of the water and the Spirit by the written word and believes it in his heart.

We too must examine ourselves as to whether we are indifferent to the sin of the soul and the judgment of God while looking only at the circumstances of the world and our own

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future. We must believe the word already given and accept the salvation Jesus accomplished, remember the Lord who will come again, and preach the word of salvation to the people who do not yet know the gospel.

[Question] 17. In Luke chapter 12 verse 59, what does *"mite"* mean?

A *"mite"* means a very small amount or an extremely small value. In the original text of Luke chapter 12 verse 59 the word 'lepton' is used, a coin of very small value at that time. Therefore the words *"paid the very last mite"* mean that even the smallest part of the debt, that is, even the last penny, must all be paid.

"When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite" (Luke 12:58–59).

Jesus spoke of a situation in which a debtor goes to the judge together with the person accusing him. While he is still on the way there is a chance to be reconciled, but once he is judged and thrown into prison, he cannot get out until he has paid the whole debt. The *"mite"* emphasizes the point that not even a little of the responsibility can be left.

"Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny" (Matthew 5:25–26).

This parable does not stay only with the matter of money. While a person is alive, he must judge his own state before the

word of God and be reconciled to God. The law of God reveals a person's sin, and a sinner cannot completely pay the price of sin by his own deeds.

Jesus took all the sin of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and by rising from the dead fully bore the price of sin that sinners had to pay. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not pay the price of sin with his own good deeds, but receives the remission of sins by believing the fact that Jesus settled all sins without leaving any behind.

The words *"the very last mite"* are a warning not to regard sin lightly, and at the same time they show the fact that the salvation of Jesus is perfect. The judgment of God does not pass over even a small sin, but the remission of sins Jesus accomplished is sufficient to settle the whole debt of sin.

Therefore we must not put off the decision of salvation or rely on our own good deeds. While we are still on the way where reconciliation is possible, we must believe the salvation Jesus accomplished and be reconciled to God, and must preach so that other people too may hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit before the judgment arrives. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The faith that believes in God

< Luke 12:1-9 >

"In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. 'And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! 'Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. 'Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God."

Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees

Our Lord told us to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. He is telling us to beware of the doctrine that the Pharisees spread.

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He also said that whatever we have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light and what we have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops, and He told us not to be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do, but to fear the One whom we ought to fear. And He said that if we confess before people that our Lord is our Savior, the Lord will also confess before the angels of God that He knows us, and that if we deny the Lord before people, saying that we do not know Him, the Lord will also deny us before the angels of God, saying that He does not know us.

The leaven of the Pharisees does not mean the leaven used in brewing liquor; it means the doctrine of people who are not born again, human doctrine, sermons that interpret the word of God in a human way. He told us to be careful of such things. If you eat the leaven of the Pharisees, you die. If you eat human doctrine as if it were the word of God, it may be sweet at first, but later you come to be killed by that doctrine. That is why we must be extremely careful of the documents and the doctrines of people who are not born again. In fact, the people who persecuted Jesus the most were the Pharisees. The Pharisees persecuted Jesus and tried to kill Him. In this age, too, it is the people who say they believe in God who most persecute the person who believes in God rightly. That is why we must be careful of the leaven of the Pharisees.

Live by the faith that believes in God

We must live believing in God. We must live believing in that God who exists and lives. Whatever fear or persecution may come, we must not forsake that faith that believes in God. If we do not have the faith that believes in God, we later come to deny

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God and suffer much loss before God, and so while we live on this earth we must live with the faith that believes in God. *"Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:6–7).* Sparrows are sold for such a cheap price, but God does not forget even one of them, and He counts and knows every single hair of our heads.

The reason the Lord said this is that He knew there would be many dangers on this earth and that circumstances might come in which we would deny God, and so He warned us in advance. God made the universe. He saved you and me from all our sins. And He is alive even now, and He rules over us and keeps us. As we live on this earth, though He is not visible to our eyes, we must believe that God is alive. We must always live by the faith that believes that God saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit and is with us, that He knows our every move, and that He helps us and keeps us. Without the faith that believes in God, we cannot live. Because each one of us is so lacking, we cannot live believing in ourselves, and because this world is so unstable, we cannot believe in anything of this world. That is why we must live believing in God.

God is not visible to the eyes of the flesh. But He is alive. He exists. And He counts even one sparrow falling, and there is nothing He does not know; He knows everything. That is why we must believe in and rely on that God, ask Him for help, pray, and live receiving His help. Without the faith that believes in God, we come to deny God, and we may even fall into our own weakness and give up our life of faith. As the Lord said, if we deny the Lord before people, saying that we do not know Him, the Lord also denies that person on the last day before the angels of God, saying that He does not know him. Such a thing can

happen at any time. Truly, in whatever circumstances, we must live by the faith that believes in the Lord.

In fact, as we live in this world, we are afraid because of all sorts of things. We are afraid of the future and of our own weakness, and we are afraid about our lack of faith and about what is to come. But God knows us well. There is not one thing about us that God does not know. He said that even the very hairs of our head are all numbered. That is why what we can live by is faith. The faith that believes in that God, though He is not visible to the eyes, is what gives life to you and me. Even after receiving salvation, if we do not believe that God is alive and do not live by that faith, we cannot live on this earth because of anxiety. We overcome even our own weakness by the faith that believes in God, and we overcome all worries and anxieties by that faith. If we do not believe in God we die, and if we believe in God we live.

In Hebrews chapter 11 the people of faith appear. It says, *"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1)*. Though God is not visible to the eyes, He is alive, He hears our prayers, and He knows our circumstances and everything around us. If we live believing in and relying on that God, praying, meditating in our hearts, and earnestly asking, God helps us in due season, works, holds us up, and keeps us. There is also the word, *"Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6)*. Only when we have the faith that God actually lives and exists can we pray before God and receive an answer to that prayer.

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"To him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven"

Our Lord also spoke of people dragging those who believe in God to the synagogues and putting them on trial in these last days, and He said, *"Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven" (Luke 12:10)*. Speaking a word against Jesus can be remitted, but if a person blasphemes the merit of that salvation by which our Lord removed all the sins of mankind—the salvation by which Jesus received baptism from John and received our sins passed on to Him, died on the Cross, and rose again, and so became our Savior—and says that the Lord did not remove all our sins, that is the end.

He said that saying with the mouth that God exists or does not exist can be remitted, but if a person blasphemes that work by which the Lord saved us with His baptism, His death of blood, and His resurrection, it cannot be remitted. I believe that people who are born again do not do that. But people who are not born again often fall into the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. It is very common for them to say, 'How could He have taken away all sins?' If a person truly blasphemes like that, he can never receive remission.

We who are born again do not blaspheme the salvation of Jesus, but we have very many weak points. We have lived by faith until now, but when we look at the future, we have many worries in our hearts about how we will live by faith. That is why God says that He knows even one sparrow, that He numbers even the hairs of your head, and that He keeps and protects you. We must live the life ahead of us by the faith that believes in God. We cannot live with only the faith of having been saved,

the faith that we have no sin. The righteous live by faith alone. We must live by the faith that God is alive, the faith that He hears when we pray and helps when we ask for help, the faith that He knows everything about me and helps me, the faith that believes that God saved me. We must live holding on to God.

"You are of more value than many sparrows"

Do you believe that Jesus received baptism from John and received all your sins passed on to Him, and that He washed them all away by dying on the Cross shedding His blood and rising again? All our sins, all the sins of the world, passed on to the head of Jesus, who received baptism from John. That is why we are the people of God and the children of God. We are God's own people, whose every single hair God has numbered. That is why we must live relying on God and believing in Him. Because God is our Father, because He is our Shepherd, because He is alive, because He is almighty and perfect, we must live by faith in God.

In this last world of destruction, the only way we can live is to believe in God. If we believe in God we live, and if we do not believe we die. Whether you receive salvation or not also depends on whether you believe or do not believe that God has removed all your sins with the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. If you believe you receive salvation, and if you do not believe you suffer destruction. People who believe in God receive salvation, receive grace, receive help, receive blessing, and receive His keeping and care. They live receiving their daily bread every day, and because our Lord has removed all our sins, we too can forgive the wrongs of the people who wrong us. If we believe in God, God bestows

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every grace on us.

The point of what God is saying is this. Do you believe in Me? Live by faith in Me, and if the desire of your heart accords with My will, I will fulfill it. That is why we must live believing in God. Even if we have received salvation, if we do not believe in God, it is nothing. Only the one thing of having been saved remains, and there is nothing else. If we do not believe, how will we live from now on? I am telling you over and over that even when we are spiritually suffocated and distressed, and even though we live in a dark world, if we believe in God and pray, God hears, and if we rely on Him and believe, He holds us up.

Faith is the life of the righteous

Live believing in God. If you believe in God, you can live, you can go to heaven, and He also supplies what you need to live in this world. Rather than living by your own strength, because your own strength has its limits, you must rely on and believe in God whenever you have no strength and are lacking. The adults, the wives and sisters, the young people, all the brothers and sisters and the little children and all the ministers must believe in God. Only when we believe in God does the work get done, do we receive care, and are we not bitten to death by Satan the Devil, and God works and helps us.

Salvation, too, is received by faith. By faith sin disappears. Unless it is by faith, sin never disappears. It does not work by weeping, it does not work by prayers of repentance, and it never works by all-night prayer or by forty days of fasting prayer. When you believe in your heart that Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River and received all my sins passed on to Him, died on the Cross, and

rose again, sin disappears. When you believe that God has saved me, that He has removed all my sins, the sin in your heart disappears and you become a child of God. You receive help in daily life, and when you believe, you come to do righteous work.

So how important is faith to us, the righteous? To the righteous, faith is life. It is life, like blood. Without faith we are like a dead corpse. If we have the faith that believes in God, then even if our circumstances are difficult and unstable and we have nothing, when we hold on to God in our hearts and believe the word of God, that faith gives us life and brings us many graces and gifts.

If a born-again person has no faith, he has a form of godliness but is dead. But if you believe in your heart that God is my Savior, that He is the One who removed all my sins, and that He is the living God who knows all my circumstances, hears my prayers, and supplies what I need, then you come to live however difficult your circumstances may be. However good your circumstances may be, if you do not believe in God, those circumstances keep getting worse. That is why we must use faith. By faith we drive back Satan, and we also drive back the leaven of the Pharisees. By faith we receive blessing, fight the good fight, and also save souls.

Believe in and rely on God the Savior, and pray

What is there in this world for you and me to believe in, and what is there to rely on? Our Lord said, *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14:1)*. We must believe that our Lord is God. We must believe that He is alive. We must believe that the Father of Jesus Christ is our Father. We must believe that God, who made the universe and

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all things, has removed all your sins and become your Savior. This is because faith is exactly what gives life to you and me. In everything of the life that remains ahead of you, I hope that you will fight by faith and stand against by faith, and live receiving blessing and all the help you need by believing in God. It is said, *"Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4)*. Our God is One who can be believed.

When you are in darkness, when things are hard, when you are anxious and trembling, when you cannot see the future, believe in God. When anxiety and worry come upon you, pray to God and ask for help, saying, "God, I believe." Even when your own weakness is exposed, believe in God in everything. It is said, *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6–7)*. God knows all our thoughts and hearts, our worries and supplications, and He can help us spiritually and in every respect. We cannot live with material things alone. We can live only when He keeps our hearts and gives our hearts grace and strength. That is why we must believe in God. Just as salty taste comes only when salt is added, even though God is alive and has prepared everything, it does not work unless we believe in God with our hearts, and so we are saved by believing in God and can go on living with His help after that as well.

People who are not born again must believe in God, and people who are born again must also believe in God. A person who is not born again obtains eternal life only when he believes that God sent His Son Jesus Christ into this world and saved him by having Him receive all his sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, having Him receive the

judgment on the Cross in his place, and raising Him from the dead. Who is that God? He is none other than Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, who made the universe and all things and removed all our sins with the baptism He received from John, is the God of you and me. The Father of Jesus Christ is none other than our Father.

We must believe that God has made us His children and that He supplies everything His children need. When we believe we live, and if we do not believe we cannot live because of anxiety. I, too, worry and agonize over many things. At such times I entrust to God everything I cannot do. 'God, I believe. Please do this. Please take charge of it. Please keep it.' I commit everything to Him. After I do that, the anxiety in my heart disappears. I leap over the wall by the faith that believes in God.

Because human beings are weak, we must believe and rely. The Korean term for faith is made up of the Chinese characters 信, meaning "to believe," and 仰, meaning "to look up to"; thus, faith means believing in God and looking up to Him. The faith that believes that God saved us, believing and looking up to God as the One who helps us—this is exactly what faith is. When we believe, God works for us. God knows even the sparrows sold for a cheap price, and God regards us as more valuable than sparrows and has numbered every single hair of our heads. He does not just leave us alone; He keeps us. So whatever happens in your life, He is telling you to believe in God, rely on Him, and pray. Then God keeps us, who are more valuable than sparrows.

Even when God helps us, it is a big problem if we do not know that it is the help of God. This is because if we do not know that God has worked, we do not pray and do not rely on Him the next time. When we know that God has helped us, then the next time a problem arises, we hold out an empty bowl to God and receive help again. When I pray aloud, there are times when the

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faith takes hold of my heart that even if I forget after praying, God does not forget and surely fulfills it. Even if we pray and forget for a while, God surely hears that prayer and does according to that prayer for the person who has faith. That is why we can pray, entrust it to Him, and then do other work. When a worry arises about something, we ask again before God. Since it is said, *"Cast your burden on the LORD" (Psalm 55:22)*, we entrust it to Him again. And we diligently do what we can do, and diligently ask for help with what we cannot do.

Even faith as small as a mustard seed is enough, if only you believe

If you believe in God, you receive help and receive blessing. If you believe in God, you receive salvation, sin disappears, worry disappears, you come to do the work of God, and you receive every grace. Even faith as small as a mustard seed is enough, if only you believe in God. If you believe, God works, and if you do not believe, He does not work. He said that if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can command a mountain to move. We do not have such great faith, but we do have the small faith that believes that God is alive, hears our prayers, and helps us. That is exactly the faith as small as a mustard seed. Even with only that faith, God works and we receive salvation. That is why we cannot be discouraged. Because we believe in God, we do not give up on life, we do not give up our life of faith, and we do not give up the work of God, and though we are lacking, we can keep going forward.

Pray and believe. If you have no faith, at least rely on Him. Even if you only come to Him saying, "God, please help me," God helps you. He gives our hearts the faith that believes, and at

the same time He works and helps us. Faith is relying. It is relying as a child relies on his parents. Even if you do not have great faith, rely on God. When you are in urgent need, pray, believe, and also confess. God works. When you say, 'Now I am exhausted and cannot live, it is too dark, I do not think I can go any further,' that very moment is the time to rely on Him. God gives us our daily bread every day and gives us the graces we need. When we believe and rely on Him, we come to experience that God helps us and loves us. By tasting that grace we keep on living and going forward. When your strength is lacking, rely on Him. He helps and blesses at all times. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

There is nothing covered that will not be revealed

< Luke 12:1-9 >

"In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. 'And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! 'Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. 'Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God."

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"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy"

While the Lord was ministering on this earth, many people heard the word of the Lord, and also heard that the Lord gave blessings, and followed Him around. Looking at the word, it says that an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another. At that time Jesus said to His disciples, *"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Luke 12:1)*, and He said, *"There is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known" (Luke 12:2)*. The Lord was saying that the Pharisees, while performing religious rites on this earth and claiming to give people teaching and to lead them in their own way, were in reality saying things that were not good.

Why did He say this? In the Lord's eyes, the priests and the prophets and the kings and the people of Israel had all followed the sin that Jeroboam committed in the Old Testament era, serving the golden calf and hushing it up and hiding it. In the New Testament era they could not have said openly to serve the golden calf as in the days of Jeroboam. But the Pharisees practiced hypocrisy. While not believing in their hearts, they pretended outwardly to believe, and while not loving God, they pretended outwardly to love Him, and they told other people to love God. That is why Jesus said that nothing that is hidden or spoken in the dark can remain hidden, but it is all revealed.

Religious leaders who serve the golden calf

In fact, the religious leaders of the world have a great many dark sides. They bring up Jesus a great deal in everything, but in

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reality they are speaking in order to rake in money, and in the end they are serving the golden calf. They themselves serve the golden calf, and they do ministry in order to make their church members serve the golden calf as well. Yet they themselves do not really know that this is so. As a result, the religious leaders lead religion in order to act like big men before people, to be treated well, and to live well, and this becomes a great poison to countless people. It becomes a poison that kills the people who eat it. Just as the people at that time had to beware of what the Pharisees were doing, today we must also beware of the hypocrisy practiced by the religious leaders within Christianity.

I saw on a broadcast that at a certain large church, the son of the senior pastor inherited that church and is doing ministry. Watching him preach, working up people's emotions and emphasizing things that are not even important, I felt in my heart, "Are you really doing that because you love the Lord?" There are people in our country who oppose Christianity, and looking at Christianity as it is now, they say that it is a business of the world. They say, is it not exactly the same, the chairman of a large group handing over his company to his son, and the pastor of a church handing over the authority of the church to his son? That is why many people of the world dislike Christianity. They dislike it because they regard Christianity not as the light of the world but as deceivers. Of course, some of it may be said just in order to oppose, but when you listen, some of it is right. If the son of the pastor of a church loved Jesus so much, he should not inherit the church his father was running but should go out and plant a church himself and serve the Lord. I know that it is wrong for a person to slander another person. Since the Lord said not to judge, and that if we judge we too will be judged, I know that if I judge them, there are things for which I too will be judged.

But when you listen to what they say, they tell their church

members bluntly, “If you give offerings before the Lord you become rich, so why do you not give offerings?” They say that with the offerings the church members gave they built churches abroad and put pastors there to run them, and so they have done a blessed thing, and that God gives blessing because of that. They say to test whether God will pour out overflowing blessing or not if you give tithes, and that giving material things well is the secret of becoming rich. Listening to such talk, I feel in my heart, ‘This is going too far. Is that really receiving blessing?’ They themselves are not like that, yet they tell their church members to love God and to serve God. And they say that if you only believe in the blood of the Cross of Jesus you receive the remission of sins, and that everyone who receives Him has become a child of God. But have they really received the remission of sins by believing only in the Cross? Do they have no sin in their hearts? Such people are practicing great hypocrisy and committing great sin before God. Speaking in terms of the Old Testament era, their sin is the same as the sin of serving the golden calf as God. He is telling us to be careful of such doctrines that say that if you believe in Jesus you receive blessing and go to heaven, and that if you give many offerings and are faithful you receive blessing. Such things plunge people into destruction by hypocrisy, and such things cannot be hidden. The Lord knows everything about how the religious leaders lead people down the road of destruction by hypocrisy and take away what they have.

People today are serving the golden calf just like the people of the Old Testament era. With their mouths they say that they love God, but in their hearts there is no heart that loves God. As a result, it is a ministry done in order to satisfy the desires of their own flesh and to gather in material things. The church members inside, too, do not give material things and serve

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because they love God; they give because they are told that if they give material things He gives blessing. The religious leaders are practicing hypocrisy, and the many church members inside are practicing hypocrisy as well. Such an appearance looks good to other people, but because of it countless people are being led to destruction and hell. How evil and dreadful it is! Yet these things cannot fail to be revealed. They hide them and hush them up, but in the end they are all revealed. If there were no one in this age to dig these things up and testify to them, they would all be hidden, but the Lord wants to expose these things. I am not saying this in order to judge them; God is exposing it.

The one who covers and the One who reveals

Today the religious leaders seem to lead people well, but in fact they lead countless people to destruction. They say do not do bad things to others, do good deeds, build up merit, be faithful, and use material things for good works, and that this is the way to receive blessing, but in reality they are killing countless people with it. Because such things appear good, other people also imitate them and come to be killed. So the Lord wants to expose such doctrines and deeds that kill people, make them known to people, and rescue them from the mouths of the false ones. Because the Lord is God, He knows all the hearts of people. The religious leaders say good words to people, but He knows well what their purpose is. The purpose of their ministry is the golden calf, that is, to satisfy the material desires of the flesh. To put it simply, they do so in order to become rich. But this is a secret. There are hardly any who do this knowing that they are doing it for their own flesh and material things. Without knowing it themselves, they are leading people down the road of

destruction. That is why religion is dreadful.

Originally, because man is a being made in the image of God, he has a heart that wants to follow God, a heart that longs to live forever, and a heart that wants to become perfect. But the people who have been deceived by Satan deceive themselves and deceive other people, and they are being used, like Satan, to kill other people. Yet they themselves do not know it. Of course, not everyone does it without knowing. The pure ones do it without knowing, but those who have played the leader for a long, long time know that they are like that. In the end, what they want is money. That is why the Lord called the Pharisees hypocrites. It means that they only pretend outwardly to believe while not believing. Even though outwardly they seem to speak meekly, humbly, and politely and to lead people with good manners, they do the work of luring people with hypocrisy and killing them. That is why Jesus said to the disciples and the multitudes that unless their righteousness exceeds that of the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, they will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Within this Christianity there are many people who exhort others to believe in Jesus and go to heaven while not believing in heaven themselves. There are also many people who deny the divinity of Jesus, that is, that Jesus is God. When a survey was conducted abroad asking Christian believers whether they believe that heaven really exists, it is said that a considerable number of pastors and many Christians answered that they do not believe. They themselves do not believe, yet they tell other people to believe. That is hypocrisy. Jesus is telling us to beware of the hypocritical words such people speak. So the Lord is pleased when we expose the sin of the people who serve the golden calf, rescue the people who belong to them, and keep people from falling into such sin. A person cannot carelessly

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slander another person. But we have the word of God, and we expose their sin in order to save souls. We must say these things in order to save the people who, knowing nothing, have fallen for the hypocrites and are suffering destruction.

A tree is known by its fruit

The Lord said that a tree is known by its fruit. He said that a good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit, that a bad tree cannot bear good fruit, and that a good tree cannot bear bad fruit. That is why we must expose their sin of hypocrisy. We must point out and expose the lie that a bad tree bears good fruit, and teach that only by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does one become a child of God and a good tree. In Matthew chapter 7 the Lord said that the gate that leads to destruction is wide and the gate that leads to life is narrow, and told us to enter by the narrow gate. How wide is this Christianity today? Even the people who do not believe in Jesus think that Christianity is a good thing because it teaches people to become good people.

But man is not fundamentally a good being. Man is evil by nature, yet people keep trying to cover that evil with religion or worldly education. In reality that evil must be exposed and operated on and healed, but they keep trying to cover it. One can cover up another person's weakness or shame, but if a person is going to be destroyed and go to hell because of the disease of sin in his heart, one must teach him about the evil in his heart so that his sin is exposed. And one must teach him that Jesus received baptism from John and received all those sins passed on to Him, died on the Cross shedding His blood, and rose again, and that with the gospel of the water and the Spirit He accomplished in

this way, He has removed sin. We must play that role. That is truly good work, and the person who does such work is the good person.

For example, a cancerous lump is growing inside a person's body, and people keep trying to cover it up. He goes to the hospital, and they say it is just a little stomach pain and he will be fine if he only takes stomach medicine, and they keep giving him only medicine. When he takes the medicine temporarily it seems to work, but as time goes by the illness gets worse. He goes to another hospital, but they do not have precision equipment, so they examine him roughly and keep covering up and hiding the illness, saying that it may be because his nerves are too sensitive. Then, because it hurts too much, he goes to a large hospital and has a precise examination, and the cancer has already passed stage three, and they say how could you have left this illness alone until now, and that it is already too late. Such things are very common in this world.

It is the same with the religious leaders, who ought to be spiritual physicians. When a church member says that he has sin in his heart and is in anguish and feels that he will die because of sin, they teach him that it is all right if he offers prayers of repentance, does good deeds, and works for the Lord, and that he goes to heaven even though he is lacking. Every time the church members come to church with troubled hearts, they tell them to do good deeds, to offer prayers of repentance, to do early morning prayer, and to do fasting prayer, and so they keep making them cover and hide their sins. Quoting the word, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9)*, they are teaching that if you confess, sin disappears.

Then what happens? People think that those words are really the truth and believe them. So, saying that they believe in Jesus,

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they commit sin and merely offer prayers of confession, while in reality they are piling up sin in their hearts. Not knowing, not having heard of, and having no interest in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, saying that they believe only in the blood of the Cross, they live piling up sin in their hearts and then die. Then they go to hell together with Satan the Devil. That is why Jesus told His disciples to beware of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The Pharisees keep whitewashing. They keep saying it is all right. But the Lord said that such things are not hidden, and that the sin of those who serve the golden calf and how they kill people are all revealed. He said, *"What you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops."* It is proclaimed to the whole world. This word I am delivering at this hour, too, is recorded, written down, and translated, and delivered to all the coworkers overseas. All the people of the whole world must know this fact. I am not speaking of a certain individual; I am saying that the Christian leaders of today are collectively like this.

There are people who do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit but believe only in the blood of the Cross and attend church, and who speak humbly and politely. Such people look good. But we must be careful of such an appearance. People can be led astray by it. Deceivers speak more gently, more carefully, and more politely in order to deceive people. This is because only then do people feel favorably toward them. Our brothers and sisters must all know this too. This is because if we do not know this, we too can be deceived by that falsehood, fall into hypocrisy, and die. And we must deliver this to other people. Because the Christian leaders do not deliver this, this Christianity of today has become like the Dark Ages.

I saw on the news that a certain area was to be redeveloped. The residents were being evicted, and while ordinary people

received compensation and moved out, many churches that had been renting space in the buildings were not going to receive compensation. But what the pastors who spoke about it were all worried about, without exception, was whether, if they moved far away, the church members they had worked so hard to gain would be scattered here and there and they would lose them. Are they really grieving and worrying because the souls of those church members might perish? Are they not worrying because they might no longer receive the offerings those people give? It is said that one church member, though he himself had received only a small compensation, handed over to the church all the money he had received in compensation because the church was in difficulty. What an admirable person! But if that church is the church of a hypocritical religious leader, then although that church member did it without knowing, he is as a result taking part in an evil thing. Since I, too, know well the hardship of renting a place of worship and going around every two years to find a new lease, I understand their situation fully. But the question is whether, while doing ministry with such hardship, they are really delivering the blessing of God to people. They are not doing the work of delivering the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which saves people from sin. Of course, among those people too, in the future there will be some who will believe when they come to know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and there will be some who oppose it. But for now, this hypocrisy is rampant, and they themselves do not know the sin they are committing. So how pitiful a thing it is! We must expose these things, make them into documents, and show them to people. It is not a personal attack on some individual; only when we expose this sin and deliver it to people will people know, will they not? Only then will they come to their senses, and those who will truly believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

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will believe, and only then can at least some people obtain salvation.

Let us deliver the hidden secret

There is something about themselves that people do not know well, and it is this: they want to have a large church. I, too, in the past, before I met the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins, did not want to have a small church. I wanted to have a very large church with a large sanctuary and an education building next to it, and I prayed asking for that. A certain coworker pastor of ours overseas, too, before he met us, thought that he had to have a large church that gathered many people, and did that kind of ministry. But now his thinking has changed, and he says that he has come to know that even if the number is small, to have even one person receive perfect salvation and to teach him properly and raise him up as a worker is truly doing well. People do not know well that they are committing sin. That is why they keep doing it. Therefore we must tell them of that sin. If we tell them that they are now committing the sin of serving the golden calf and that it is wrong to do ministry for the purpose of serving the golden calf, they will say, when did we ever do that, and that we are lumping them all together without knowing anything. But they are actually serving the golden calf without knowing that they are committing such sin. If they gather many people, their salary increases and they live being treated well, and if the number of church members is large, the pastor of that church lords it over them like a king.

A certain famous pastor in our country finished fifty years of ministry and held his retirement ceremony in a large stadium,

where an enormous number of people gathered, and it is said that the people attending that church number one million. Then some will say, then why do you not do the same instead of slandering him? But if that pastor had truly believed in and preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit and led people on the way of eternal life, my saying this would be committing sin against God. In the flesh I am not better than that man, so what reason would I have to slander him? The problem is where he led those many church members while doing ministry for fifty years. He led them to serving the golden calf. Quoting the word, *"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 1:2)*, they do ministry so that people may believe in Jesus and become rich, be healthy, go to heaven, gain power, and succeed in the world. Is it not exactly a ministry of serving the golden calf to bring in young people and only tell them to become great people in this society? Should we Christians become people who are useful in the world, or people who are useful before God? If we are useful before God, we naturally become useful in the world as well. Since Jesus came, except for the early church, the religious leaders have done so until now in order to enjoy power.

Am I now forcibly slandering Christians? No, I am not. I am saying these things because they must be rescued. If we only deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit to them, they do not even pretend to listen. They have no sense of it at all. We must knock on their consciences. We testify to the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but we must also testify about the sins of those people. We must tell them and teach them about these things—are you not serving the golden calf, do the members of that church not believe in Jesus in order to prosper in the flesh?—for only then can they return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This is the hidden secret.

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They say that Christianity now must carry out a new reformation, as Martin Luther carried out the Reformation in the Middle Ages, but they do not know what must be corrected. They must abandon serving the golden calf and return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. They must believe in the Lord who gave the gospel of the water and the Spirit as their own Savior. We must deliver the message that only the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth of salvation. So we will make this gospel of truth known not only to the people of our country but to all the people of the whole world. We do such work not because we are great, but because God has entrusted that duty to us, and we do it united with one another. In the Book of Judges, when Gideon broke down the idol of the foreign god, he was afraid and could not do it in the daytime, so he went and broke it down at night. Now I, too, am afraid to stand directly before them and speak, and so I record it in documents, translate it, and distribute it to the whole world. Nevertheless, I know that we are saying what must be said before God.

God, who regards the righteous as precious

Let us look at verses 4 and 5. *"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!"* He is telling us not to be afraid of the people who kill the body on this earth. He is telling us not to be afraid of those who can do nothing more than kill the body. Because they cannot throw us into hell, He is telling us to fear God, who can throw us into hell. In the last days countless righteous people, the servants of God and the brothers and sisters,

will suffer martyrdom. After they kill us, they can do nothing more. They can only kill us in the flesh; they cannot do anything spiritually.

In fact, the righteous are bold even when death comes upon them. The person who has a place to go, the person for whom the next world is prepared, can die singing praises. If you watch the movie Quo Vadis, the righteous who believe in God are put into the amphitheater in Rome and lions are released to bite them to death, and you can see them singing praises before they are killed. That is something made possible by the Holy Spirit. It is frightening. It is not that it is not frightening. But the heart is at peace and bold. They say, 'I have entrusted my body to God.'

Because the Spirit of God is in our hearts, He gives peace to our hearts, and the Lord enables us to bear death by faith. That is why we need to know and believe this word. The One we must really fear is God, who rules over heaven and hell. We must fear that God and carry out our ministry on this earth by believing in that God.

This is the word of verses 6 and 7. *"Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."* The copper coin here is the assarion, the name of a currency. Five sparrows are sold for two copper coins, but God does not forget even that and knows it all. How much more, if the righteous are killed in the world, does the Lord know that fact. So He is telling us not to be afraid of that death. Because we are of more value than sparrows, there is a place the Lord has prepared for us.

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What it means to confess the Lord before people

Let us look at verses 8 and 9. *"Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God."* God clearly told us that these things will be revealed, and He told us to reveal them and testify to them. The Lord told us to testify to the gospel of the water and the Spirit and also to testify to the sins of people, so as to make people return to the right way. But if, out of fear of people, we deny it, saying that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not the only truth and that the gospel of the blood of the Cross is also the truth, the Lord will say that He does not know such people as us. He said that we will be denied before the angels of God, and although we thought that when we went to the Lord's kingdom and the angels of God spoke of our faults, the Lord would say, 'It is all right, he is My people,' if the Lord says, 'I do not know such a person,' that person is finished. He is completely cast out and put to eternal destruction.

What is it for us to confess the Lord before people? To acknowledge that the Lord has saved me with the water and the Spirit and to preach that only this gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth is to confess the Lord. The Lord told us to testify that the Lord has saved me with the gospel of the water and the Spirit and has saved all of you too, and that people must not set the golden calf, that is, the material things of the world, in the place where God is. However powerless we are, we must testify to this.

If we do not testify to it, how can other people hear this gospel, know the truth, and receive salvation? In war there is a trumpeter who blows the trumpet, and advance and retreat depend on the signal of the trumpet sound. If the sound of the

trumpet is not clear, how can one fight a war? The Epistles of Paul also speak of this. If the word we deliver is not clear, how can people hear it and receive salvation? That is why, while we live on this earth, we must clearly preach that this is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that only this gospel is the truth, and that if one believes this truth one receives the remission of sins and becomes a child of God.

However, we must not just speak one-sidedly and unconditionally and be hated; we must plow the field of the heart well and testify wisely. And we must tell them that doing wrong in deeds before God is also sin, but that a greater sin than that is serving the golden calf, and that the greatest sin is the irreversible sin of despising the gospel of the water and the Spirit and, though knowing this gospel of truth, not believing it or believing and then betraying it. That is why we must be careful of the leaven of the Pharisees. We must be careful of the hypocrites, the deceivers.

We must carefully examine and be careful of the sermons and the deeds of the people who do not possess the gospel of the water and the Spirit by faith and yet say that they are the servants of God, and we must not be drawn into their words or deeds. We must know that they are those who serve the golden calf and false prophets who lead other people to hell, and be careful. You and I are watchmen. When the watchman gives clear warning, people can escape and can also receive salvation. I hope that you and I will carry out this role well. I hope that God will keep us and bless us. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Let us not become fools

< Luke 12:27-36 >

"Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? 'And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. 'Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 'Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately."

Our Lord said, *"But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you" (Luke 12:31)*. Telling us not to worry about what we will eat or what we will drink, He said to consider the lilies, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these, that if God so clothes those flowers

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and the grass of the field, how much more will He clothe you, who are the children of God, and that your Father knows that you need these things. And then He said, *"Seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you."*

"Do not fear, little flock"

And our Lord said, *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32)*. We are so weak and lacking that we cannot even do well the work entrusted to us, yet the Lord has given us a very great blessing and entrusted us with a very great work. We give thanks that He has given and entrusted to us the precious works and the precious blessings of heaven. If there were no word of the Lord, if the Lord did not work together with us, and if there were no church, we could not really do these things, but I believe that God has held us up and enabled us to do these things. The Lord called us *"little flock,"* and among the many people of the whole world, the people who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, have received salvation, and live like this are truly few. The flock that has received salvation by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished by receiving baptism from John and receiving all our sins passed on to Him, dying on the Cross shedding His blood, and rising again, is truly a little flock.

A brother in the United States sent an email. He is a brother of about fifty, and he said that he had been suffering from an indescribable depression, but after receiving and reading the books, his depression was healed and he had gotten much better, that he believes all the word, and that he is thankful. But when he delivered this gospel to the people he knows and handed out

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the books, a certain person wrote down about ten Bible verses as evidence that one is saved by the blood of the Cross and sent them to him. It was an email saying that he does not understand why people do not believe this when it is so clearly shown in the Bible. A certain person in Thailand also sent news that many books had been sent out and many people were reading them. It is truly being preached to many people, but the people who believe are very few. In a country with a population of over one billion, how many people would be believing? Only a tiny few. In our country, too, only a tiny few are believing. But the Lord said that He is pleased to give each nation to us. Because the Lord says so, there is hope in our hearts.

"Provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old"

The Lord spoke again. *"Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys" (Luke 12:33).* Anyone who is a person wants to make a money bag for himself. This is because all the people living in this world are people who have flesh. So many people try to make their own money bags. But what is really wiser? They are all people who have the same flesh, yet some people live for the kingdom of God, and some people live only for themselves. But those who sell what they have and give alms and provide themselves money bags which do not grow old are the wise ones.

The person who lives only for himself on this earth does not live with much stored up in his barn, and the person who lives for the Lord does not live with great things stored up either. But

He said, *"Seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you."* We live serving the Lord, while they live to death only for themselves, and yet even that is hard to live on. How hard is the world to live in these days? Even the people who have a foundation are having a hard time. Nevertheless, the Lord still adds all these things to us. To those who sell what they have, share with people, and let souls receive salvation, He still fills them so that they have something to share. But the people who try to live only for themselves cannot fill their own barns. If we live only for eating and drinking, what do we live in this world for? We open our eyes, work, eat, sleep, get sick, and at the end of birth, old age, sickness, and death the conclusion is to die, so why suffer for so long only for that?

Living for the Lord is not easy for us either, and there are people who lose their strength midway, but that does not mean that we lose our strength. It is said that ten lepers were all healed, but nine left and one came back and thanked the Lord. Such things happen even after receiving the remission of sins. There are people who leave like that, but the Lord fills us and helps the work we do. Since He said, *"Provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old," "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,"* and *"all these things shall be added to you,"* I believe that the Lord will do so. The person who lives only for himself, however hard he lives, eats three meals a day and sleeps, and when he meets a dangerous situation he has to take responsibility himself and do everything himself. He has no day of rest. When we work in the church, you do this and I do that, and that is a tremendous strength, but do you think that the person who lives only for himself has a lot of free time and days of rest? It is not so.

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The time is at hand, so be watchful and ready

We must set our hearts on the Lord and on the preaching of the gospel, and since the time when the Lord will come is at hand, we must be ready. He said, *"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately."* Truly, this age is the beginning of disasters. Living is becoming extremely hard, and as the Lord said in the Bible, things like famines, earthquakes, wars, and diseases will increase year by year. We do not know what may happen in our country either. Natural disasters have become extremely severe worldwide, and disputes have arisen between nations, so that the danger of war is growing as well. People are also becoming more and more violent. Even the people who are fine now do not know when they will meet with something. Now is the beginning of disasters, and the question is who truly believes and knows that it is the beginning of disasters, and is ready and watchful.

We must truly be watchful. When the last days come, the strength of the flesh drains away and things are wearisome, and the people who worked together with us may leave, and then dregs remain in our thoughts and we cannot set our hearts in order. But we must set things in order clearly. Even within one household, the person who serves the gospel and follows the Lord is a follower, and the person who does not follow is one who does not follow. In fact, it is human nature to want to live in peace, both in the flesh and in the spirit, if at all possible. But even if we want to live in peace, there is a definite boundary line. Even with a person who has received the remission of sins just as we have, if he does not unite with the Lord, we must draw a boundary line, as Abraham and Lot drew a boundary. If we do

not, you too will become like them. We must not think foolishly. Even if one has received the remission of sins, if one does not live for the Lord, what remains? It means that even if one has met the Lord, if one does not serve the Lord, it is the same. He is telling us to calculate.

Do not become like the servant who received one talent

The Lord told us to stand like people who wait with their lamps burning to open the door when He returns from the wedding. He told us to seek His kingdom, and He told us to provide ourselves money bags which do not grow old. You and I must come to our senses. I will be a person who waits with my lamp burning until the Lord comes. I have already made up my mind. I hope that you too will make up your minds. Because He said that all these things shall be added to us, I believe that I will live in sufficiency and abundance until the day the Lord comes.

But what happens if one foolishly lives only for oneself even after receiving the remission of sins? It is like the servant who received one talent having to settle accounts at the end. To the servant who did not trade with what the master had entrusted to him but buried it in the ground and returned it to the master as it was, the master said that he was a wicked and lazy servant, and told them to cast him out into the outer darkness where there is gnashing of teeth, and to appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. He receives judgment. The person who, having received the remission of sins, says that he will live only for himself and does not do the work of God and does not unite—that person must be prepared. It is not I who do it; God disposes of it. He himself wanted it.

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He is telling us not to think foolishly even if we have possessions. He is telling us to throw away the dregs of our thoughts. We must calculate well. This life in which we eat and live while living for the preaching of the gospel is living well and is wise. We have no trouble eating and drinking and living, do we? It is not that there is no problem because you have done well; it is that God fills everything through whomever He will. But if you say that you will not live for the gospel, from that moment you must solve the problem of food, clothing, and shelter by yourself. Try solving the problem of eating, clothing, and drinking by yourself once. See whether it is easy. Even so, do we not live for the Lord?

The wise person is the person who stands with his lamp burning to receive the Master when the Lord comes at the time of the last disaster. The person who does not do so is the foolish person. Such a person must take responsibility for everything himself. He must take responsibility for the problem of his own living and for his own soul. What will he say, standing before the Lord? If he stands with only the one thing, the salvation by which the Lord saved him, and when asked what he himself did, answers that he lived only for himself and came, the Lord will say to take even that one talent and give it to someone else, cast him outside where there is gnashing of teeth, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. The Lord is a God of love, but He is also a just God. To be just means to be fair. Even though the Lord sacrificed Himself for us like this and saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, if a person does not live for other people but insists on living only for himself, and builds a complete wall even though he could live in union when he is lacking, the Lord makes him pay the price for it.

Weighed on the fair scales of the Lord, such a person must return the salvation he received and be judged. If such a person

also lives in heaven just as we do, no one needs to serve the gospel. If the Lord, even when He judges with justice, remits everything and lets everyone off, I, first of all, will demand that we be treated the same way. Of course, even if the Lord did not do so, we would still serve the gospel. But the Bible says that when the Lord judges, He will do so first to those who have been saved, and if so, what will it be for those who have not been saved?

Before the word, I too am no exception. I too am subject to it just the same. I too am doing the work of God, and you too are doing the work of God. I am not telling anyone to go to hell; I am saying that we must be prepared. It is right and wise for the person who has received the remission of sins, though he is lacking, to unite with the church, and if he cannot do this part, at least to unite in that part, and to live the life of faith until the day the Lord comes.

At least if one is a person who has received salvation, it is right to live that way. If one has received salvation, living only for oneself is absolutely impossible. I hope that you will be those who wait with their lamps burning on the day the Lord comes. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Be those who serve the Lord while waiting for His second coming

< Luke 12:35-40 >

"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

The work we do is work like a treasure

I would like to tell you that we should think and believe that all the things we are doing now are the precious works of God, and that we should do them that way. The Lord said, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:34)*. We are doing the work of God, and if we think that the work of God is a

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treasure to us, I know that our hearts are also in that work of God.

If we think that these things we do are truly precious work and work like a treasure, our hearts are there. But if we think that the things we do are not like a treasure, that they are nothing, our hearts are not there. That is why I hope that these things we do truly serving the Lord and for the Lord will be a treasure to you and me. In the Lord's eyes this work is work like a treasure and very precious work. Because it is precious work, you and I give our hearts to it, and also give our bodies, our material things, and everything. It is because it is a treasure.

Because it is a treasure, we sometimes bear even extremely hard work and work we do not want to do. Some work gives us a headache, and there is work we would rather not have done and want to avoid. Those who work in the field want to avoid the work when they meet work that raises so much dust that they cannot bear it. We want to do only easy work and clean work, and we instinctively want to avoid dirty work. Not only the people who work in the field or the workshop but also the people who work on the internet are bound to feel that they want to avoid it when they meet troublesome work.

The things we do are all work like a treasure. This is because it is the work of serving God. How much dust rises? How many dirty things and hard things there are! There is also much work for which we must switch day and night. It is the same in every department. People commonly think that only their own department is hard, but if you look deeply into each department, they all have such difficulties. There is work that is extremely difficult, dangerous, and dirty, and there are times when we feel that this is not right. But because it is the work of God, because it is a treasure, we put our hearts into it and do it. Also, because the time when the Lord will come has fully arrived, we do it in order to serve the gospel through this work.

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"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning"

The time when the Lord will come has fully arrived. So He said, *"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning" (Luke 12:35)*. He says this because we do not know when the Lord will come. This word was spoken with reference to the order of the wedding ceremony of the people of Israel.

In Israel, after a man and a woman are betrothed and have promised to marry, the bridegroom goes to the bride's house at night. So on the bride's side they must light their lamps, gird their waists, and be ready, and when someone cries, *"The bridegroom is coming,"* they must run out with their lamps lit and welcome the people on the bridegroom's side. They light the dark road, prepare food, play music, and from then on hold the wedding.

It is like that when our Lord comes to this earth. He comes when it is dark, when this world has become completely perverse. So we must be girded and ready at all times. You may not understand well what it means to be girded. But if you are a worker, you can understand. A worker must prepare his work clothes and tighten his belt firmly, making all the preparations of heart and body, and only then can he handle the work when it comes upon him. If some work comes upon him when he is not ready, he cannot do that work. Doing it without preparation, whether it works or not, just because one is told to, is not regarding that work as a treasure. Because that work must be completed, and because even work that seems utterly impossible must be made to work, one must be fully ready and then do that work with the heart of serving the gospel.

Be a servant who is ready and accomplish the work of the Lord

So He said, *"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately" (Luke 12:35–36)*. Since the things we do are all the work the Lord desires, and the work through which the gospel is preached, they are a treasure to us and a treasure to the Lord as well. So He is telling us to be servants who have the heart that is ready to do this work like a treasure at any time. This gospel we preach is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished by receiving baptism from John and taking the sin of the world upon Himself, dying on the Cross shedding His blood, and rising again.

To accomplish even one of those works, how much must we think and prepare in our hearts? Reckoning in advance what variables may arise, as if seeing what cannot be seen with the eyes, preparing what is needed administratively and the materials actually needed, what to be careful of, how to accomplish it, and how to make it active after it is accomplished—how much preparation do we make? Only when we do so is that work accomplished. The work of serving the Lord cannot be served in the manner of, if it works it works and if not, so be it. Do not be such a person; be a worker who prepares his heart and is always ready, and works with the attitude that can accomplish what the Lord desires.

Seen in that way, there is not a single work that is not precious. Making food in the kitchen is also all precious work. If one just roughly makes something out of the ingredients and throws it at people, it is nothing, but if one works with the heart

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of thinking how to cook these ingredients deliciously to suit people's taste so that the workers can eat with relish, gain strength, ease their hearts, and go back to work, then working in that kitchen is also very precious work and work like a treasure. Since each and every small task done in each department is all work like a treasure, we must be those who, with the heart of such a worker, wait for the second coming of the Lord and carry out the preaching of the gospel.

If we have faith, we prepare in advance and take up the challenge

The time when the Lord will come has clearly drawn near, but He may come when we do not expect it, when everything seems fine. The words the Bible prophesied can be fulfilled quickly. In the Book of Revelation it is written that nature is damaged, a third of the trees are burned up, and hail weighing a talent falls (Revelation 8:7; 16:21). It means that lumps of ice the size of a person's head fall from the sky. It is something that can happen at any time through abnormal weather. Yet people do not believe.

Knowing and believing are different. People know, but they do not believe. But if we have faith, we prepare in advance for the time when the world becomes more difficult. As I now print the gospel in books and send them out and deliver it in e-books, I am trying to prepare little by little in advance, as far as circumstances allow, in order to preach the gospel in the future. When the world becomes more difficult, with that I intend, in the last days, to have the coworkers in each country find a printing house, so that we can take the originals from here, go to that country, and immediately print the gospel in books and

deliver it. This is something I thought out a very long time ago. If we do so, the gospel is preached. Since He said, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:34)*, because I am trying to accomplish the preaching of the gospel in that way, each one of these preparations now is a treasure to me.

Some people pour all their money into building one splendid sanctuary at great expense. But with that money, one cannot imagine how much the gospel could be preached to the whole world. I truly feel it is a pity that they bury that great sum of money in a building rather than preaching the gospel. Since the time when the Lord will come has fully arrived, we must prepare in advance like this and serve the gospel. If we have faith, we do like this.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for

You must believe. Faith and knowing are different. If you believe, faith springs up, but if you do not believe, it still ends as merely knowing. If you believe, you come to take hold of what is not visible to the eyes as if you saw it, and later you come to obtain what was invisible as something visible to the eyes and held in the hands. With the belt tied loosely, the work does not get done. Only when we draw in our breath and tighten it firmly does strength arise and the work get done. We must tighten the belt of our hearts like that.

This work of our churches throughout the nation preaching the gospel to the whole world is exactly according to the word, *"Faith is the substance of things hoped for" (Hebrews 11:1)*. Because we take up the challenge by faith and do it by faith, is the preaching of the gospel not now actually felt in our hands, tangibly? Is it not actually being accomplished? Could the news

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that comes from overseas even now, these testimonies, be false? Could it be an illusion that over twenty-two thousand testimonies have come in? Could this work of people receiving salvation overseas be a fantasy? Could we be laboring in vain? Certainly not. This is the substance given into the hands of those who took up the challenge by faith.

Important words must be heard repeatedly

People often say that the same thing is said again and again. But repeating because there is nothing to say and repeating because it is important are different. How much did the Lord also repeat His words? The four Gospels are like that. It seems that it would have been enough for one person to record the Gospel, but He had four people—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—all record it. Because people are all different, they each recorded from a different point of view what they saw and heard while accompanying the Lord.

Then why did He have us read the four Gospels as Scripture? Because you and I are different from one another. Even when we hear the same word, we each receive it differently according to the point of view from which we hear it. So He arranged it that way because it is necessary. Our hearts grow slack very often. We hear the word and keep a little of it, but as we work we soon become lazy, and then we hear the word again and hold on to it a little, and then grow slack again. That is why we must hear the word several times a week. If we knew everything and believed everything after hearing it once, there would be no need to preach or to gather. As we gather like this and deliver and hear the word, praise, and pray, the Holy Spirit moves, and because the circumstances each person goes through are different from

one another, He wraps up and heals each person's heart in a way suited to that person at that time, and also gives each a different realization. Here is the kingdom of God and the church of God. That is why we hold such gatherings.

Let us live regarding one another's labor as precious

We must live knowing that the things all of us are doing now are work like the treasure of God. What a great thing it is even to prepare one meal! Once a coworker boasted that he would take charge of kitchen duty and do it himself. So we let the pastors' wives rest, bought the ingredients for him, and left the cooking to him. But the rice he actually served was burned at the bottom, half-cooked in the middle, and raw rice as it was on top. Even the person who had boasted so loudly turned out like that when he actually tried it. That is how precious and difficult a thing it is to prepare and serve a meal even once. We must not make light of the labor of the sisters who cook meals all their lives, but must be truly thankful.

One may think that it is nothing, that it is just doing again what has been done before, but it is not so. Even if the ingredients are similar, the method of cooking is different and the taste is different. Even with the same rice every day, how the rice is cooked from it differs, and even with the same lettuce, how it is cooked differs. It is that difficult a task. We must know that what the other person has done is all precious. We must not regard the work done in other departments as if it were nothing, whether it is work done up on the roof, work done in front of a computer, or administrative work. Only when a person takes on that work and truly regards it as a treasure and does it does a

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corresponding result come out. Therefore we must respect one another and regard one another as precious. Should we not rightly do so?

We do not know when the Lord will come, but because we know and also believe that He is coming before long, we must live with the heart that is ready to carry out the work of God at any time, as if girding our waists and being prepared. The work of God is work like a treasure. So we must give our hearts to it and work, and this is the will of the Lord. I hope that you will regard one another as precious, know the work of God as work like a treasure and believe and serve it that way, and live thinking of the people beside you as all precious workers. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Be the one who feeds My people when I come

< Luke 12:35-48 >

"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.' Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming," and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an

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hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

It is good to see you. Meeting you and living together through such an age as this is truly a great strength to one another. Today I went to Gadeokdo. My elder brother in the flesh and my nephews and nieces, who are bound by a false religion, are always a burden on my heart, and I have the heart to pity them, care for them, and also preach the gospel to them. I hope that the Lord will lead me in that way.

We who live in this age now have work that we must surely carry out. One is the work of preaching the gospel to the whole world. The other is to do the will of the Lord and to become people who are watching and waiting to open the door to the Lord when He comes. The Lord said that the servant who waits to open the door immediately when the master returns from the wedding and knocks, the servant who is watching, is blessed.

The steward who gives out food in due season

There is one thing the Lord especially asked of us in this last age. What is it? It is the word, "*Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his*

household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes" (Luke 12:42–43).

Then what is the food we must give out? The first is the food of the spirit. We are those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world. However difficult the world is and however hard it is to live, we are preaching this gospel. These days it has become an age in which, if you ask a person you meet on the street whether he has sin, you rather get abused. Therefore now we must deliver it in documents. Delivering the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world in documents and e-books—this is the food of the spirit that we give out. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth of the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished by receiving baptism from John and taking our sins upon Himself, dying on the Cross shedding His blood, and rising again.

The second is the food of the flesh. While we live on this earth, until the day the Lord comes, the people of God must not go naked and the servants of God must not go naked. Workers are needed who will give out food in due season so that the problems of food, clothing, and shelter are well solved. Do they not say that even the Diamond Mountains are to be seen after a meal? When one is hungry, however beautiful a thing may be, it does not catch the eye. At the end of the world the Antichrist appears, and there is no one who will not surrender before food. Therefore it is the will of the Lord that we care for our family so that they do not go hungry either in spirit or in the flesh.

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The Lord regards as precious the one who obeys the word and believes and follows it

Therefore, the more difficult the world becomes, the more diligently we must prepare. If we have nothing at all and are bound to the matter of barely making a living, and only go around asking others for things, the Lord does not want that. The one who goes ahead must lay the groundwork in advance so that those who come after can live in sufficiency. This is what the one who goes ahead ought to prepare.

I have carried out this work by faith until now. Whenever land was needed and a workplace was needed, I took up the challenge by faith and asked, saying, “Lord, we have nothing; You know that we need it, so please give it,” and the Lord opened the way each time. All this preparation, too, is in the end done by faith. It is not something that gets done because a person is clever; it is the Lord who accomplishes it when we take up the challenge by faith. Therefore I regard this work of running a business and preparing as the work of serving the Lord, that is, as worship.

Here is a core point that we must never forget. Do you think that faith grows because you listen to sermons well? It is not so. Our faith grows when we serve the Lord in our lives and follow the will of the Lord. However good the sermons we hear and however much we know, faith does not grow by that alone. Even if we know little, when we obey that word and believe and follow it, that faith is experienced and grows in our hearts. The Lord does not regard as precious the one who knows much, but the one who does what he knows.

The news of salvation becomes great food for us

We have yet another food of the spirit. It is the mission news sent by the people overseas who have received the remission of sins. For what do we do this work? Is it not exactly for that fruit? Therefore, at every worship service on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday, before going into prayer, have a brother stand up and read that news first. Such news comes every day, and if we do not read it and just leave it lying there, it only piles up as documents and there is no benefit at all.

Hearing the word, praising, and praying during the worship service are truly important. But reading that news of salvation, giving thanks in our hearts and rejoicing because of the work of God, and praising God—this too is great worship. Perhaps it has greater power than any sermon. When we have preached the gospel, God gives us food not only through the word but also through its fruit. So let all the churches throughout the nation do this.

What did the Lord say? He said, *"And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:47–48)*. We are those who have been entrusted with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If we know this gospel and yet do not preach it, we come to be appointed our portion with the unfaithful. This is the stern warning of the Lord.

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Serve the gospel to the whole world

If the core of this word is reduced to two sentences, it is this. Serve the gospel to the whole world. Give out the food of the spirit and of the flesh to the people of God on this earth. He is saying that if you say you are a servant of God, do exactly that work. The one who truly goes ahead is the person who makes it possible for his family to make a living. Be the one who waits to open the door when I come; be the one who feeds My people when I come—that is exactly it.

So let us, not just a few of us but all of us, gather our hearts together, unite, and put our strength into this work. Since we cannot fully trust the leaders of the world and the world is becoming more and more difficult, we at least must stick close together, prepare diligently, serve the gospel, and care for one another. I want us to live doing the will of the Lord like this and then meet the Lord.

This gathering has been truly happy. Meeting the coworkers, opening our hearts together, and hearing one another's news is a great joy. How did we come to live such a life? Because of God, and by being together with you, we have come to live such a life. Therefore I thank you, and above all I give thanks to God. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Be like those who are watching and waiting

< Luke 12:35-48 >

"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.' Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming," and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an

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hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

The workers who receive the love of the Lord are those who do the will of the Lord

Who are the workers who receive much love from the Lord? They are those who do the will of the Lord. The Lord said, *"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately" (Luke 12:35–36)*. When the master returns and finds the servants watching, those servants are blessed. He said, *"Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them" (Luke 12:37)*.

What kind of person is a worker who receives the love of the Lord? He is the person who prepares while doing the will of the Lord, so as to open the door to Him immediately when the Lord comes again to this earth, and who also acts according to what he has prepared.

Those of us who know and do the will of God on this earth are the ones who receive love. As we diligently do the work of preaching the gospel to the whole world on this earth, the Lord

comes to us and, just as one brings out a delicious snack to a worker who is working hard, He loves us, feeds us, and serves us Himself. What is the work that the workers living in this last age ought to do? It is exactly the work of doing the will of the Lord.

The faithful and wise steward who gives out food in due season

Then what work do those who do the will of the Lord do? It is the work of giving out the food of the spirit and the food of the flesh to the people of God. We are now preaching the gospel to the whole world with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and also supplying the things they need. The Lord loves those who do this work and regards them as truly precious in this last age. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth of the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished by receiving baptism from John and taking the sin of the world upon Himself, dying on the Cross shedding His blood, and rising again.

What does the Lord want most in this last age? It is that we become those who give out food in due season to My people. This seems easy, but it is by no means easy. There are many souls scattered all over the world. There is no telling how many people are seeking God. And it is exactly to these people that we give out the food of the spirit they need, in due season.

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The work of giving out the food of the spirit is a truly beautiful work.

You may think, what is so great about giving it out in documents? Even if we do not read books much, somewhere out there someone may be reading until that paper is all worn out. Even in that far-off land, one book of ours becomes a very precious food of the spirit to him. Each and every one of those letters becomes the food that gives life to his soul, just as if God came to his side and explained the gospel to him as He did to the Ethiopian eunuch.

These days the gospel is being preached to Mexico and India as well. So I ask you. On Wednesday and Sunday evenings, as we begin the worship service and before we hold the prayer meeting, I would like us to read and hear together the news that the coworkers overseas send after reading our books and receiving salvation. We must hear this news. For a while we lost that flow, but now I hope that, with a microphone in place, we will sit down calmly to read and hear it. Hearing together at worship the testimonies of salvation that come from overseas like this becomes great food of the spirit for us.

The work of giving out the food of the spirit, and also the work of giving out the food of the flesh in due season, is a truly beautiful work. The Lord said, *"Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes" (Luke 12:42–43)*. Those who do such work are blessed.

He makes him ruler over all that He has, and that is the kingdom of heaven

How precious is the work of giving out food to those who seek God, the work of handing out books so that they become the food of their souls and the food of their faith! Those who do such work are truly blessed. The Lord said that He not only gives such people the keys of the kingdom of heaven but also entrusts them with the best things He has, so that they may enjoy the kingdom of heaven. *"Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has" (Luke 12:44)*. Is this not exactly the kingdom of heaven and the Millennial Kingdom?

Now is the last age. We do not know when the Lord will come. He said, *"Be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately" (Luke 12:36)*. The Lord accomplished all the work of salvation and went up to heaven, and now He is coming again. So He is telling us to work, doing the will of the Lord, with the attitude of heart that is ready to open the door to Him immediately as soon as He comes. To those who do so God gives blessing and makes them rulers over all that He has. All that He has is exactly the kingdom of heaven and the Millennial Kingdom that He intends to grant us.

Be watchful and ready; the time of the Lord's coming is near

We do not know exactly when the Lord will come, but we can roughly know that the time is near. The age of artificial intelligence is deepening more and more. People's hearts are becoming more and more desolate, and having lost the exchange

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of feelings, they rely on machines and come to follow them.

The world, too, is slowly changing, and sovereignty is moving from those who held absolute ruling power to the people. Originally the leaders of the world are those who were appointed to serve the people, but because they have failed to do so, the world is in such turmoil.

When a system is fully set up that can move all people under one command, we must know that the time when the Antichrist will appear is near. The word Antichrist means the enemy of God. At first he appears with a handsome and appealing face, with a voice everyone likes and a respectable appearance, and seizes control of everyone, and then he suddenly changes and becomes one who opposes God and the people of God. When that time comes, we must know that the time when the Lord will come has fully arrived. He is coming before long. When the Lord comes, we must be those who give out food to the people of God. Those who do such work receive blessing and come to possess the kingdom of God.

We are now giving out the food of the spirit through literature mission, and at times we are also supplying the food of the flesh to some ministers. Since our strength has its limits, we concentrate on preaching the gospel in documents, but we keep sending books and giving out the food of the spirit. God is pleased with such people. We are those who live feeling the warmth of the Lord. I hope that you will know that you are those who live doing the work in which the Lord delights most in this last age, and that you will have the self-respect that knows your own preciousness.

But what about the servant who is not like that? Thinking that his master is delaying his coming, he abuses the people under him, and eats and drinks and gets drunk and squanders. Such a servant is beaten severely when the Lord comes. The

Lord said that from the one who has been entrusted with much He requires much, and from the one who has been entrusted with little He requires little.

We do not serve the Lord with what is ours. We serve the Lord again with what the Lord has given us. This is the principle of the life of faith. After we offer a little of what we have, we have nothing. Then we ask the Lord, the Lord gives again, and with what He has given we serve again. This going round and round is exactly the will of the Lord.

If we know and do not preach, we are appointed the portion of the hypocrites

We are servants. Our Captain is Jesus. What Jesus likes is the work of giving out food. The Bible says this clearly. We are those who have been entrusted with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and those who know that this is the truth.

But if we know this and do not preach it, if we do not give out the food, we will be beaten with many stripes. We will be appointed the portion of the hypocrites. What does that mean? It means that He will treat us the same as the people who have not been saved. It is knowing and yet not doing. It is all right to stumble because of being lacking. But if one says that one does not want to do this work at all, it is a truly serious matter.

If a person who has received the love of the Lord and also received salvation says that he will absolutely not do the work the Lord desires, and that he will do nothing at all while living on this earth and only go to heaven, would that really work with the Lord? The Lord is One who feels all of joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure. He also knows how to be angry. The Lord Himself said, *"Appoint him his portion with the unbelievers" (Luke*

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12:46). He said that He sends to hell the hypocrite who has sin and yet says that he has none, and that He will treat the one who knows and yet does not do it in exactly the same way. But He is also One who knows how to comfort us when we are struggling, and who speaks in our hearts through the Holy Spirit and leads us Himself when we do not know the way to go.

In this last age God has granted the latter rain

It is simply amazing to be born in such an age, meet the Lord, and do this work. In the days of the early church, this gospel of the water and the Spirit was preached for a while. God said that He would send the former rain and the latter rain. Only when rain comes can farming be done and grain grow. In the days of the early church He sent the former rain. And this last age is the latter rain. Now the gospel is to be preached once to the whole world, and with those who will believe believing and those who will not believe remaining unbelieving, the harvest is to be reaped once and the end brought about.

And it is the purpose of God to do away with the first heaven and the first earth, make a new heaven and a new earth anew, and live there forever together with the righteous. Do you believe this? This earth will not last long. The abnormal weather is severe too.

By all means, I want us to serve well like this and then meet the Lord. Not only I but all of you as well, let us live well within the church of the Lord, enjoy within the church the blessings the Lord gives, and do the work of the Lord together until we meet the Lord. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Live the life of a servant of God who walks with the Lord

< Luke 12:41-59 >

"Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming," and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more. 'I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! Do you

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suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.' Then He also said to the multitudes, 'Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, "A shower is coming"; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, "There will be hot weather"; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? 'Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite.'"

Abandon our own thoughts and set our hearts on the word of the Lord

When we look at the word of God, we must look at it abandoning our own thoughts. When we face this word, we must focus on what the Lord is saying, and set our thoughts, our hearts, and our faith on that word.

Speaking of our lives, the Lord took the lilies blooming in the field as an example. Saying, *"If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you" (Luke 12:28)*, He told us to

live by faith. He also said, *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32)*, and told us to set our hearts on heaven, that is, on that kingdom the Lord will bring to us. And then He told us to live the life of a servant in the last days. In verses 35 to 40 He told us to live with the heart of servants who are watching when their master returns and faithfully do their master's work.

The blessed steward who gives out food in due season

Today's word, too, may be seen as an extension of that. Since the Lord said that He would come at an hour we do not know, Peter asked. *"Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes" (Luke 12:41–43)*. The servant who gives out food in due season when the master returns is blessed. The Lord has given us everything we need, and so He tells us to live for Him. He said that the one who does so is blessed, but that many stripes and punishment await the one who does not.

He is telling us to be faithful stewards, to be well entrusted with what belongs to the master and manage and use it according to his will, to make a profit so that there is no loss, and to accomplish all the will of the master. Even when we get a job at someone else's company, is it not so that only when we do not waste what belongs to that company but produce a benefit and work faithfully does the owner love that employee, treat him generously, and praise him as a precious worker? The life of

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faith of you and me is exactly like that.

Our Lord is the Master, and you and I are those who labor as servants in all the work the Master does. The one who does so is blessed. The word of God says that a lazy person is like a thorn in the eyes of his master. It means that a lazy servant looks like a thorn in the eyes of his master and troubles his heart. If one works for another and is not faithful but only pulls the wool over his eyes, one ends up being like a thorn in the eyes of the master. If there is one who gives out food to the servants in due season when the master returns, such a person is blessed.

Let us take food as an example. Suppose the master entrusted a granary to you and me and gave us the duty of giving it out suitably in due season to the people of God. If we faithfully carry out that work, we receive blessing from the master. But if we do not share it in due season but scoop it all out at once at any time and share it, and then never look after them again and leave them to starve to death or not, that is not right. Likewise, you and I are those who spiritually give out the food of the spirit to the people of the whole world. If we carry out this work properly, we become blessed people, and if we do not carry it out properly, we are beaten and punished when the master returns. Is it not so?

This work must continue without ceasing, in due season. The work of preaching the gospel to the world is like that. This past week, too, some thirty thousand people came onto the website, and countless people downloaded and read the audiobooks and e-books. Also, testimonies of the salvation of the remission of sins continued to come from various countries, and the books of the gospel keep being published in various languages, including English. This is what it means to be a steward who gives out suitably in due season. But even among stewards, the person whom the Lord has entrusted with much must work much, and the person whom He has entrusted with little may work little.

The person who knows the master's will and does not do it is beaten, and the person who knows the will and faithfully does it comes to live a life of being made ruler over all the master has, enjoying it, and carrying out that work.

When we actually apply it to you and me, that word is right. He asks much of the one who has been entrusted with much and little of the one who has been entrusted with little, and, regrettably, you and I are people who have been entrusted with much. Why is that? Because we are not people who do not know the will of the Lord. There is no gospel of the water and the Spirit in the whole world. If there is no one but us to preach it, we must do that work. If we know and yet do not do it, that is a great wrong. Therefore we do it today, do it tomorrow, do it the day after tomorrow, and keep on doing it without ceasing.

The Bible speaks only of the work of the Lord and of living by faith

This life of faith is quite different from and far removed from the way we live in the world. When we open the word of God, it seems that it would teach us how to become rich in this world, how to live wisely, how to win the favor of others, and how to conduct ourselves, but the Bible says nothing whatsoever of the kind.

The Bible speaks only of the work of God Himself. It speaks only of the salvation He has given us and only of His work. For the rest, He only tells us to live by faith. Here lies the reason we fall into great temptation in the life of faith. Even the people who believe in Jesus want, like the wise people of the world, to live conducting themselves well somewhere in the middle, being neither far right nor far left, neither liberal nor communist nor

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democratic, and they regard that as wise. But the Bible leans firmly to one side. It says do the work of God, believe the gospel God has given, if you do not believe it is hell and if you believe it is salvation, and after believing, unite with the Lord and serve Him well. And it says that if we do well the work the Lord has entrusted to us, He gives blessing in spirit and in the flesh, and that if we do not, there is no such blessing and even the salvation we received can be canceled.

Therefore the one who preaches cannot but preach it as it is. What if one interpreted this word as one pleased, and taught that since He said to give out food in due season, we should love our neighbors, and that we should also earn much money on this earth, and, borrowing the word of Malachi, that since He said He would pour out blessing until the storehouse overflows if we give tithes, let us give two tenths and three tenths and become rich? If in that way the church builds a building, becomes rich, the pastor's salary rises, the church becomes splendid, and it buys up land, that is not a church. That is not a servant of God. A servant has a master. A servant who has a master is a true servant, and acting in accordance with the will of that master is the life of a servant.

Once one has become a servant, it is entirely natural to be faithful to the Lord. The Bible speaks firmly to one side. This world perishes and life is vanity of vanities, so you must meet the Lord; while living on this earth you must do righteous work; that is exactly the work of serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit; for the person who lives united in faith for that work, the way to live in spirit and in the flesh is opened, and for the person who does not, it is not. Is that so? Am I interpreting the Bible artificially and preaching the word as suits my benefit? Am I doing ministry that way? I know that it is not so.

Whoever believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is a servant of the Lord

If we are servants, we cannot but live in accordance with the will of the Master. Whoever believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is a servant of the Lord. There is not one person who is not a servant of the Lord. Laypeople are servants of the Lord, ministers are servants of the Lord, and workers are servants of God. In a way, laypeople have a harder time. They go out into the world and work themselves to the bone in fields that have nothing to do with the kingdom of God, and when they come back to the church they must take on new work again, so they are working in two worlds, so to speak. Our Master is only One, our God Jesus Christ, yet they go back and forth trying to serve two masters in the world, and so it is harder.

Whoever has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus received the sin of the world passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, and then saved us by rising from the dead, is a servant. Why a servant? Because the Holy Spirit is in our hearts. When we do the work in which the Lord delights, the Holy Spirit rejoices. Since the Master has come to dwell in us, if we do work in which the Master does not delight, we are rebuked and beaten because we are servants. On the other hand, if we do the work in which the Master delights, our hearts are glad, we are glad because the Master is pleased, and the Master gives us the blessings of spirit and flesh as a bonus. He also gives great faith, renews our hearts, and helps the work we do to go well. So there is no other way to deal with it.

If there were another way to live, why would we not take it? If we could live somewhere vaguely in the middle,

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compromising moderately with the world and compromising moderately with God as well, without serving the gospel and without living entirely for this alone, would we not do so? But it does not work. This is because our Master is so very clever. He never tolerates unrighteousness, He is holy, and He desires only that good work be done. He does not do evil to us and wants only to give us blessing, whether spiritual blessing or earthly blessing or the blessing of the flesh; He is One who takes no pleasure in cursing, doing evil, or tormenting others. Since such a Master dwells in our hearts, only when we please that Master are we glad.

We are not servants in outward appearance. In reality the Lord has come to dwell in our hearts, that Master rules over us, and He has made us His servants and uses us as His instruments. So there is no other way. Even when we go outside, the Master does not change. The Master in one's heart is there separately, and He is the Lord. Therefore we must live as the Master delights.

Unite our hearts with the Lord and walk with Him

Therefore we must set our thoughts on the Lord. We must set our will on the will of the Lord, our plans on the plans of the Lord, and our purpose on the purpose of the Lord. If instead our purpose, plans, thoughts, and hearts do not align with the Master, we perish. That way we cannot walk together. How can two walk together unless their hearts are agreed?

Even when a husband and wife go to the market together, if their hearts are not united they always quarrel. One wants to buy this one and the other wants to buy that one; their tastes differ and their purposes differ, so though their bodies go together their hearts are apart, and they go together but come back separately.

In the world one may come back separately like that, but with the Lord we must go together when we go and come together when we come. Without uniting our hearts, we cannot go together. When the purpose differs, the plan differs, the thought differs, and the heart differs, how can we go together?

With the Lord the cogwheels must mesh and turn from the very beginning. There is no such thing as being out of joint here and then happening to fit by chance at the far end. Therefore the servants of the Lord cannot but live according to the will of the Lord. However much we struggle, there is no way out. If there had been a way out, we would have gotten out long ago. If there had been a way to live without serving this gospel, I too would have done so long ago, and I would have cried, "Receive the fire!" like other churches and stirred up your hearts. But there is no other way. If you have met the Lord and truly believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, from that time on you have a new Master. The old man has died and you have become a new man; the old master has disappeared and a new Master has come. Is your Master not new? Is it the old master or the new Master? It is the Lord, the new Master.

It is the same with me. Now there is only one Master. In death or in life that Master is my Master, and I cannot but follow Him alone. His will is my will, and I cannot but be united with His thoughts and His heart, so I cannot insist on my own stubbornness and there is no other way. So I have given up on that altogether. I have already finished all the calculations. A wise person must calculate well. You too, calculate well. Calculate whether, having received the remission of sins, you must follow the Lord or not. Apart from the answer I have told you, you must have the answer you have obtained by thinking for yourselves. That is the true answer, and you must live the life of faith with that answer. If there is no way out, is it not better to

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go forward all the more actively and receive blessing? I know that that is the sensible thing.

"I came to send fire on the earth"

The Lord says to us, *"I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49)*. The Lord is saying that He has now come to send fire on the earth, that is, to set off a fight. We think of the Lord only as the God of love and peace, and He truly is such a God. But when He sees the unrighteous, He is a righteous Lord who never lets it pass. If there are those who abuse and oppress others, the Lord surely saves the oppressed.

The Lord took our sins upon Himself for us by receiving baptism from John, but the work of salvation had not yet been fully accomplished. He had already received baptism from John, and now there remained the work of being hung on the Cross and dying. So He said, *"But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:50)*, and went on to say, *"Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division" (Luke 12:51)*. And He says this: *"For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.'" (Luke 12:52–53).*

Five family members live in one household, and some follow the will of the Lord and some do not. Some believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord has given and unite their hearts with the Lord and follow Him, but even within the same

family there are those who do not follow. When the person who lives united with the will of the Lord sees a family member who lives without uniting, fire flares up in his eyes and his heart burns. So he cannot help but fight. Who did this? It was none other than the Lord who did it. It is not that you and I do so. The Lord has stirred up war like this, both in the world of those who are not born again and within the world of those who are born again.

The born-again person tries to follow the right way, tries to live a right life, and tries to lead the person who lives wrongly to what is right. That is right. But to the person who is not right, the person who does what is right becomes a thorn in the eye and is hated, and they come to hate each other and quarrel. Each tries to make the other live according to his own will. Is that actually so for you?

I, too, in the past got along well in union with my mother and the members of the prayer house. But after I met the Lord, many quarrels arose. Neither they nor I wanted to fight each other, and we wanted to be at peace, but after meeting the Lord I could not live as before. In that place where they bound people with a false religion and exploited in offerings even what belonged to those who had nothing, how could I have remained as I was? It was only right to help people receive the gospel and live a right life, but that was not being done, and my heart could not bear it. So as I turned to the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in the end division arose, and I ended up divided even from my family. To be divided and quarrel is exactly division.

Why do quarrels arise? Because even within one household, even among the people who have heard the same gospel, there are those who do not go the right way. However much we are one family, we must live a right life. Fighting comes with accomplishing what is right. Yesterday I watched the story of a man called Choi Bae-dal. Despised and abused in Japan for the

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reason that he was a Korean, he sought out the famous martial arts masters of Japan and fought them in order to show that Koreans are by no means weak. The one he loved held on to him, begging him to stop that fighting and stay at his side as an ordinary man, but though he was battered all over and feared death, he did not back down. This was because unless he did so, Koreans would keep on being despised.

How can there be no fighting when one does what is right? How can a person who has received the remission of sins become his own master? Only when we do the work in which the Master delights is the heart at ease. It is not that we have become enemies of our families. It is not that parents and children have become enemies of one another. Since the righteous Lord is within us, how can we abandon that Master and go? If we abandon the will of that Master and go along united only with our families, that whole family perishes. It is not that the Lord kills them; they become wretched by themselves and end up as people who are useless both on this earth and in the kingdom of heaven, and that is exactly a curse.

The person who has received the remission of sins must fight in order to lead his family to the right way, and the person who has not received the remission of sins fights for his own purpose, but in the end the person who does what is right wins. When neither will yield, they are divided, and that is division. It is not that I am ordering this; I am delivering the word of God as it is. How could a pastor tell people to fight with their families and fight with their friends? The servants of the Lord are ambassadors of peace. If we are reconciled to the Lord, we can be reconciled even to the people who had been our enemies, and if we are not reconciled to the Lord, all people become our enemies.

Discern this time

The Lord speaks again. *"Then He also said to the multitudes, 'Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, "A shower is coming"; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, "There will be hot weather"; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? 'Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right?" (Luke 12:54–57).* He is saying, you discern the face of the sky and of the earth so well, so how is it that you do not know what kind of time this time is?

I once told you what I saw when I went to Taiwan. From the trees lining the roadside, roots were hanging down not only in the ground but above the ground as well. Because the weather was so humid and sultry, the roots had come down so as to absorb moisture from the air as well, rather than only from the ground. The climate is now becoming like that. All over the world winter is disappearing, snow is disappearing even in places like Alaska, and with warming, winter itself is disappearing.

You know these things well; you all know that when the south wind blows it gets hot, when the north wind blows it gets cold, and when clouds come from the west it rains, so how is it that you do not discern this time? What kind of time is this time now? It is the time of destruction. This age now has little time left. It is an age in which the economy, health, the climate, and nature collapse and wars break out. It is an age in which only the culture of human sin develops. Do you think something special and different is coming? The Lord tells us to discern this time well.

Countless people are closing their doors. A trade war breaks

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out, and then a nuclear war follows. Christians must discern this time and live by faith. The Lord told us to be careful not to be caught in a trap because of the hardships of life. Since making a living is becoming hard, we must pay attention, pray, study, and cope. There are countless occupations that will disappear within the next few years. Now is different from the past. The Mayan civilization, the Roman culture, and the Greek culture rose and fell, but in those days they could rise again; now, because science has developed to the highest degree, once it collapses it is the end, and nature too is now at its end. Therefore we must cope. We must live by faith.

If you do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, it is hell and Hades.

The Lord says this: *"When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite" (Luke 12:58–59).* If you have sin, who is the one who will accuse you? Is it not the law, the law of God? Who on this earth can escape the command of God? Therefore He is telling us to be reconciled quickly and settle it before going to be judged, before leaving this world and going to be judged before God. Once we receive the verdict before the judge it is the end, and we simply go to hell.

He said, *"You shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite."* How can we ever fully pay the debt we owe to God, that sin, even the very last mite, even the tiniest speck? There is only one way to pay it. What is it? The way of believing

in the gospel of the water and the Spirit; there is no way but that. The Lord took our sins upon Himself for us by receiving baptism from John, and by dying on the Cross He paid the full price of all our sins for us. Therefore, if we believe in the Lord and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins, all our sins are remitted without leaving even the very last mite, and we come to have paid all the debt we owed to God. But if we do not believe and do not follow, the debt we owe to the Lord remains and we can never come out of that prison, and that is exactly hell and Hades.

Be alert again and live by the faith that believes the word

Even when we hear the word of God, we must hear it abandoning our own thoughts, and the one who preaches must do the same. Even if we have heard it a hundred million times, we must hear it again at any time, be alert, and wake up. When a person is good to another person, it is only being good temporarily, so we must be careful in looking at it. There is the intent to use him as one's own servant or to accomplish one's own purpose; a person cannot be endlessly good to another person. It is enough to be good to God. Living with our hearts united with the people who follow the will of God well is also being good to God.

Let us live by faith. I am not saying that we have not lived by faith until now; I am saying let us be alert again, live by faith, and come to our senses. There is no one here who lives only for himself. If one lives only for oneself, no one can grow, no one can continue the life of faith, and no one can follow the Lord. Fortunately, the Lord has taught us the truth, and because

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knowing alone is not enough, He Himself dwells in our hearts, becomes our Master, leads us, and teaches us with the word, and so we are living like this. Truly, I give thanks and thanks again before God. ✉

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CHAPTER

13

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Luke Chapter 13

Part 1. Understanding the text passage by passage and its gospel-based interpretation

Luke chapter 13 begins with the warning that everyone must turn to God, and goes on to the mercy of God, who is patient with sinners, the true rest that Jesus gives, the growing kingdom of God, the narrow gate of salvation, and the love of the Lord toward Jerusalem. The fact that we must believe the word and return to God while the opportunity of grace is open runs through the whole chapter.

1. Do not judge others, but repent (13:1–5)

"There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.'"

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General interpretation of the text

People tell Jesus about the incident of the Galileans killed by Pilate. At that time it was easy to think that a person who had suffered a terrible thing had done so because he had committed greater sins than others.

But Jesus says that they did not die because they were greater sinners than the other Galileans. He goes on to say that the eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell were not more sinful than others either.

Instead of guessing at or judging the sins of those who suffered misfortune, Jesus demands that we examine our own lives. The word *"unless you repent you will all likewise perish"* does not mean that everyone will die in the same kind of accident; it means that all people stand before sin and the judgment of God, and so must return to God.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—We must not judge others but know that we ourselves are sinners

People thought that the Galileans killed by Pilate had suffered such a thing because they had more sins than others. They must have judged similarly about the eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell. But Jesus said that they were not greater sinners than others.

People easily judge the sins of another person by looking at the misfortune he has suffered. But Jesus turned their eyes from other people to themselves. Even though there are differences in the outward appearance of sin and in the circumstances of life, before the law of God everyone is a sinner. The fact that one

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lives in peace without suffering disaster cannot be evidence that one is righteous before God.

The repentance Jesus spoke of does not end merely with correcting a few wrong behaviors. One must turn from the thought that one could be saved by one's own goodness and religious deeds. One must realize through the law that one is a person who cannot escape sin and judgment by oneself, and seek the salvation Jesus accomplished.

Jesus took the sins of all mankind upon Himself by receiving baptism from John the Baptist. Then, carrying those sins, He was hung on the Cross, received the judgment of sin, and rose from the dead. True repentance is going as far as abandoning one's own righteousness and knowing and believing in the heart this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

2. The fig tree that bore no fruit (13:6–9)

"He also spoke this parable: 'A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, "Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?" But he answered and said to him, "Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down."'"

General interpretation of the text

A man looked for fruit for three years on the fig tree he had planted in his vineyard, and when he found none, he told the

keeper to cut the tree down. But the keeper of the vineyard asks him to wait just one more year, saying that he will dig around it and fertilize it.

This parable shows the fact that God is patient even with the person who does not repent, and gives him another chance. But the patience of God must not be understood as permission to keep putting off repentance.

God expects fruit worthy of repentance from the person who has experienced His grace. That fruit is not outward religious acts but a changed life that returns to God and practices justice, love, and mercy.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—The patience of God has an end

The owner looked for fruit on the fig tree for three years but found none. So he said to cut down the tree that only used up the ground. But the keeper of the vineyard asked him to wait just one more year, and said that he would dig around the tree and fertilize it.

This parable shows the fact that God does not judge sinners at once but gives them the opportunity to be saved. He lets them hear the word, makes them realize their sins through the law, and keeps caring for them so that they may come to know the gospel of the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished.

But the patience of God must not be misunderstood to mean that there is no judgment. The opportunity to hear the gospel and the time of being alive do not continue forever. While the door is open, one must admit that one is a sinner and believe the word of salvation.

The fundamental fruit God looks for first is not a person

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boasting of his own deeds, but the fruit of faith that knows and believes the salvation God accomplished. After receiving the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the fruit of a life that follows the word and serves the gospel and souls out of thankfulness for the grace received must appear. Such service is not a price paid to buy salvation but the fruit borne from the salvation already received.

3. Healing the woman who was bent over (13:10–17)

"Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, 'Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.' And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, 'There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.' The Lord then answered him and said, 'Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?' And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him."

General interpretation of the text

On the Sabbath, in a synagogue, Jesus heals a woman who had not been able to straighten her body for eighteen years. Though the woman did not ask first, Jesus calls her and sets her free from her suffering.

The ruler of the synagogue complains, telling people to be healed on a day other than the Sabbath. But Jesus says that, since people loose their ox or donkey even on the Sabbath and lead it to water, it is all the more fitting to loose *"a daughter of Abraham"* who had been bound for so long.

Jesus did not disregard the Sabbath; He restored its original meaning. The Sabbath is not a day for oppressing people but a day for life, rest, and liberation. In this event the woman's suffering is related to an evil spirit, but on this basis one must not generalize that all illness arises because of evil spirits.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—Jesus looses the bonds of sin and Satan

A woman had been bound by Satan for eighteen years and could not straighten her body. Jesus first saw that woman and called her, told her that she was loosed from her infirmity, and made her straight.

One must not conclude that every illness is due to an individual's sin or the work of a demon. But the woman in the text is clearly recorded as a person bound by Satan. This event shows the fact that there is a power of sin and Satan that a person cannot resolve by his own strength, and that only Jesus can loose that bond.

The ruler of the synagogue did not rejoice that a soul had

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been loosed from eighteen years of bondage; he put the form of the Sabbath first and was angry. He loosed his own ox and donkey on the Sabbath and led them to water, yet he could not accept that a suffering woman had been set free. This is religious hypocrisy.

True rest is not obtained by the merit of keeping the form of a particular day. When we believe the fact that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself and was judged, and so ended the work of sin, true rest comes into the heart. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit escapes the condemnation of sin and enjoys peace before God.

4. The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven (13:18–21)

"Then He said, 'What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches.' And again He said, 'To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.'"

General interpretation of the text

Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a small mustard seed. The mustard seed is very small at first, but when it grows it becomes a plant large enough for birds to nest in.

The kingdom of God is also like a little leaven spreading through a large lump of dough. In other passages leaven is

sometimes used in a negative sense, but here it represents the power of the kingdom of God to spread quietly and change the whole.

The kingdom of God seems insignificant at first, through Jesus and a small community of disciples, but in the end it embraces many people and brings about wide and deep change. One must not judge the work of God lightly for the reason that its beginning is small.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—The kingdom of God grows and spreads through the gospel

Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a single mustard seed and to leaven put into three measures of meal.

The mustard seed looks very small at first, but there is life in it and it grows into a large tree. The gospel of the water and the Spirit, too, may look to the people of the world like a small and insignificant word. But in the heart of the person who knows and believes the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus, the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit, and the kingdom of God are established. A sinner becomes a child of God, and that person in turn becomes a worker who preaches the gospel to other souls.

Just as leaven makes the whole lump of meal rise, the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not stay in the heart of one person but spreads to the whole world. Here the leaven represents not a wrong teaching but the power of the gospel of the kingdom of God to expand.

The kingdom of God is not a kingdom built by the political power and the material things of the world. It is established as sinners hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the

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remission of sins, and become the people of God. The saved saints must use their material things, time, and talents to serve so that this gospel is delivered to other souls as well.

5. Enter through the narrow gate (13:22–30)

"And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, 'Lord, are there few who are saved?' And He said to them, 'Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, "Lord, Lord, open for us," and He will answer and say to you, "I do not know you, where you are from," then you will begin to say, "We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets." But He will say, "I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity." There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.'"

General interpretation of the text

A person asks Jesus whether there are few who are saved. Instead of telling the number of those who will be saved, Jesus says, *"Strive to enter through the narrow gate."*

This does not mean to obtain salvation by human effort and good deeds. It means not merely to speculate about salvation,

but to respond seriously to the invitation of God with repentance and faith.

The outward familiarity of having eaten with Jesus and heard His teaching alone is not enough. If one has heard the word of God, the direction of one's life must change and the fruit of obedience must appear.

The word that people will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and take part in the feast of the kingdom of God shows that the salvation of God will expand beyond ethnic and social boundaries. Those who thought themselves first may become last, and those regarded as left behind may become first. What matters is not bloodline or religious background but one's response to the invitation of God.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—The narrow gate is the gate of salvation that God has appointed

Someone asked Jesus whether the number of those who are saved is small. But Jesus did not explain the number of those who are saved; He told each person to strive to enter through the narrow gate.

To enter through the narrow gate does not mean to earn the qualification for salvation by much asceticism and sacrifice. It is to admit that one cannot be saved by one's own deeds and religious righteousness, and to believe the method of salvation that God has appointed.

Jesus took our sins upon Himself once and for all with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is the narrow gate that leads into life. Many

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people speak the name of Jesus, yet because they do not believe the meaning of His baptism and follow the broad way of religion, they fail to enter through the gate.

The word *"Strive"* does not mean that a person should produce salvation by good deeds. It is an urgent exhortation that, while the gate of salvation is open, we should not leave our faith to others but hear, know, and believe the word of God in our hearts for ourselves.

Even the fact of having eaten with Jesus and heard His teaching up close cannot take the place of an individual's faith. The religious familiarity of having attended church for a long time and heard the gospel much is not enough. The word that people from the east and the west, from the north and the south, take part in the feast of the kingdom of God shows the fact that one enters the kingdom of God not by bloodline and religious status but by the faith that believes the true gospel.

This does not mean that after entering through the narrow gate one may live as one pleases according to one's own desires. The saint who has received the remission of sins must serve the church, the gospel, and souls according to the will of the Lord who saved him. But this life is not a condition of salvation; it is the way of faith walked by the person who has been saved.

6. Jesus, who set His face toward Jerusalem (13:31–35)

"On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, 'Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.' And He said to them, 'Go, tell that fox, "Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and

the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"'"

General interpretation of the text

Some Pharisees warn Jesus to leave, saying that Herod wants to kill Him. Jesus calls Herod a "*fox*" and says that He will continue His ministry despite his threat.

The word that He works "*today and tomorrow*" and is completed on "*the third day*" means that the mission of Jesus will be completed at the time God has appointed. It brings the resurrection to mind, but first of all it means that Herod cannot determine the way and the time of Jesus.

While rebuking Jerusalem for having rejected the prophets, Jesus laments that He tried to protect its people as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. At the center of the rebuke of Jesus there is not only anger but also sorrow and saving love toward those who reject Him.

But if one keeps rejecting the invitation of God, judgment follows. Though Jesus knows the suffering that will come upon Him, He goes forward toward Jerusalem in order to fulfill the plan of salvation of God.

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The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—Jesus set His face toward Jerusalem beyond the threat

Though He heard that Herod wanted to kill Him, Jesus did not stop the ministry entrusted to Him. The words *"today and tomorrow"* and *"the third day"* express His intention to complete His ministry according to the course God appointed, unshaken by the threats and the hindrance of people.

It was not because Jesus did not know that suffering would come upon Him that He went to Jerusalem. Since He had already taken the sin of the world upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, He went to Jerusalem, where the Cross awaited, in order to receive the judgment of that sin. The death of the Lord was not a failure suffered for lack of power or an accidental event, but obedience for the purpose of saving sinners.

But the people of Jerusalem rejected the prophets God sent, and finally rejected even Jesus, who came as the Savior. Even so, Jesus wanted to embrace and save them, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. In this word the deep compassion of the Lord toward sinners is revealed.

The problem lay not in the Lord failing to prepare salvation, but in people not wanting to come into the bosom of the Lord. If one insists on one's own righteousness and religious pride and rejects the word of salvation, desolation and judgment finally come. The love of God is not a love that overlooks sin, but a love in which He Himself took upon Himself the judgment of sin in order to save sinners.

Conclusion of Part 1—The gospel of the water and the Spirit that Luke chapter 13 conveys

Luke chapter 13 tells the person who was judging the disasters and the sins of others to examine himself first. Everyone is a sinner before God, and must settle the problem of sin while alive.

God gives sinners the opportunity to hear the word and be saved, as one cares for a fruitless fig tree. By loosing the woman bound by Satan, Jesus showed that He is the One who saves people from the power of sin and Satan and gives true rest.

That salvation Jesus accomplished by receiving baptism from John the Baptist and taking all our sins upon Himself, receiving the judgment of sin on the Cross, and rising from the dead. To know and believe in the heart this gospel of the water and the Spirit is to enter through the narrow gate.

The saint who has received the remission of sins does not stop there. Like the mustard seed and the leaven, he must serve so that the gospel spreads to other souls and to the whole world, and must walk the narrow way, putting the will of the Lord before his own desires. Salvation is obtained by the grace the Lord completed, but the life of the saved person leads on to a life that bears the fruit of the gospel out of thankfulness for that grace. ✉

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Part 2. An expository sermon
following the text passage by passage

We must believe the gospel in the time of repentance

Beginning the sermon

In Part 1 we examined each passage of Luke chapter 13 side by side from the general interpretation of the text and from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Now, following the flow of the same text, we will examine in detail the repentance that examines oneself rather than judging others, the longsuffering of God, and the true rest obtained through release from the bondage of sin and Satan.

The fig tree without fruit, the healing of the woman who was bent over, the mustard seed and the leaven, the narrow gate, and the lament over Jerusalem are not words separate from one another. All these words show that God wants to save sinners, but that the invitation of grace must not be put off to the end or refused.

The expository sermons that follow examine, while following the flow of the text, how the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus took the sins of mankind upon Himself with the baptism He received from John and completed salvation with the Cross and the resurrection—is testified in each passage.

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Do not judge the disasters of others

"There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.'" (Luke 13:1–5).

Those who suffered the disaster and those who survived are all sinners

Luke chapter 13 verse 1 begins with the words *"at that season."* Luke recorded this word directly after the word in which Jesus rebuked the people, telling them to discern the time and warned them to make every effort to be reconciled before being dragged before the judge. Therefore the call to repentance in the text connects naturally with the preceding urgent warning that one must realize one's own condition and turn to God before the judgment of God arrives.

At that time some people came to Jesus and told Him of the horrific event in which Pilate had killed certain Galileans and mingled their blood with their sacrifices.

The people who brought this news must have wondered whether those who had suffered such a terrible thing had been judged because they had committed especially great sins compared with others. When people see someone who has

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suffered a great misfortune, they easily judge that he was punished because he was more wicked than others. They even think that they themselves are more righteous and safer than that person because the same disaster has not happened to them.

But Jesus said clearly that the Galileans who died had not suffered such a thing because they had more sins than the other Galileans. Those people, and the people who were telling about and hearing of the event, were all the same sinners before God.

Jesus went on to speak of the event in which the tower in Siloam fell and eighteen people were crushed to death. The former event was one in which people died by the violence of Pilate, and the latter was one in which people died when a tower suddenly collapsed. By speaking together of two events with different causes, Jesus made clear that whether they died by human violence or by an unexpected accident, those who suffered these things did not die because they were greater sinners than those who survived.

Though there are differences in the deeds and reputations that appear in the world, all people are sinners who are born with sin and commit sin with the heart and with actions. Therefore the heart of the text lies not in judging how great a sinner the person who suffered the disaster was, but in realizing that the one who hears the news is himself also a sinner who cannot escape the judgment of God. Death comes without warning, and the person who has not repented cannot escape the final judgment of God.

True repentance is turning from the wrong way and going to Jesus

The repentance spoken of here is not a religious act of

repeating “I was wrong” with the mouth, or of offering prayers of repentance every time one sins and washing those sins away little by little. Repentance is realizing that the way one was going was wrong and turning from that way. It is abandoning the thought that one is better than others and one’s own righteousness, admitting that one is a complete sinner and a being who cannot escape the judgment of God, and returning to God.

In true repentance there is a heart that admits sin to be sin and wants to turn from the evil way. But a person is not saved by the merit of completely correcting his life or cutting off all his sins. Correcting one’s conduct cannot pay the price of sin in one’s place, nor can it wash away all the sins of the heart. Because a person cannot make himself righteous by his own effort, he must believe in Jesus Christ, who came to save sinners.

Jesus accomplished perfect salvation in order to save sinners who would perish. Jesus took all the sins of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, at the Jordan River. Then, carrying those sins, He was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died, thereby receiving the judgment and punishment of sin in our place. After that, by rising from the dead He overcame sin and death and completed salvation.

Therefore the repentance that leads to salvation is turning from the thought that made light of one’s own sins by comparing them with others’ and from one’s own righteousness, and returning to God. The person who has thus turned to God must believe in the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished with His baptism, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection.

The person who believes this gospel does not try to wash away his sins with his own deeds and repeated prayers of

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repentance. He receives the remission of sins once and for all by believing the fact that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. And he obtains new life by believing in Jesus, who rose from the dead. In the heart of the saint who has received the remission of sins the Holy Spirit dwells and testifies that he has become a child of God.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, when a saint realizes his fault through the word, he must turn from that way, apologize to the person he has harmed, and fulfill the responsibility he ought to bear. This is not an act for washing away sin again, but the fruit of faith of the saint who has received the perfect remission of sins from Jesus and lives according to the will of God.

We must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit now and receive the remission of sins

Even today, when a great accident, disease, war, or disaster occurs, we must not say carelessly that the victims suffered such a thing because they had especially many sins. Only God knows all the circumstances and the hearts of people. What a saint must do is not to condemn those who suffer but to have compassion on them and help them, and not to forget that he himself was also a sinner who could only have perished were it not for the grace of God.

The sudden death of another person reminds those who are still alive that the time of repentance is right now. What matters is not thinking that one is less wicked than others, but confirming whether one has received the remission of sins now by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Religious career and office,

service and good deeds, and social reputation cannot save a person's soul before death and judgment.

Luke chapter 13 verses 1–5 teach us not to regard ourselves as righteous on the basis of the misfortune of others. Just as the Galileans and those who died under the tower in Siloam were not greater sinners than others, so those who are still alive are not people who are safe by their own righteousness. Everyone must admit that he is a sinner, turn from his own righteousness, and return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished.

God does not take pleasure in the perishing of sinners, and He wants no one to perish but all to repent and be saved. Therefore when we hear the news of a disaster, we must not condemn the victims or merely remain in vague fear, but realize that the time of grace in which we can still believe the gospel has been given to us. Because Jesus solved the whole problem of sin and judgment with the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection, the person who believes that salvation in the heart now escapes from destruction and obtains eternal life.

Believe the gospel in the time of grace

"He also spoke this parable: 'A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, "Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?" But he answered and said to him, "Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down."'" (Luke 13:6–9).

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God waits for the fruit of repentance

Speaking of the death of the Galileans and the collapse of the tower in Siloam, Jesus warned twice, *"Unless you repent you will all likewise perish."* And immediately afterward He spoke the parable of the fig tree that bore no fruit. Therefore this parable is not a word separated from the preceding call to repentance. Together with the fact that there is judgment for the sinner who does not repent, it shows the fact that God is still allowing time to turn back.

A man planted a fig tree in his vineyard. This tree was not a tree that had sprung up by itself in an abandoned field, but a tree the owner had planted inside his vineyard with a purpose. The owner expected the tree to grow and bear fruit, and he came seeking fruit. But no fruit at all could be obtained from the tree.

The word that the owner sought fruit for three years shows that God was longsuffering and waited for the fruit of repentance. But the tree continued to bear no fruit, and its fruitless state could not be tolerated as it was.

The fig tree makes the people who were hearing the word examine themselves. Just as a tree is cut down if it has no fruit even though it was planted inside the vineyard, so the person who hears the word of God and yet does not repent to the end and refuses salvation cannot escape judgment.

People easily think that they are bearing good fruit merely because they have stayed long in the church and heard much of the word. But the fact that it was planted inside the vineyard did not mean that the fig tree had fulfilled the will of the owner. Even if one has a good environment of faith, a long religious career, office, and service, if one does not admit one's own sinfulness before God and does not believe the gospel, one cannot be said to have borne the fruit of salvation by those things.

The fruit in this parable must be understood in connection with the call to repentance in the preceding context. John the Baptist also cried out to bear fruits worthy of repentance. The fruit of repentance begins with abandoning the thought that one is more righteous than others, admitting that one is a sinner who will be judged before God, and turning to God. And it leads on to faith in Jesus Christ, who saved sinners.

Fruits worthy of repentance are not deeds by which human merit accomplishes salvation. Their beginning is admitting that one cannot become righteous by one's own strength and returning to Jesus Christ, who saved sinners.

There is an appointed time to the longsuffering of God

Then the keeper of the vineyard pleaded with the owner, *"Let it alone this year also."* He did not propose to keep on neglecting the fruitless tree. He said that he would dig around the tree and fertilize it, caring for it so that it would bear fruit. The whole parable shows, together with the warning of judgment, the longsuffering of God, who allows the sinner more time to turn back. By warning sinners and giving them the opportunity to turn back, God calls them not to destruction but to salvation.

The one year the keeper of the vineyard was granted is the time of grace in which God gives the sinner more opportunity to turn back. But that time does not continue endlessly. When God digs around the heart with the word and supplies the nourishment of the gospel, one must turn back and bear the fruit of salvation.

Seen as an application for today, the time in which God lets us hear the word and makes us examine our own condition is by no means a time to take lightly. But the fact of having heard

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much of the word does not in itself automatically accomplish salvation. Before the word he has heard, a person must admit that he is a sinner and cannot be saved by his own righteousness, and turn to God and believe the gospel.

The person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit bears the fruit of the Spirit

Jesus came to this earth in order to save sinners who could only be cut down and thrown away. Jesus took all the sins of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, at the Jordan River. Then, carrying those sins, He was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died, thereby receiving the judgment and punishment of sin in our place. After that, by rising from the dead He overcame sin and death and accomplished perfect salvation.

Therefore, before trying to produce good fruit by his own strength and be recognized by God, a sinner must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished. He must believe in the heart the fact that all our sins were passed on to Jesus through His baptism, that Jesus received all the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and that He rose from the dead and opened the way of eternal life. The person who believes this gospel receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Salvation is a gift received by believing the righteousness of God that Jesus completed, and the fruit of righteousness appears after salvation, following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The person who has been born again by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit bears the fruit of faith and obedience by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the person who has received the remission of sins by believing the gospel, there appears the fruit of a changed direction of life. He does not boast of his own righteousness but testifies of the righteousness Jesus accomplished. He does not make light of his own faults, and when he realizes a fault through the word, he turns from that way. He also serves so that other souls, too, may hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and be saved. Such fruit is not the saint completing his salvation by his own deeds, but the result that the Holy Spirit who dwells in him brings about through the word.

One must not think that God has approved of one's unbelief just because health, time, and opportunities to hear the word continue to be given to one. The fact that judgment has not appeared before one's eyes does not mean that judgment itself has disappeared. The time in which we can hear the word now is not a time to hold on to our own righteousness and worldly desires and put off our decision, but a time to turn to God and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jesus has already completed salvation for sinners with the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart escapes from a judgment like that of the tree that is to be cut down and thrown away, and obtains the remission of sins and eternal life. And, following the guidance of the Holy Spirit who dwells in his heart, he lives bearing the fruit of faith, obedience, and the preaching of the gospel.

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Jesus, who looses those who are bound

"Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, 'Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.' And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, 'There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.' The Lord then answered him and said, 'Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?' And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him" (Luke 13:10–17).

Jesus loosed a bondage of eighteen years

Jesus was teaching the word of God in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. There was a woman there who had suffered from an illness for eighteen years, whose body was bent over and who could in no way raise herself up. It was not a temporary discomfort but a deep suffering and bondage that had continued for many long years.

The Bible records that this woman *"had a spirit of infirmity"*

and could not raise herself up. Jesus, too, spoke of her as one *"whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years."* Therefore we must accept the fact as it is: the bondage of Satan was involved in this woman's illness.

There is no record in the text that the woman first asked Jesus to heal her. Jesus first saw her and called her. The Lord knew her suffering and bondage, and He Himself called her and bestowed grace on her. It also makes us think of the fact that the work of salvation does not begin from human ability or merit but from the mercy of the Lord, who has compassion on sinners.

Jesus first declared, *"Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity."* After that, when He laid His hands on her, the woman immediately straightened her body. The order of events recorded in the text is that Jesus saw her, called her, spoke, and laid His hands on her, and then the woman was restored at once.

Even a bondage that had continued for eighteen years was loosed immediately before the word and the power of Jesus. This shows that Jesus is the Son of God, who rules not only over the disease of the body but even over the power of Satan that was binding this woman. Jesus is stronger than Satan, and He has the authority to loose those who are bound by Satan.

After her body was made straight, the woman glorified God. She did not boast that she had healed her own body. She acknowledged the grace and the power of God who had loosed her, and gave Him glory. The woman's immediate restoration and praise show that what Jesus did was a work that revealed the glory of God.

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The Lord of the Sabbath bestowed life and mercy

But the ruler of the synagogue did not rejoice together at the woman's restoration. He was indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. Without protesting to Jesus directly, he told the crowd that there were six days on which to work, so they should come and be healed on those days and not do so on the Sabbath. His words were directed at the crowd, but in fact he was finding fault with the healing Jesus had done.

God did not give the Sabbath in order to keep people bound in suffering. The Sabbath was a day set apart to commemorate that God finished the work of creation and rested, and so that the people of Israel might stop their own work and enjoy the rest God gives. But the ruler of the synagogue did not look at the meaning of the Sabbath from the perspective of life and mercy; according to his own rigid interpretation, he judged the healing of Jesus as if it were a forbidden work.

To the ruler of the synagogue and to the others who opposed that healing, Jesus said, *"Hypocrite!"* They, too, loosed their ox or donkey from the stall on the Sabbath and led it to water. While doing on the Sabbath what was necessary to sustain the life of an animal, they insisted that loosing a person who had suffered, bound by Satan for eighteen years, was not permitted. Jesus exposed the contradiction between their words and their actual conduct.

Jesus called this woman *"a daughter of Abraham."* This reminds us that she was a descendant of Abraham and a person who belonged among the people of Israel, who had received the covenant of God. People might have made light of a sick and weak woman, but Jesus called her with respect as one of the covenant people.

The logic of Jesus was clear. If loosing an ox or a donkey

from the stall and watering it was permitted even on the Sabbath, it was all the more fitting to loose from her bond a daughter of Abraham who had been bound by Satan for eighteen years. Jesus did not abolish the Sabbath; He revealed the fact that doing good on the Sabbath and loosing those who are bound is fitting to the will of God.

The loosing of this woman on the Sabbath shows the true meaning of the Sabbath. The rest God gives is not keeping suffering people bound under religious regulations. By loosing the woman bound by Satan so that she glorified God, Jesus revealed the fact that bestowing life and mercy is fitting on the Sabbath.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit gives true rest

The bent body of this woman shows the spiritual condition of human beings, who lie under the power of sin and Satan and cannot be saved by their own strength. Everyone born as a descendant of Adam commits sin and cannot escape from the power of sin and death by his own strength.

A person cannot wash away all the sins of his heart by his own efforts of keeping the Law, piling up good deeds, or offering prayers of repentance over and over. The Law makes us know what sin is, reveals the real state of the sinner, and makes us realize that we are under the judgment of God. But the Law itself does not wash away sin or give new life to the sinner.

The ruler of the synagogue knew the regulations of the Sabbath, but he had no power to loose the woman bound by Satan. A religion that applies the Law hypocritically can point out and condemn people's faults, but it cannot save sinners from sin and death. Only Jesus can give perfect salvation by taking

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the sins of sinners upon Himself and receiving their judgment in their place.

Jesus came to this earth in order to save mankind, bound by sin and death. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, at the Jordan River, He took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body. Then, carrying those sins, He was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died, thereby receiving the punishment and judgment of sin in our place. After that, by rising from the dead He overcame sin and death and accomplished perfect salvation.

A sinner must not struggle to cut the cords of sin by his own strength, but must believe in the heart the word of salvation that Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. The person who believes this gospel receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. The salvation Jesus accomplished is not a reward a person receives in return for keeping the Law well, but the grace of God bestowed on sinners.

The event in which Jesus loosed this woman's illness and the bondage of Satan reveals the power and mercy of the Savior, who rules over the power of Satan and sets free those who are bound. The sinner receives the remission of all his sins and is released from the power of sin and death by believing in the heart the gospel Jesus accomplished with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

The person who has received the remission of sins by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit no longer remains a person who will be judged because of his sins. This is because Jesus took all his sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. He does not confirm whether he has received the remission of sins by his feelings or by repeated prayers of

repentance; he enjoys true rest by believing the righteousness of God that Jesus completed.

The person who has received the remission of sins escapes from the vain labor of trying to make himself righteous by the works of the Law and enjoys true rest. And, guided by the Holy Spirit who dwells in his heart, he serves God and preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the souls who are still bound by sin and death.

Those who have met the Lord truly love

Today's church, too, must be careful not to fall into the same hypocrisy as the ruler of the synagogue. Keeping the order of worship, the rules of the church, and its traditions and order is necessary. But such systems exist to serve the gospel and to build up the saints rightly, not to turn away from suffering people or to block the way of coming to the gospel. If, on the grounds of keeping outward order, one only condemns people bound by sin and suffering, one can fall into the hypocrisy Jesus rebuked.

Also, while speaking of mercy toward people, we must not blur the truth of God. Jesus not only had compassion on the woman but actually loosed her from the bondage of Satan. The love the church bestows, too, must go, without neglecting physical help and comfort, as far as preaching the true gospel so that sinners may receive the eternal remission of sins by believing in the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection.

The adversaries who heard the word of Jesus were put to shame, and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things Jesus had done. Those who hypocritically opposed the work of

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life and salvation of God were put to shame. On the other hand, the multitude rejoiced to see the glorious thing Jesus had done in loosing the one who was bound.

Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins with the blood and death of the Cross, and rose from the dead and opened the way of eternal life. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart escapes from the bondage of sin and death and obtains the true rest the Holy Spirit gives. And, thankful for the grace of God who saved him, he lives preaching this gospel of salvation to other souls as well.

The kingdom of God that grows with vitality

"Then He said, 'What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches.' And again He said, 'To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.'" (Luke 13:18–21).

In the gospel that is like a mustard seed there is the life of God

On the Sabbath Jesus loosed the woman who had been bound by Satan for eighteen years. Those who opposed that work were put to shame, and the multitude rejoiced for the glorious thing Jesus had done. Then, with the words *"Then He said,"* Jesus

likened the kingdom of God to a grain of mustard seed and to leaven.

The word *"Then"* shows that this parable is connected in context with the preceding event of healing. Jesus' loosing of the woman bound by Satan showed that the rule of God and the authority of salvation were being revealed through Jesus. The parables that follow show how this kingdom of God begins and grows by the power of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jesus did not liken the kingdom of God to a huge army, a splendid palace, or the political power of the world. He likened it to a grain of mustard seed that a man planted in his garden and to leaven that a woman put in meal. This shows the fact that the kingdom of God is not a kingdom established by outward might and coercion like the powers of the world.

A grain of mustard seed looks very small at first, but when it is planted in the ground it grows and becomes a tree, and the birds of the air come to nest in its branches. The kingdom of God begins from the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is like a mustard seed. Because in this gospel there is the life and the power that save sinners and make them the people of God, it surely grows and brings about an abundant result.

When Jesus came to this earth, the kingdom of God did not appear through the political power or military strength of the world. Jesus preached the word of God, healed the sick, and loosed those who were bound by Satan. A small number of disciples followed Jesus, and the religious leaders rejected Him and handed Him over to the Cross. Jesus was nailed to the Cross and died, but He rose from the dead, and after that the gospel of salvation began to be preached to many nations through the disciples.

If one looked at the Cross alone with human eyes, the ministry of Jesus could look as if it had failed. But the Cross and

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the resurrection were not a failure but the completion of the salvation that overcame sin and death. The preaching of the gospel, which had looked small, spread to many countries and nations in the work of the Holy Spirit, and countless people believed in Jesus Christ and became the people of God.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit, too, was at first delivered through Jesus and a small number of disciples. The word of salvation that Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection was preached beyond Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria to many nations. As people who had been under sin and death heard and believed this gospel, received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit, and became the people of God, the kingdom of God was widely testified in the world.

The kingdom of God is established as sinners are saved and the people of God are raised up by the power of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The sinner believes this gospel, receives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit, enters under the rule of God, and becomes one of the people of the kingdom of God and a worker of the gospel.

Like leaven, the gospel spreads to the whole world

Jesus went on to liken the kingdom of God to leaven that a woman hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened. When leaven goes into the meal it is hardly noticeable at first, but it works within it and finally makes the whole of the meal rise. This shows the fact that even if the kingdom of God does not appear in a loud outward form from the beginning, it continues to exert its influence by the power that is within it.

In this parable the leaven represents the power of the gospel

of the water and the Spirit, which spreads to the whole world. Just as a little leaven makes the whole of the meal rise, the gospel that looked small at first is preached widely to many countries and nations, saves sinners, and expands the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God has already appeared among people through the coming of Jesus Christ to this earth. Jesus revealed the rule of God by preaching the word, saving sinners, and loosing those who were bound by Satan. After Jesus completed salvation with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, the rule of God appears also in the hearts and lives of those who have believed the gospel and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit.

The person who believes the gospel becomes one of the people of the kingdom of God

A sinner cannot make himself qualified to enter the kingdom of God by his own deeds. He cannot wash away his sins with good deeds, religious life, the works of the Law, and repeated prayers of repentance. He must admit that he is a sinner who will be judged before God and cannot be saved by his own righteousness, and believe in the heart the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished.

Jesus took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, at the Jordan River. Then, carrying those sins, He was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died, thereby receiving the punishment and judgment of sin in our place. After that, by rising from the dead He overcame sin and death and completed the salvation by which sinners can enter the kingdom of God.

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The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. Because the Holy Spirit dwells in that person's heart, he is a child of God and becomes one of the people of the kingdom of God. He has been called to live not making his own thoughts and desires his master, but being guided by the word of God and the Holy Spirit.

The kingdom of God is not only a distant place with which a person comes to have a relationship only after he dies. The person who has received the remission of sins believes in Jesus as his King from now on and follows the rule of God. The reign of the word of God and the Holy Spirit appears in the heart and life of the saint and in the community of the saints who believe the gospel.

The salvation Jesus accomplished with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection is perfect. When one believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart, one receives the remission of all one's sins once and for all. After that, the person who has received the remission of sins learns the word, denies his own thoughts, and grows in faith following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven show the work by which this powerful gospel establishes the kingdom of God and expands it widely.

The life of faith of a saint who has just believed the gospel may look small and weak. But the gospel he has believed is not a dead doctrine or mere religious information, but the word of God that saves sinners. The saint hears the word in the church, follows the guidance of the Holy Spirit, grows in faith, and preaches the gospel to others as well.

The preaching of the gospel, too, may begin from what is a small thing in human eyes. The gospel preached to one person, the word proclaimed in a small gathering, and service that is

hardly noticeable may look as if they produce no great result for the moment. But in the true gospel there is the power of God that saves sinners. Through the word that has been preached, God gives life to souls and widens the territory in which the gospel is preached.

Therefore a worker of the gospel must not be discouraged because the beginning is small, nor evaluate a ministry only by the number of people and its outward scale. It is God who makes the kingdom of God grow. What a saint must do is not to compromise the content of the gospel with the world in order to gather many people, but to believe accurately and preach faithfully the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection.

The mustard seed was planted in the garden, and the leaven was put into the meal. In the same way, the gospel must be delivered to people. A saint must serve the word and labor for souls in the place God has entrusted to him. God uses the faith and obedience of the saint who preaches the gospel to save souls and widen the kingdom of God.

The person who has received the remission of sins must examine whether his heart and life are following the rule of God. He must not keep the gospel only as knowledge, but believe the word of God and live following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He must also preach to other souls the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which spreads with vitality like the mustard seed and the leaven.

With the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection, Jesus completely opened the way by which sinners can enter the kingdom of God. The person who has believed this gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit becomes one of the people who belong to the kingdom of God. He does

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not despise small beginnings but serves the gospel faithfully following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and lives following the rule of God in his present life and looking to the kingdom of God that will be completed in glory in the future.

Enter through the narrow gate before the door is shut

"And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, 'Lord, are there few who are saved?' And He said to them, 'Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, "Lord, Lord, open for us," and He will answer and say to you, "I do not know you, where you are from," then you will begin to say, "We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets." But He will say, "I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity." There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.'" (Luke 13:22–30).

Jesus went through the cities and villages teaching the word of God, and He was journeying toward Jerusalem. The Gospel of Luke keeps showing the flow that Jesus was going forward toward what He would do in Jerusalem—suffer, die, and rise again. Therefore this journey toward Jerusalem was not a mere

movement from one region to another, but the way of going forward toward the Cross and the resurrection by which He would complete the salvation of mankind.

When Jesus began His public ministry, He took the sins of all the people of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. Now, carrying those sins, He was to go to Jerusalem, receive the judgment of sin by the death of the Cross, and rise from the dead and complete salvation. On that very way, someone asked Jesus, *"Lord, are there few who are saved?"*

That person's question asked whether the number of people who are saved is large or small. But Jesus did not answer by calculating the number of people who would be saved. To those who were hearing the word, including the one who asked, He commanded, *"Strive to enter through the narrow gate."* This is because confirming whether one has oneself entered the gate of salvation now is more important than discussing how many others are saved.

People can take an interest in whether others are saved, in the size of the church, and in how many in which country will believe, while not examining the state of their own souls. But Jesus did not give an answer that satisfied curiosity; He warned that each person who heard the word must enter through the narrow gate.

We must enter through the narrow gate by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit

"The narrow gate" is not a gate of obtaining salvation by works, through which only a person who has piled up many austerities and good deeds can pass. Nor is it a gate a person

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enters with his own merit and his own righteousness. It is a narrow gate because the way of salvation God has established lies in Jesus Christ alone and the righteousness He accomplished.

People think that they can be saved through various religions and self-cultivation, the works of the Law, and repeated prayers of repentance. But God has not recognized the various ways of salvation that human beings have made. A sinner must believe the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ, whom God sent. It is a narrow gate because one must abandon the various ways that look right in one's own thinking and accept the one way God has established.

The word of Jesus, *"Strive to enter,"* also does not mean that one is to buy the remission of sins or pile up the merit of salvation by human effort. A sinner must not keep putting off the gospel while holding on to his own desires and thoughts. He must lay down his own righteousness, admit before the word of God that he is a sinner who will be judged, and accept in the heart the word of salvation God has given.

People want to enter through the narrow gate, yet they cannot follow the word because they cannot abandon their own desires, the recognition of the world, possessions and family, honor, and their own thoughts. The word *"Strive"* is an urgent call that a person must not keep putting off the problem of salvation while remaining in indifference, stubbornness, and his own desires.

Even when people hear the gospel, they try to accept only the parts that agree with their own thoughts. They may decide for themselves that they are already saved and not examine their own faith by the word of God. They may think that they have already come inside the gate because they know the gospel of the water and the Spirit as knowledge. But the word of salvation is not knowledge to be looked at from outside or known only with the head, but the truth that must be accepted and believed

with the heart.

The word *"many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able"* is a warning that there are many who say they want salvation and yet do not accept the gospel God has established but hold on to their own righteousness and desires. If one wants to be saved, one must not insist on a way made by one's own thinking, but accept in the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

One is not saved by a mere vague wish to enter through the gate. One must not try to be saved only in the way one wants while refusing the way God has established. Nor can one reach salvation with the thought of putting off the gospel now and entering later, after the door has been shut. One must hear and believe the word while the door is open.

Seen in the light of the whole gospel, this narrow gate is the gate of salvation through which one enters into Jesus Christ and the gospel of the righteousness He accomplished. So that sinners might enter the kingdom of God, Jesus took all the sins of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, at the Jordan River.

Carrying those sins, Jesus was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died, thereby receiving the punishment and judgment for sin in our place. And by rising from the dead He overcame sin and death and accomplished perfect salvation. The baptism of Jesus is the event in which He took sin upon Himself, the blood and death of the Cross is the event in which He received the judgment of that sin, and the resurrection is the event in which He overcame sin and death and opened the way of new life.

To believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit is to accept in the heart the fact that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment

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of those sins with the blood and death of the Cross, and rose from the dead and opened the way of eternal life. The person who believes this gospel receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, not by the merit of his own deeds but by the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished.

To enter through the narrow gate is first to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins. And for the person who has come inside the gate there is the course of faith of following the Lord. The saint who has received the remission of sins does not make his own desires and thoughts his master, but lives united with the word of God and the church, serving the gospel.

The remission of sins is received once and for all by believing the righteousness Jesus completed. The person who has received that salvation wants to do the will of the Father following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and when he has entered a wrong way, he turns back before the word and follows the Lord again by faith.

We must believe the word before the door is shut

Jesus said that once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, those outside cannot enter even if they knock at the door. Now is the time when one can hear and believe the gospel, but that opportunity does not continue forever. After the door is shut, the person who was outside cannot open the door again as he wishes.

When an individual's life ends, or when Jesus comes again and judges, the door of salvation cannot be opened again. Therefore a person must not put off the gospel while calculating

that time, but must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit now, while the door is open.

Those standing outside after the door is shut plead, *"Lord, Lord, open for us."* But the Master of the house answers that He does not know where they are from. The mere words of calling Jesus *"Lord"* with the mouth do not guarantee salvation. What matters is not religious titles and familiarity, but whether one has become a person who belongs to Jesus by believing in the heart the gospel He accomplished.

Those standing outside claimed that they had eaten and drunk in the presence of the Lord and that Jesus had taught in their streets. This shows the fact that they were not people who had had no contact at all with Jesus. They asked Him to open the door on the grounds that they had heard the word Jesus taught close at hand and had experienced His ministry outwardly.

But a relationship of salvation is not formed merely by the fact of having been in the same place as Jesus and having heard the word. Even if one heard the word of Jesus close at hand, if one does not believe that word in the heart, one is not a person who belongs to Him. Outward familiarity and true faith are not the same.

Even today, the fact that one has spent a long time in the church, attended worship, and heard many sermons cannot be made the ground of salvation. The fact that one has been close to a pastor or an evangelist and done much church work does not wash away sin either. The experience of having been outwardly close to Jesus cannot take the place of faith.

When the Master of the house said, *"Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity,"* it was a declaration pronounced on those who had refused the righteousness of God and lived with no relation to the Lord, keeping their sins as they were. True faith does not insist that one's own evil is right. The person who has

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believed the gospel relies not on his own deeds but on the righteousness Jesus accomplished, and when he realizes a fault through the word, he turns from that way.

People try to cover their sins with religious acts, but a person who has sin cannot escape the judgment of God. Good deeds, service, and repeated prayers of repentance cannot take the place of the atonement by which Jesus took sin upon Himself with the baptism He received from John and was judged on the Cross. A sinner must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the remission of all his sins, and become righteous before God.

Jesus said that those thrust out would see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God. Abraham, the patriarchs, and the prophets were not people who entered the kingdom of God by their lineage in the flesh or by perfect deeds. They believed the promise God had given and looked to the salvation of the Christ who was to come.

The saints of the Old Testament era did not live after the baptism of Jesus and the Cross had been accomplished in history. But they believed in the Savior God had promised and hoped for the Christ within that promise. Jesus came according to the promise and completed salvation with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. Therefore the faith of the Old Testament and the fulfillment of the New Testament are not two different ways of salvation, but are within the one salvation that God promised and Christ completed.

On the other hand, even those who boasted that they were descendants of Abraham in the flesh and had received the word of God first are thrust out if they refuse Jesus Christ. Lineage, tradition, and religious privilege cannot take the place of the faith that believes the gospel. God looks not at a person's family and religious career, but at whether his heart believes the promise of God and the righteousness Christ accomplished.

The word that those thrust out will weep and gnash their teeth shows that the result of being excluded from the kingdom of God is an irreversible judgment. One must not think that there will be another opportunity later while refusing the gospel now. While the door is open, one must accept the word of God and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jesus said that people would come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and take part in the feast of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is not a kingdom only for the Jews in the flesh or for one particular nation. Saints from many regions and nations who believe the salvation of God come to take part in the feast of the kingdom of God.

The word *"there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last"* teaches that a position that appears to be first in the world and in religion is not necessarily recognized in the same way in the kingdom of God.

Even the person who received the word and the covenant first becomes last if he refuses Christ, and even the person who heard the gospel late becomes first if he believes in the heart. The standard for entering the kingdom of God is not one's circumstances in the world or one's religious position, but the faith that believes the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished.

The person who has come inside the gate lives according to the will of the Lord

Today a saint must not let his heart be taken up with judging how many others will be saved, but must examine whether he himself truly believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If one knows only the Cross while leaving out the baptism of Jesus, or knows the gospel only as knowledge and has not accepted it

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in the heart, one must confirm one's faith again before the word of God.

The person who has come inside the narrow gate by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit is assured of the remission of sins and salvation on the ground of the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and the resurrection. Also, he does not go the broad way following his own desires, but willingly walks the way of faith of serving the gospel and the church, following the guidance of the word and the Holy Spirit.

The church, too, must not change the narrow gate into a wide gate in order to gather many people. Hiding sin and judgment and leaving out the baptism of Jesus, or mixing human deeds and repeated prayers of repentance into the gospel, blurs the way of salvation God has established. Even if people do not like to hear it, the church must clearly preach the fact that one must abandon one's own righteousness and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished.

Luke chapter 13 verses 22–30 turn the question about the number of people who are saved into an urgent question directed at one's own soul. Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins with the blood and death of the Cross, and rose from the dead and completed the way of salvation by which one enters the kingdom of God. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart, from whatever nation and region he has come, receives the remission of all his sins and takes part in the feast of the kingdom of God. Therefore one must believe the gospel now, before the door is shut, and after receiving the remission of sins, one must walk the narrow way of believing the word and serving the gospel, following the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, who set His face toward Jerusalem

"On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, 'Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.' And He said to them, 'Go, tell that fox, "Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"'" (Luke 13:31–35).

When Jesus was speaking about the narrow gate and the feast of the kingdom of God, some Pharisees came and told Him to leave that place because Herod wanted to kill Him. The threat of Herod, who had earlier killed John the Baptist, was now directed at Jesus.

What is clear is the fact that Herod's threat to kill Him was delivered to Jesus. Because Herod was the ruler who had earlier killed John the Baptist, his threat was not something to be taken lightly. But Jesus did not stop the ministry God had entrusted to Him or give up the way to Jerusalem because of that threat.

Despite the threats of the world, He went the way the Father had appointed

Jesus said, *"Go, tell that fox,"* and did not retreat before the threat of Herod. What Jesus would do and when He would finish

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it had been determined not by a worldly ruler like Herod but according to the will of God the Father. Herod could wield the authority to kill the human body, but he could not block the saving ministry of Jesus or change His way.

Jesus said that He would cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day He would be perfected. His casting out demons and healing the sick showed that the kingdom of God was coming to the people who were suffering under the power of sin and Satan. Even if there was the threat of Herod, Jesus would continue to do the work entrusted to Him in the period God had appointed and would accomplish its purpose.

The center of the words *"today and tomorrow"* and *"the third day"* lies in the fact that Jesus continues His ministry until the time God has appointed and finally completes it. The way of Jesus did not end with the ministry of casting out demons and healing the sick. He would be hung on the Cross and die in Jerusalem, and rise again on the third day, thereby overcoming sin and death and completing salvation for mankind.

Jesus said, *"I must go on my way –ASV"*; His way was not a way determined by chance because of the threat of Herod. Jesus had already taken the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. Now, carrying those sins, He was walking the way of going to Jerusalem to receive the judgment of the Cross.

Therefore the death of Jesus was not a failure that came about because Herod or the religious leaders defeated Jesus. Jesus obeyed the will of the Father and gave up His life at the appointed time. By shedding His blood and dying on the Cross He received in our place the punishment of the sins He had taken upon Himself with His baptism, and by rising from the dead He overcame sin and death and completed salvation.

The word of Jesus, *"It cannot be that a prophet should perish*

outside of Jerusalem," was a rebuke that Jerusalem, where the word of God and the temple were, had instead become the center of the unbelief that had rejected and killed the prophets God sent. Now Jesus, too, was going the way of entering that Jerusalem to be rejected and killed.

In Jerusalem there were the temple and the priests, and the Law and the word of the prophets were handed down. But the mere fact of having religious institutions and the word close at hand did not mean that they believed in God. They rejected the people God sent, and finally tried to refuse even the Son of God, who had come to them. Even if one has heard the word close at hand and lived a religious life for a long time, one cannot reach true faith unless one accepts the Savior God has sent.

The love of the Lord, who wanted to embrace Jerusalem

Jesus lamented, calling twice, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem."* In this call there is, together with the severity that rebukes sin and unbelief, a deep sorrow toward the people who refuse the Savior. Jesus did not overlook their unbelief, but neither did He take pleasure in their coming to judgment.

The Lord said that He had wanted to gather the children of Jerusalem together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. Under the wings of a hen is the place where the chicks receive protection and care. This figure shows the mercy and love of Jesus, who wants to call and save the people who are under sin and judgment.

But Jesus said, *"You were not willing!"* It was not that the people of Jerusalem did not know the Savior because there had been no calling from God. God sent the prophets, and Jesus, too,

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preached the word again and again, but they held on to their own righteousness and religious authority and refused to be gathered to Him.

Salvation was prepared by God in grace and completed by Jesus. A sinner must turn from his own righteousness and unbelief and believe in the heart the word of salvation God has accomplished. The people of Jerusalem refused Jesus, who wanted to embrace and save them, and held on to their own religious righteousness and authority.

Jesus completed the gospel of the water and the Spirit in order to gather sinners into His salvation. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, at the Jordan River, He took all the sins of the world upon His own body, and by being hung on the Cross and shedding His blood and dying, He received the punishment and judgment of those sins in our place. And by rising from the dead He overcame sin and death.

As a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, Jesus wanted to gather the children of Jerusalem into the embrace of salvation. In this lament and call, the love of Jesus, who would save sinners even at the cost of giving up His own life, appears clearly. A sinner must not hide under his own deeds and religious merit, but must come into the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished.

The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit accepts in the heart the fact that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, received all the judgment of those sins with the blood and death of the Cross, and rose from the dead and gave eternal life. By this faith he receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God.

The saint who has come under the wings of Jesus has been

saved from the judgment of sin and eternal destruction, and no power of the world can take away the eternal life Jesus has given. Even in suffering and hardship, he lives believing the love and the righteousness of the Lord, who embraced and saved him.

The house that has refused Christ becomes desolate

Jesus warned, *"See! Your house is left to you desolate."* Judgment was to come upon Jerusalem, which had refused the prophets God sent and finally even the Son of God. Even if one has the temple and religious institutions, if one refuses Christ, who is their substance, those things cannot save a person.

"Your house" refers to Jerusalem and the temple they relied on. Jerusalem and the temple, which refused Jesus, actually became desolate. This shows the fact that a faith that holds on only to the temple and religious institutions while rejecting Christ cannot protect a person from the judgment of God.

The fundamental desolation of the house that has refused Christ is the state in which there is no salvation and life of God. Even if there are splendid sanctuaries, many religious ceremonies, and long traditions, if the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished is not preached, such outward things cannot save sinners. On the other hand, even if the outward form is small, where the true gospel is preached and people receive the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit, there is the life of God.

Jesus said that they would not see Him until they said, *"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"* This word makes us look to the time when Jesus will be acknowledged as the King and Savior sent by God. Later, when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the multitude of the disciples cried out, *"Blessed is*

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the King who comes in the name of the LORD!" Therefore the entry into Jerusalem is an important scene that calls this word to mind.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the multitude of the disciples praised Him as *"the King who comes in the name of the LORD."* But the religious leaders tried to stop that praise and refused Jesus to the end. Knowing their refusal and the desolation that would come upon Jerusalem, Jesus looked at the city and wept. Jesus is clearly the King and Savior sent by God, and only the person who believes in the heart the salvation He accomplished can truly praise Him.

Toward Jerusalem, which would refuse Him, Jesus did not show only anger; He lamented. A saint, too, must not hate a person who refuses the gospel or wish for him to be judged. While clearly pointing out his unbelief, the saint must preach the word with the heart that wants him to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished and be saved.

Like Jesus, who went His way despite the threat of Herod, a saint must not let his heart be taken up with the threats and opposition of people, but must carry out with faith and wisdom the work of the gospel God has entrusted to him.

A worker of the gospel must not change the content of the gospel because there are threats and opposition from people. Nor must he hide the baptism of Jesus or weaken the word of sin and judgment out of fear of people. At the same time, he must not despise or insult those who oppose him, but must preach the truth with compassion for the souls that have not been saved, as Jesus lamented over Jerusalem.

Luke chapter 13 verses 31–35 show the fact that the saving ministry of Jesus is not stopped by the threat of Herod or the opposition of Jerusalem. Jesus cast out demons and healed the sick following the way God had appointed, and finally went to

Jerusalem and completed salvation for sinners with the death of the Cross and the resurrection.

Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins with the blood and death of the Cross, and completed salvation for sinners by rising from the dead. A person must abandon his own righteousness and religious boasting and believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart. The saint who has received the remission of sins must believe the love of the Lord, who embraced and saved him, and even amid the threats and opposition of the world must live a life that does not change the gospel and calls the souls that have not been saved to the truth with compassion. ✉

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Questions and Answers on Luke Chapter 13

[Question] 1. In what manner does Luke chapter 13 show that Jesus ministered?

Luke chapter 13 shows Jesus calling sinners to repentance, having compassion on the sick and healing them, teaching about the kingdom of God and the gate of salvation, and going forward toward Jerusalem without wavering.

First, people told Jesus about the event in which Pilate killed the Galileans and mingled their blood with their sacrifices. Jesus said that those victims had not suffered such a thing because they had more sins than the other Galileans, and warned that unless everyone repents, they will perish. The event of the eighteen who were crushed to death by the tower in Siloam gives the same lesson.

"I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

Next, in the parable of the fig tree without fruit, the longsuffering of God, who waits for repentance, and the severity of judgment appear together. That the keeper of the vineyard said he would leave it one more year and care for it means that the opportunity of grace was given, but if there is no fruit to the end, it can only be cut down.

On the Sabbath He healed a woman who had been bound by a demon for eighteen years and was bent over. The ruler of the synagogue was indignant, putting forward the regulation of the Sabbath, but Jesus said that since that woman, too, was a

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daughter of Abraham, it was fitting to loose her from her bond. Jesus appeared as the Savior who restores the true meaning of the Law and sets free those who suffer.

"So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" (Luke 13:16).

The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven show the kingdom of God, which began small, growing and spreading with vitality. Even if the word and the gospel of Jesus look small and insignificant at first, they work in the hearts and lives of those who believe and accomplish the will of God.

To the question whether those who are saved are few, He did not speak of the number of people but said to strive to enter through the narrow gate. Lineage, religious experience, and worldly position do not guarantee salvation. We must believe the way of salvation Jesus has opened, not follow the desires of the flesh and our own thoughts, and live according to the word.

"Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able" (Luke 13:24).

Finally, even when Jesus heard that Herod wanted to kill Him, He said that He would continue His ministry today and tomorrow and on the third day be perfected. Though He knew the suffering that awaited Him in Jerusalem, He went that way according to the will of the Father, and toward Jerusalem, which rejected Him, He lamented that He had wanted to gather them as a hen gathers her chicks, but they were not willing.

The Jesus who appears in this chapter is the One who does not take sin lightly and yet gives the opportunity to repent, looses those who are bound, opens the gate of salvation, and calls sinners. Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and completed the gospel of the water and the Spirit by

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rising from the dead. We must believe this gospel, enter through the narrow gate in the time of grace given to us now, and live according to the word.

[Question] 2. In Luke 13:1, what was the news that some people told Jesus?

The news that some people told Jesus was that Pilate had killed certain Galileans and mingled their blood with the blood of the sacrifices they were offering. They reported the horrific event that had happened to the Galileans who had come to worship.

"There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices" (Luke 13:1).

People easily think that a person who has suffered a great disaster must have especially greater sins. But Jesus said that those Galileans had not suffered such a thing because they had more sins than all the other Galileans.

"And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:2–3).

Jesus did not make this news material for judging the sins of others, but turned it into a warning that the very people who heard the news must repent. He went on to say that the eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell did not have more sins than the other people of Jerusalem either.

The repentance spoken of here is not a mere temporary fear or regret for the sake of avoiding disaster. It is admitting that one is a sinner before God, turning from one's own righteousness

and wrong faith, and believing the salvation God has given.

A person must not think that he is safe and righteous while looking at the misfortune of others. Since life is guaranteed to no one, we must hear the word of God today and examine our faith and our lives.

Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, was judged on the Cross, and accomplished salvation for sinners by rising from the dead. Therefore we must not judge others while looking on at tragedy, but believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the remission of sins, and turn to God.

[Question] 3. In Luke chapter 13 verse 14, what kind of day is the Sabbath?

The Sabbath is the day on which God, having finished the creation of the heavens and the earth, rested on the seventh day, blessed it, and hallowed it. God commanded the people of Israel to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, and to rest from all their work.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8–11).

The rest of the Sabbath was not given only to masters or free people. Sons and daughters, servants, cattle, and the strangers

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within the gates also had to stop their work and rest. Therefore in the Sabbath, together with the worship of God, there is the mercy of God, who cares that people and animals may rest from their labor.

In Luke chapter 13, the ruler of the synagogue was indignant when he saw Jesus heal on the Sabbath a woman who had been bent over for eighteen years. He said that there were six days on which to work, so they should come and be healed on those days and not on the Sabbath.

"But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, 'There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.'" (Luke 13:14).

Jesus rebuked them for hypocrisy because they loosed their ox or donkey from the stall and watered it even on the Sabbath, while blocking the loosing of a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound for eighteen years, from her bond. Caring for life and setting free those who are bound was not a violation of the meaning of the Sabbath but a revelation of the mercy of God.

"The Lord then answered him and said, 'Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?'" (Luke 13:15–16).

Jesus said that the Sabbath was not a burden that oppresses people but was given for people, and He said that He Himself is the Lord of the Sabbath. Therefore the true meaning of the Sabbath lies not in turning away from suffering people by putting forward regulations, but in worshiping God and enjoying the rest and mercy He gives.

"And He said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27–28).

The Sabbath also makes us look to the true rest that cannot be obtained by human deeds. Jesus received baptism from John and took sin upon Himself, was judged on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit escapes from the heavy burden of sin and condemnation and obtains true rest in God.

Therefore a saint must not turn away from suffering neighbors while keeping only the form of worship. He must enjoy with thankfulness the rest of salvation God has given, have compassion on the sick and weary, and help them obtain true freedom and rest in Jesus.

[Question] 4. In Luke chapter 13 verse 14, what duty did the ruler of the synagogue hold?

The ruler of the synagogue was the person responsible for the synagogue of the Jews, managing the worship and the order of the community. He looked after the building and the gatherings of the synagogue, and was also involved in appointing the person who would read and teach the Scriptures at the Sabbath worship.

In the Acts of the Apostles there is a scene in which, after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue asked Paul and his companions to speak if they had any word of exhortation for the people. This shows that the ruler of the synagogue was in charge of managing the conduct of worship and the opportunity to deliver the word.

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"And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, 'Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.'" (Acts 13:15).

The ruler of the synagogue in Luke chapter 13 was also a person who held this responsibility. But when he saw Jesus heal the sick woman on the Sabbath, he did not speak to Jesus directly but was indignant, telling the crowd to come and be healed during the six days.

"But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, 'There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day" (Luke 13:14).

His fault did not lie in the duty of ruler of the synagogue itself. A person entrusted with the word of God ought to have understood the meaning of the Law rightly and had compassion on the one who suffered, but he put forward the regulations he kept and could not rejoice at the work of salvation God had done.

Jesus rebuked as hypocrisy that they loosed the ox and the donkey and watered them even on the Sabbath, while blocking the loosing of a daughter of Abraham who had long been bound. The ruler of the synagogue tried to keep the order of worship, but he missed the will of God, which gives life.

An office entrusted with the word and worship is not a position of lording it over people, but a position of serving the will of God and helping the people hear the word. Before protecting his own authority and customs, an office holder must rightly deliver the written word and care with love for the sick and the oppressed.

We, too, must not think that our faith is right merely because we have been given some responsibility in the church. We must

believe in the heart the salvation Jesus accomplished, and through the duty entrusted to us do the work of giving life to people with the word and the gospel rather than condemning them.

[Question] 5. In Luke chapter 13 verse 24, what did Jesus answer to the question whether those who are saved are few?

When someone asked whether those who are saved are few, Jesus did not speak of the number of people who would be saved, but answered that they should strive to enter through the narrow gate. This is because the one who asked, too, had to enter the gate of salvation now rather than remain a spectator.

"Then one said to Him, 'Lord, are there few who are saved?' And He said to them, 'Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able" (Luke 13:23–24).

The narrow gate does not mean one among many ways of salvation. Just as Jesus said that He is the door of the sheep, the way a sinner is saved lies in believing the salvation Jesus accomplished.

"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9).

The reason this gate is said to be narrow is that one cannot enter it with status, knowledge, good deeds, or religious zeal. A person cannot obtain salvation while holding on to his own righteousness and the desires of the world. He must admit that he is a sinner and believe the salvation God has accomplished.

Jesus received baptism from John and took all the sin of the world upon Himself, received the judgment of that sin on the

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Cross, and completed the gospel of the water and the Spirit by rising from the dead. To enter through the narrow gate is to receive the remission of sins by believing this gospel in the heart without relying on one's own merit.

The life of entering through the narrow gate does not stop at words that acknowledge the gospel once, but is living according to the word of God after believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the way of not making the desires of the flesh, such as money, honor, and the recognition of people, one's master, but denying oneself and following the will of the Lord.

That many will seek to enter and will not be able is not because the way of salvation is unclear. It is because they try to enter the kingdom of God too without giving up their own thoughts and desires. If one refuses the gospel Jesus accomplished while saying that one wants salvation, one cannot enter through the gate.

Also, after the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, one cannot enter even by knocking at the door from outside. Since the opportunity of grace has an end, we must not put salvation off.

"When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,'" (Luke 13:25).

Therefore, rather than reckoning how many others will be saved, we must examine whether we ourselves are inside the gate Jesus has opened. We must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit now, and after being saved, walk with the Lord according to the written word rather than the desires of the flesh.

[Question] 6. In Luke chapter 13 verse 25, why must we strive to enter through the narrow gate now?

The reason we must strive to enter through the narrow gate now is that the gate of salvation is not open forever. Once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, even if people knock from outside and ask Him to open, the Master says that He does not know them.

"When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,'" (Luke 13:25).

This word reminds us that the opportunity to believe the salvation of God is given while we are alive. A person cannot know the time of his death, and after the judgment of God has come, he cannot turn back the time in which he put off faith.

The people outside the door say that they ate and drank in the presence of the Lord and that the Lord taught in their streets. But one is not saved merely by the outward experience of having been near Jesus or having heard the word. One must believe the word of salvation in the heart and become a person who belongs to the Lord.

"Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'" (Luke 13:26–27).

To enter through the narrow gate does not mean obtaining salvation by piling up difficult good deeds. It is to receive the remission of sins by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed by receiving baptism from John and taking the sin of the world upon Himself, being judged on

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the Cross, and rising from the dead.

God says that now is the day of salvation. While receiving the exhortation to believe the gospel in the heart, one must not put it off, saying that one will believe after one's circumstances improve or after one grows older.

"For He says: 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Life after entering through the narrow gate is also important. The saved person must not make his own desires his master again, but live united with the Lord according to the written word. This is what faith that lives the narrow way looks like.

To say that one must believe now does not mean to make a decision driven by emotion without knowing the content. It means to accept in the heart the salvation God has accomplished after hearing and confirming the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and the resurrection recorded in the Bible.

Therefore we must not put the problem of salvation off until tomorrow. Now, while the door is open, we must believe the gospel Jesus completed and receive the remission of sins, and, thankful for the grace we have received, live according to the word of God.

[Question] 7. In Luke chapter 13 verse 25, what does Jesus say to those who come after the door of salvation has been shut?

To those who come after the door of salvation has been shut, Jesus says that He does not know where they are from. Even when they plead that they ate and drank in the presence of the

Lord and that the Lord taught in their streets, He gives the same answer.

"When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'" (Luke 13:25–27).

These people put forward the experience of having heard the word of Jesus and the fact of having been near Him. But one is not saved merely by the fact of having seen the Lord or having taken part in religious gatherings and heard the word. One must believe in the heart the salvation Jesus accomplished and belong to the Lord.

Jesus calls them workers of iniquity and tells them to depart. Because they lived following their own righteousness and desires while refusing the salvation of God, they had no relationship of life with the Lord even though they had outward religious experience.

Jesus received baptism from John and took all sin upon Himself, received the judgment of sin on the Cross, and opened the door of salvation by rising from the dead. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and becomes one of the people of the kingdom of God.

The word that pleading after the door is shut is not accepted is a warning not to take the present grace lightly. Salvation is not obtained by putting forward outward acquaintance or religious career at the last moment, but is received now by believing the gospel God has given.

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The saved person does not say only with his lips that he knows the Lord, but lives according to the word. He turns from the way of following the desires of the flesh, is united with the Lord, and bears the fruit of faith in the life entrusted to him.

Therefore we must not reassure ourselves merely by the fact that we have attended church for a long time or heard much of the word. We must confirm whether we rightly know and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and come to the Lord now, while the door is open.

The warning of Jesus is not a word meant to drive people to despair, but a call to believe now. We must not put salvation off, but believe the gospel Jesus completed and live as the people of God whom the Lord knows.

[Question] 8. In Luke chapter 13 verses 28–29, why will all the workers of iniquity weep and gnash their teeth?

All the workers of iniquity will weep and gnash their teeth because they will see that they themselves have been thrust out of the kingdom of God, while Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets are in the kingdom of God.

"There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:28–29).

They had the lineage and religious background of the people of God and had also heard the word of Jesus, but they did not believe the Savior God had sent. When they realize that they have been thrust out of the kingdom they had taken for granted

they would enter, great sorrow and regret arise.

On the other hand, people who have come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, take part in the feast of the kingdom of God. Salvation is not bound to one nation, lineage, or social position. Whoever believes the gospel God has given becomes one of the people of the kingdom of God, following the faith of Abraham.

This word leads on to the word that there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last. Even those who had religious privilege and knowledge first will be outside if they refuse the gospel, and even those who were far away enter the kingdom of God if they receive salvation by faith.

Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, was judged on the Cross, and completed the gospel of the water and the Spirit for all nations by rising from the dead. The ground for entering the kingdom of God is not a person's background but the faith that believes this salvation.

The problem of the workers of iniquity lies not only in having committed great crimes in society. It lies in not accepting the righteousness of God and holding on to their own righteousness, and in refusing the salvation He accomplished while saying that they know the Lord.

Therefore we must not make our career in faith, office, knowledge, or family background the ground of salvation. We must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart, and, thankful for the grace that has made us take part in the kingdom of God, live according to the word.

We must also preach the word of salvation to those who do not yet know the gospel, without regard to their origin and circumstances. Since God calls and gathers people from the east and the west, from the north and the south, the church must serve

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so that anyone may hear and believe the gospel and take part in the feast of the kingdom of God.

[Question] 9. In Luke chapter 13 verse 33, what does Jesus' word *"I must go on my way –ASV"* mean?

The way Jesus spoke of is the way of going forward to Jerusalem in order to accomplish to the end the ministry of salvation the Father entrusted to Him. That way includes, together with the ministry of preaching the word and healing the sick, the suffering and death He would receive in Jerusalem and the resurrection from the dead.

"On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, 'Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.' And He said to them, 'Go, tell that fox, "Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:31–33).

The Pharisees told Jesus to leave because Herod wanted to kill Him. But Jesus did not abandon His mission or flee in haste because of the threat of Herod. He said, *"I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected."*

The words *"today, tomorrow, and the day following"* show that the way of Jesus proceeds not according to the will of Herod but according to the plan and the time God has appointed. The threats of people could not stop the ministry of Jesus or change the will of the Father.

The Gospel of Luke records earlier, too, that when the time

had come for Him to be received up, Jesus steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. Though He knew what awaited Him there, Jesus went forward without wavering in order to complete salvation.

"Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

The way to Jerusalem was not a mere movement from place to place. Jesus told His disciples in advance that, as the prophets had written, He would be delivered to the Gentiles, be insulted and killed, and rise again on the third day.

"Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.'" (Luke 18:31–33).

Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, and carrying that sin He went up to Jerusalem and was judged on the Cross. And by rising from the dead He overcame sin and death and completed the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This is the way of salvation Jesus had to go without fail.

Looking at Jerusalem, which rejected Him, Jesus lamented that He had wanted to gather them as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but they were not willing. In the way of Jesus there appear together His love for sinners and His sorrow over those who refuse to the end.

The mission of Jesus did not fail on the Cross but was completed by the resurrection. Even the opposition of people and death itself could not overthrow the work of salvation God had appointed.

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We, too, when we believe the gospel and go the way entrusted to us, must not look only at the threats of people and our circumstances. We must believe the salvation Jesus completed, faithfully do the work entrusted to us today according to the written word, and follow the Lord. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The kingdom of God that looses those who are bound grows and spreads

< Luke 13:10-21 >

"Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, 'Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.' And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, 'There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.' The Lord then answered him and said, 'Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?' And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him. Then He said, 'What is the kingdom of God

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like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches.' And again He said, 'To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.'"

Jesus first saw and called the woman who could not raise herself up

In the synagogue on the Sabbath there were people who had gathered to hear the word. Luke recorded that among them there was one woman, *"There was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up" (Luke 13:11)*. Because of a body that had stiffened over many long years, that woman could not straighten her body and stand by herself. Luke does not record that the woman first approached Jesus and asked for help. Jesus saw her, called her, and said that she was loosed from her infirmity. The scene of salvation did not begin from the effort of the suffering person but from the compassion and authority of the Lord, who recognized her.

The gaze of the Lord was not blocked by the order inside the synagogue or the evaluations of people. Though many people were there together, Jesus did not pass by the one person who carried a bondage of eighteen years. That woman was recorded without a name among the crowd, but to the Lord she was a daughter of Abraham who had to be loosed. People can accept a long-repeated suffering as if it were a natural state, but Jesus had the authority to end those long years with one word. After Jesus declared, *"Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity" (Luke*

13:12), He laid His hands on her, and the body of the woman, which had been bent for eighteen years, was immediately made straight on the spot.

The One who worked first in this event was Jesus. The woman did not heal her illness by her own effort; Jesus first loosed her from her infirmity, and according to that word the body of the woman was immediately made straight. Then the woman glorified God. In salvation, too, this order is clear. We do not cut the bonds of sin by our own strength, become righteous people, and then come to Jesus. We, simply as those sick with sin, receive the remission of all our sins and come to praise God when we hear and believe the word of salvation the Lord accomplished.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord does not look at us only by our outward appearance and circumstances. He also calls with the word of salvation the person who has carried the burden of sin and long struggled to be recognized by God by his own effort. Even if in human eyes a condition looks too old to be changed, there is no sinner who is too late to receive the salvation of the Lord. After sin entered the world, the human heart grew far from God, and the flesh, too, came to suffer death and pain. Therefore we must not look only at the body of the sick person, but also see the fact that everyone under sin needs the salvation of Jesus. That said, we must never conclude carelessly that a sick person has committed some especially wicked sin or is possessed by a demon.

This event does not teach the religious and fleshly promise that if one believes in Jesus, every illness of the flesh is healed immediately and one's wealth increases. When one is saved by believing accurately what the Lord has done, the problem of the heart sick with sin is fundamentally solved, and one receives the Holy Spirit and becomes a child of God. Even after being saved

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the flesh is weak and can fall ill, but because Jesus received all the judgment of sin, the saved person is no longer under the judgment of hell. And on the last day of resurrection even the weak body is made completely new. Therefore the church must not carelessly judge or condemn the sick, but preach to them so that they hear and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit accurately. The church must also help them receive the necessary treatment and spiritual care as well.

When Jesus disputed with the ruler of the synagogue, He did not call that woman simply a sick person but a daughter of Abraham. The ruler of the synagogue treated that woman like a patient who should not have come on the Sabbath, but the Lord spoke first of the fact that she was a person who belonged to God, rather than of her eighteen years of suffering. The church, too, must not judge the worth of a soul by looking only at the length of illness or difficult circumstances. It must treasure the person the Lord calls and help him know clearly that he has heard and believed the word and become a child of God.

When a person has suffered the same pain for a long time, he easily gives up, thinking that it can no longer change. But with one word Jesus ended the woman's bondage, which had continued for eighteen years. Even if we have long lived in sin or have long lived a religious life without solving the problem of sin, the years that have passed cannot block the salvation of the Lord. Since God has said that He removed all sins through Jesus, we must believe that word rather than our own past and feelings. Faith is accepting as it is the word that the Lord has saved us from sin.

Loosing a person from bondage is fitting on the Sabbath

Even though the woman was immediately made straight and glorified God, the ruler of the synagogue did not rejoice. Without speaking to Jesus directly, he told the crowd that there were six days on which to work, so they should come and be healed on those days and not do so on the Sabbath. This was because he regarded the form of the Sabbath he had kept as more important than the fact that a person who had suffered for eighteen years was loosed on that very day. If one says that one keeps the commandment of God and yet is indignant at seeing a person God has given life to, that zeal has already departed from the meaning of the word.

Jesus exposed the contradiction of the ruler of the synagogue by citing what people did every Sabbath. They, too, loosed their ox or donkey from the stall and watered it. While they took it for granted to untie the rope that bound an animal of their own so that it would not be thirsty, they tried to block the freeing of a daughter of Abraham who had been bound by Satan for eighteen years. Jesus asked, *"So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" (Luke 13:16)*. If loosing an animal and watering it was permitted even on the Sabbath, loosing a person bound by Satan so that she might glorify God was all the more fitting. The ruler of the synagogue put forward the letter of the Law, but in fact he was going against the compassion and salvation of God contained in that word.

The fault of the ruler of the synagogue did not lie in the fact itself that he took the regulation of the Sabbath seriously. Even after seeing what God had done before his eyes, he regarded his own thinking as more right. While he permitted loosing his own

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ox and donkey from where they were tied, he did not accept the fact that a woman had been loosed from the bondage of Satan. When one interprets the word to suit one's own interests and standards like this, one comes to oppose the work of the Lord, who gave a person life, even while putting forward the commandment of God. It was precisely this contradictory attitude that Jesus rebuked as hypocrisy.

We, too, when preaching the word, must not demand new religious regulations from people as conditions of salvation. If we teach that God accepts a person only after he has completely corrected his life and put all the habits of the flesh in order before believing the gospel, the sinner first sets about preparing to be saved by his own strength. But God sent Jesus Christ and Himself solved the problem of us who were sinners, like the woman who could not heal her own illness. Therefore the church must not add human deeds as conditions of salvation, but preach accurately what the Lord has done so that souls believe that word and receive the remission of sins.

We who have already received the remission of sins by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit must also lay down our own standards before the word. The order of the church and the responsibilities entrusted to us are precious, but they must be used for the work of giving life to souls and preaching the gospel. If we are satisfied only with the fact that the way we are used to has been kept, and cannot rejoice over the person the Lord has saved, we can commit the same fault as the ruler of the synagogue. When God saves a soul from sin and establishes him in the church, we must not first weigh our own thoughts or position, but rejoice together at what the Lord has done.

The Sabbath also contains the meaning of believing what God has done and resting in that grace. The ruler of the synagogue tried to keep the form of the Sabbath, but because he

could not accept what the Lord had done right in front of him, in his heart he did not enjoy true rest. On the other hand, by not making the suffering woman wait any longer but loosing her that day, Jesus showed that the rest God gives is grace that gives people life. In the same way, when a sinner stops his effort to be saved by his own merit and believes the salvation the Lord completed, his conscience escapes from the condemnation of sin and obtains rest. The person who has received that grace does not add the burden of works to other souls, but comes to preach the same word of salvation.

If, while saying that we keep the word, we make people grow far from the Lord, we must examine whether our zeal is really following the will of God. Jesus is not One who abolished the commandments but the Lord who fully revealed their meaning, and His judgment is always more right than our long-standing customs. Therefore, rather than insisting on the way it is accustomed to, the church must discern by the word how it can preach the gospel to souls and glorify God.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit completely straightens us, who were bent under sin

There is a similarity between the hard illness the woman suffered for a long time and the problem of the sins of all mankind. The woman did not get this illness because she wanted it. We, too, were already under sin from the moment we were born as descendants of Adam, and so we could not become sinless people or escape from sin by our own strength. The Bible says, *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—" (Romans 5:12)*. Just as Jesus first saw the woman

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who could in no way raise herself up and loosed her from her infirmity, the sinner, too, absolutely needs the salvation of the Lord. We cannot remove the sins we have already committed and their judgment by good deeds, prayers, and the works of the Law. Even if we make up our minds firmly and correct our conduct, we cannot solve all our sins by our own strength, so salvation must come from the Lord without fail.

Jesus Christ, who is God in His essence, came to this earth in the body of a man in order to save us from sin. The Lord, who had no sin, received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist. Jesus took upon Himself those sins that had been passed on to Him and carried them all the way to the Cross, and there He received in our place the judgment we had to receive, shedding His blood and actually dying. And He rose from the dead, overcame sin and death, and completed all the righteousness of God and our salvation. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which completely raises up the soul bent under sin.

There is nothing lacking in what Jesus did. Hebrews testifies, *"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14)*. The person who believes this gospel in the heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God. Even if weakness remains in the flesh and there are things from which one must turn after being rebuked by the word, the remission of sins Jesus accomplished is not canceled so that one returns to the status of a sinner. As a righteous person who has already received the remission of all his sins, one admits one's faults, turns from them, and lives according to the word.

Just as that woman glorified God after she was made straight, the person who has received the remission of sins gives thanks and praises because he knows and believes what the Savior has

done. There is no reason to boast that one obtained freedom by one's own zeal, and no ground to put forward deeds better than those of others. The fact that Jesus completely saved us with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection is the reason for praise. The Holy Spirit gives the assurance of salvation to our hearts that believe this gospel, and leads us to live according to the word without boasting of our own righteousness.

If you still believe that you must reduce your sins little by little with daily prayers of repentance or good deeds, hear the word that the Lord has already completed the remission of sins. Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, received all the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and then rose again. God says to the person who believes this work of salvation that all his sins have been remitted. Therefore do not struggle to remove your sins by your own effort, but, like the woman in the passage, accept in your heart the word that the Lord has completely saved you.

The Lord did not raise the woman up because she had made some effort; He first said that she was loosed from her infirmity, and raised her up according to that word. This order teaches us where the assurance of the remission of sins comes from. That assurance does not come from checking whether a peaceful feeling has arisen in our hearts. When we believe the word that Jesus paid the full price of all sins, true peace also comes to the heart. Our feelings can waver, but the salvation He accomplished with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection never changes for eternity.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, there are times when we follow the thoughts of the flesh and depart from the word. At such times we must not look only at our own deeds and doubt our status as righteous people, but confirm again the salvation the Lord has accomplished for eternity. At the same time, if we have done something wrong, we must admit it in the

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light of the word, apologize, and turn from it. Such turning is for the person who has already become a child of God to live rightly according to the will of the Father.

The kingdom of God grows where people rejoice at the glorious work of the Lord

Luke recorded, *"And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him" (Luke 13:17)*. Though they saw the same thing in the same synagogue, the reactions were divided. Those who tried to hold on to their own judgment were put to shame, and the multitude that saw the work of the Lord, who loosed the one who was bound, rejoiced. They could rejoice because they acknowledged His authority as they saw Jesus actually loose the person who was bound. In this way the kingdom of God is revealed among the people who accept with joy the salvation the Lord has done.

Following the scene of healing, Luke recorded the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven. Jesus said, *"It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches" (Luke 13:19)*, and then He said of the kingdom of God, *"It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened" (Luke 13:21)*. The seed that looked small at first grew and became a tree in which the birds nested, and the leaven that went into the meal worked unseen and finally made all the meal rise. These two parables show the fact that even if the kingdom of God seems to begin small, it keeps growing and spreads widely by the power of the life within it.

The fact that one woman was made straight in a synagogue would not have looked like an event big enough for the powerful of the world to take an interest in. But in that place there appeared the authority of Jesus, who cuts the bondage of Satan and makes a person glorify God. The kingdom of God cannot be judged only by the number of people gathered or by its outwardly visible scale. When one person hears the word of salvation, is loosed from sin and praises God, and preaches the same gospel to another soul, the kingdom of God grows through that person.

A mustard seed grows by the life within it, and leaven goes into the meal and makes the whole rise. In the same way, the gospel of the water and the Spirit also actually changes the heart and life of the person who believes it. The person who has received the remission of sins does not pile up good deeds in order to be saved, but follows the guidance of the Holy Spirit out of thankfulness for the grace already received. That is also why he accepts the word of God, admits his own faults, and serves souls in union with the church. Because the new life the Lord has given works in the heart, the person who formerly lived for himself gradually comes to live seeking the will of God.

We must not underrate the power of the gospel on the grounds that the result visible before our eyes is small. That one soul hears the word and believes that all his sins have been remitted is a glorious event of the kingdom of God. Even if that person does not yet have much knowledge and the work entrusted to him looks small, if the Holy Spirit dwells in his heart and he grows according to the word, he is established as a person who serves other souls in the church. Since God saves people and makes them grow with the living word of the gospel, the church must preach that word accurately without exaggerating or coercing.

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In the two parables the actions of the man who plants the seed in the garden and the woman who puts the leaven in the meal are also recorded. The power that makes the seed grow and makes the meal rise with the leaven belongs to God, but those entrusted with the word have the responsibility to plant and preach the gospel. The church of God that truly believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit must preach the gospel it has received to every corner of the world through the preaching of the pulpit, evangelism, literature, and various media. Rather than trying to force results by human skill, we must believe in God, who saves and gives growth, and be faithful in the labor of evangelism entrusted to us.

The mustard seed and the leaven give the same assurance in different forms. The seed shows growth that becomes visible outwardly as time passes, and the leaven shows the working that changes the whole from a place that is hardly noticeable. Some people confess a clear faith soon after hearing the gospel, but others need time for their thinking and life to change according to the word while continuing to hear the word in the church. Therefore we must not judge people hastily, but consistently preach the core of the gospel and wait, believing that God will make that soul grow by the word.

Let us also save souls entangled in sin with the truth

The ruler of the synagogue limited the time for being healed, but Jesus loosed the woman on that very Sabbath. The work of giving life to souls is not something to be put off according to our convenience. When a sinner has the opportunity to hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must preach it accurately

and help him believe the word. That does not mean we should press for a decision with an impatient heart. We must sufficiently explain the passing of sins on to Him through the baptism, the judgment of the Cross, and the resurrection that the Bible speaks of, and help that person understand the word and believe it in the heart. The One who saves is the Lord, and the church is a servant entrusted with preaching the word of salvation He has completed.

In the church there are also people who have long been oppressed by the fear that they will be judged because of their sins. They think that they must wash away their own sins by themselves, or they cannot escape the thought that they are still sinners even though they have lived a religious life for a long time, or they consider that they cannot come to God because of past failures. At such times, rather than first pointing out that person's shortcomings and adding to his burden, we must clearly preach the fact that Jesus removed all sins once and for all with the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. If he believes that word in the heart, he can escape from the condemnation of sin and give thanks and glory to God.

We who have received the remission of sins must also not fail to recognize Jesus Christ the Savior by being entangled in the Law and doctrine like the ruler of the synagogue. We must lay down our own standards and the thought that we are right, and have the same heart as the multitude that saw what the Lord had done and rejoiced. We must sincerely rejoice to see another member believe the word, learn the work of the gospel, and grow, and help him live by faith together with the church. The purpose of the work entrusted to us also lies here. All the labor of the church is not for fitting people to the rules we have set, but for keeping and preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit so that more souls may be saved from sin.

We must also examine whether our words and judgments

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lead souls closer to the Lord. Preaching the truth accurately is different from seizing on a person's weakness and continually driving him into a corner. We must speak clearly of sin and judgment, but we must also, without fail, preach together the perfect salvation of Jesus, who received that sin passed on to Him and received the judgment in our place. Even when rebuke is necessary, we must not try to make the other person submit to our own standards, but help him realize that the word of God is right and follow that word.

The woman who obtained freedom in the synagogue glorified God, and all the multitude rejoiced at what the Lord had done. In the same way, the ministry of the church must not have as its purpose exalting the name of a person, but must glorify God. Rather than who preached and who labored, how Jesus saved sinners must be clearly conveyed. Then the one who preached the gospel and the one who heard it praise the Lord together, and through them the gospel also continues to be preached widely.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus saw the woman who had been possessed by a demon for eighteen years and could not raise herself up, called her, and raised her up that day—and on the Sabbath at that. Before the multitude that rejoiced at that glorious work, the Lord said that the kingdom of God grows like a mustard seed and spreads through the whole like leaven. Let us, too, stop trying to solve the problem of sin by our own deeds, and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord completed and glorify God. Also, in union with the church, let us preach this gospel that looses souls long bound in sin from all their sins. When the Lord saves a soul from sin, that person praises God and preaches the gospel to yet another person, and in this way the kingdom of God keeps growing and spreading. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The life that enters through the narrow gate

< Luke 13:22-24 >

"And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, 'Lord, are there few who are saved?' And He said to them, 'Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able."

Those who cannot go to the kingdom of the Lord

The Apostle Luke records that when the Lord was journeying toward Jerusalem, someone asked, *"Lord, are there few who are saved?" (Luke 13:23)*. And the Lord said to them, *"Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able" (Luke 13:24)*. When asked whether those who are saved are few, He said to strive to enter through the narrow gate, and said that there are many who seek to enter through the narrow gate and are not able.

It means that there are many who want to enter through the narrow gate and live well according to the will of the Lord, but who, even with such thoughts and such a heart, do not live that way. Why can they not? It is all written in the word of God, so why do people not live according to the will of God? He said that the way of following the truth, the way of living according to the will of the Lord, is narrow. He said it is difficult, and that

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many people do not go that way. It means that even those who know that fact well, who want to believe and follow the gospel of the water and the Spirit, who want to serve, and who want to live according to the will of the Lord and go to the kingdom of the Lord—even so, there are many who cannot do it.

They cannot enter because of desire

Why can they not? There are many reasons why people cannot enter through the narrow gate and live believing and doing. It would be their own greed. Their own desires, wanting to live well and impressively while being recognized by people in the world, because of money, because of the people they associate with, because of a wife, because of children, because of the honor of the world—if one wants to make excuses, there are many. That there are many who seek to enter through the narrow gate and are not able is all because of desire. It is because the fleshly desires of people are great.

It used to be said that the Christian believers in our country numbered about fifteen million. Then it dropped by five million, and dropped again to ten million, they said, and now I do not know whether there are even five million. Before long it may become one million, and then a little later a hundred thousand, or ten thousand. This time, because of what a certain well-known pastor caused, an epidemic spread and Christianity came under the criticism of the whole nation, so the number of believers may drop greatly once more. Yet even if only ten thousand believers remained, they would want to live according to the will of God. And that there are still many who do not live that way means that their hearts want to, but in reality they do not live that way. Most want to live that way, but in reality they do not. The reason,

as I have said, is their own desires.

To live according to the word, according to the will of the Lord, one must set the direction firmly and go. Because the Bible is the word of God, when we read the word we accept it into our hearts and follow it just as it is. If the word says right, we go right; if it says straight ahead, we go straight ahead—believing and following the word just as it is. If one moves according to one's own thoughts and circumstances, one cannot follow. The reason countless people believe in Jesus and yet do not live according to the will of God lies in themselves.

There are such people in our church, too. In the early days, when our church numbered about four hundred, I said, "Two-thirds of the people here will all leave. Can you live as the Lord wants? You will end up following the desires of the world." Now take a look. Of the people who came to church in the old days, only a few remain, **as rare as** beans sprouting in a drought, and the rest are all people who have newly come.

Without the gospel of the water and the Spirit it is not the narrow gate

Let us take a look around us. Leaving aside all the so-called orthodox, let us look at the groups that teach things different from the Bible. In one group, to belong to the 144,000, one must give up one's own work three days out of the week and go around evangelizing with a bag in hand, and must offer a large part of one's income. In their thinking, that 144,000 is the narrow gate. Those people, too, are trying to enter through the narrow gate. Other groups are the same. There are said to be students who take their tuition money and offer it all, and people who split a single packet of ramen to live on for a day and offer

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all that money. Not only students but adults, too, and many among the educated classes of society. Why do they go so far? In order to enter the place they call the narrow gate, into the 144,000, they offer up all their property, time, and even their lives in devotion.

There are many people who really want to live that way, but what do those people not have? They do not have the gospel of the water and the Spirit. They do not have the church. They do not have the Holy Spirit. That is why those people seek to enter and are not able. It does not work.

After entering, there is a course to follow

Then what about us? If we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit in this world, we have already entered inside the narrow gate. The Lord saved us, and we have entered by faith. But it is not enough only to enter. From then on there is a course. There is a way of following the Lord, a way the Lord has set. As we follow that way, there are dangerous ways where it seems we will fall off a cliff and die, and there are times when we must live a life that cannot be lived unless we take it on by faith. When I do some work and cannot follow by the strength of the flesh, I take hold of the faith that I not only died with Christ but also was made alive with Christ. I follow the Lord saying, "I am a person who no longer exists in this world; I have nothing to do with the people who knew me in the world." When doing the work of God, there are many things that cannot be solved by human wisdom and effort, and at such times I use faith and solve them by faith.

While telling us to strive to enter through the narrow gate, He said that there are many who want to enter and yet do not

enter. It means that there are people who do not qualify, and there are also people who qualified and did enter, but do not follow. There are those who cannot unite by faith and follow. Those who have heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit and yet cannot unite with the church and cannot follow are such people. The Lord said that the person who hides the ability with which he can serve Him, that is, his talent, and does not use it for the Lord and does not live for the Lord, will on the last day be dealt with together according to the rule applied to those who are not born again. If we have the gospel and do not preach it to others, we are treated exactly the same as those who are not born again. Not living by faith is all sin.

By the fruit you can know yourself

When you compare the word of God with reality and shine its light on it, it becomes plainly evident. In the Gospel of Matthew the Lord said, *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15)*. They say they believe in Jesus well, and come out in sheep's clothing and play the part of religious leaders, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. They are people who snatch and devour and exploit. We must keep away from such people. And the Lord said, *"You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?" (Matthew 7:16)* and *"Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:20)*.

By the fruit you can know whether you have been saved or not. You can know it by believing the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but if you still say, "I do believe, but I am not sure whether I have been saved," you can know it by looking

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at the fruit of your life. There are people who do serve the Lord, but reluctantly, hating it to death, like an animal dragged along against its will. Not the case of being unable because the body is tired, but being unable to bear it because you simply hate doing the work God has entrusted to you—that is your fruit. If the Holy Spirit is within you, it is not like that. If you make your heart new, it is not like that. Even if the thoughts of the flesh rise up, if you say, "Satan, get behind me," and if, by doing the work entrusted to you faithfully, the saints benefit and it helps the gospel be preached, the person who has received the remission of sins finds joy in that. It is rewarding. Even if I do lowly cleaning, if through it books go out and people read the books and receive the remission of sins, the heart is glad. But if someone does it against his will and does it for the purpose of the flesh, that person must think for himself about whether he has entered through the narrow gate.

The righteous feel good when the work of God goes well. Whether I did it or someone else did, if the work of God goes well, it is good. But if you feel bad when it was not you who did it, if what others did has nothing to do with you, and if, whatever becomes of the work of God, only what you yourself aim at must go well—that, too, is fruit. It is not for you to say, "Why does the pastor say such things? Do you doubt me?" To a person one does not love, one does not even say a word, whether he goes wrong or not. It is because I love you that I tell you, "You must not do that." You must look at the fruit of your lives and turn back yourselves. And you must drive out Satan the devil, who is holding you captive.

Satan the devil must be resisted. If you do not resist him, he never retreats. Satan the devil comes into your thoughts and puts some thought in. If you go along with it, he enlarges it. Then that thought of the flesh seizes and crushes your soul. You cannot get

out of it just by muttering, "I must not do this." When you judge that the thought is not right, you must boldly speak out loud and resist by faith, saying, "Satan the devil, who seizes me by the flesh and drags me along, get behind me," and then Satan retreats. Even when you have dirty and miserable dreams and your heart is oppressed, do not suffer alone but speak out loud and resist. Then you come back to your senses. He told us to resist Satan the devil.

"He who does the will of My Father"

The Lord said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21)*. The person who wants to do the will of the Father enters through the narrow gate. It is believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. And after entering, too, it is living according to the will of the Father. What is the life the Lord wants? It is preaching the gospel to the whole world. Then how shall we preach it? Even if we go out and preach diligently, the other person does not listen. So we make the sermons into books, translate them, and hand them over politely, saying, "Would you like to read this once? It will be beneficial to you." If the person who receives it reads it and accepts it in his heart, thinking, "How does he know so well what is in my heart? So this is how the Lord saved me in the Bible. So I am this sort of person, a person going to hell," he is saved. And he, too, can believe and become the same kind of person as us.

What is doing the will of the Father? It is living for others. It is living for the brothers and sisters, for the church, for souls. Not actually living this way while only thinking, "I am saved; I will live according to the will of God," falls under that word that

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there are many who want to enter through the narrow gate and are not able, many who are captured by their own desires. There are many people who know all the words of the Bible and yet fall far short when they apply them. Then you must quickly turn back and believe, saying, “Ah, this is how I am.” First of all, you must believe the gospel. Jesus is God, is He not? He came to this earth in human flesh to save us, and received all our sins passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John and washed them all away, did He not? And to give us new life, He poured out all the blood of His heart on the Cross in place of our death, and rose from the dead and gave us new life, did He not? You must believe in the heart. Then you receive the remission of sins, live this way, and go before the Lord.

In these last days, Christianity will keep sinking down. Among them there are many people who want to come in through the narrow gate. But in this age there is no way to go near them and preach. Because the false ones have scattered so much falsehood, people are scared and tremble. So we approach them with e-books, paper books, and audiobooks, made decently and in a gentlemanly way. If I say such things, people will say that I am praising myself, but I do not think that I am doing this. I think that God makes me do it, that the Holy Spirit within me makes me do this, and that I did not make this kind of church because I wanted to in the flesh. It is the Lord who works within me. I know that your following the Lord, too, is that you are living because the Lord within you leads you and draws you so that you can live according to the will of the Father. If it were done in the flesh, there would be absolutely no one who would do so. One would do it for a while and then give up.

On this earth there are enormous numbers of false ones. If someone has published a book, look at whether the gospel of the water and the Spirit is in it. What the Lord did in coming to this

earth and saving us, mankind, is all revealed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Those who do not have that content are all false. Even if a person speaks in tongues and speaks the language of angels, is popular with people, and is decent, if he does not testify of the word about the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that person is a false one. However eloquently he speaks and however graciously he leads worship so that tears and laughter come out, if he does not preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he is a person who has come to throw your soul into hell. This age is an age in which things are coming to pass according to the word of the Lord, and before long judgment will come. Countless people will die by natural disasters, too. These days even thunder and lightning strike in an unusual way. We can do nothing about such things, but just as a building built firmly with its foundation driven deep lets lightning flow into the ground, we only believe that God protects His people, and give thanks.

With a willing heart, the life the Lord wants

Now the time of judgment has nearly come. Come to your senses and examine yourselves. At the very least you must be saved, and you must live according to the will of the Father and then go. It is not for you to say, “Why does the pastor say such frightening things? Is he threatening us?” I say it in case there is someone among us who has not been saved, someone who, when the Lord comes to take us, is like the two grinding at the mill, of whom one is taken and the other left. Even if the Lord comes now, I go. I live having prepared everything by faith. Those who are not prepared must prepare their own faith for themselves. There are people who do not chew even when food is put into their mouths. If a person who is skin and bones from not eating

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holds out and does not chew even when something delicious is put into his mouth, what can be done? He said that the violent take the kingdom of heaven by force. It belongs to those who believe. Even though God has saved us all with the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, it does not work unless I believe in my heart. Believing is taking hold of it as if pressing in, as if rushing in to seize it. The person who says, "I want it. I believe," is the one who is saved, and that person is the one who lives according to the will of God.

Now that you have been saved, to say, "Make me live; I will stay still, so let God move my arms and legs and make me live"—that is sin. It is challenging and rebelling against God. If the Lord has saved us, we must want to live as the Lord wants. To tell us to strive is to tell us to want it. It is to tell us to be willing. "I am passive, so I will go only as far as someone pushes me from behind; if no one pushes, I will stay still"—the Lord does not want that.

I know that you have lived well until now the life the Lord wants. But the nearer the end comes, the more you must live with a goal set. Without a purpose one cannot live because of anxiety, and even watching the news becomes irritating and depressing. Today, too, with the purpose of living a life that pleases the Lord, in union with the church, we must know the purpose for which God has entrusted this work to us and be faithful willingly. What is done because one is forced to is neither what the Lord wants nor efficient. When doing the work, it must be done within order without fail, and if one does it as one pleases, it may not be what the Lord wants. We want to be the kind of people who want what the Lord wants, and do not want what the Lord does not want. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord who went to Jerusalem to gather us

< Luke 13:31-35 >

"On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, 'Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.' And He said to them, 'Go, tell that fox, "Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"'"

The threat of Herod cannot change the time the Lord has appointed

Luke recorded, *"On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, 'Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.'" (Luke 13:31)*. Luke records only the content of the warning they delivered and does not reveal the inner motives of the Pharisees. Therefore we must concentrate on the recorded

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words and on Jesus' answer to them. The death threat of Herod, who held power, was delivered to Jesus, but even on hearing that news the Lord did not stop the ministry He was doing.

Jesus said, *"Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.'" (Luke 13:32)*. Before the threat of the king He neither made excuses nor compromised, but spoke of the work He had to do and of the time when that work would be finished. Herod had the power to kill people, but Herod could not decide how long Jesus would minister and when He would give up His life. The Lord continued the work the Father had entrusted to Him until the time the Father had appointed.

The focus of this word lies in the fact that the ministry of Jesus is not interrupted by the threat of Herod but is accomplished to the purpose God has appointed. In the latter part of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus again says clearly, *"They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again" (Luke 18:33)*. Jesus continued healing people and casting out demons and then went to Jerusalem, and there He suffered and died and then rose again, thereby completing our salvation. Therefore we must look at the Lord, who is greater than the threat of Herod, and at His ministry, which accomplished to the end the salvation He had appointed.

Herod's threat to kill Him was real, but that threat could not change the will of the Father. Jesus did not take the danger lightly; He was not shaken because He knew clearly why He had come to this earth and how far He had to go. We, too, must look at our difficulties as they really are and yet believe the word God has spoken all the more. The person who believes in God can rely on Him even in a frightening situation and continue the work entrusted to him today.

We who have received the remission of sins also do not take

the powers of the world lightly or create danger on purpose. We must examine the situation and act wisely, but we must not hide the gospel of the water and the Spirit or abandon the work the Lord has entrusted to us because of the threats and evaluations of people. If we believe the fact that our lives and the ministry of the church belong to the Lord, we can faithfully carry out the work of the gospel we must do today without being dragged along by fear.

In this short passage the figure of the fox, which pointed to Herod who wanted to kill Him, and the figure of the hen that gathers her chicks under her wings appear together. Herod threatened with death, but Jesus gave up even His own life in order to save sinners. The Lord knew that He would give life to sinners by His death, and He went to Jerusalem willingly. The powers of the world try to make people submit by threats, but the Savior calls us to salvation by preaching the word of truth and by sacrificing Himself.

The repetition of "today and tomorrow" also shows the faithfulness of the Lord. Jesus continued day after day the work of casting out demons, healing the sick, and giving life to suffering people, and finally completed salvation in Jerusalem. We, too, must not put off the small work entrusted to us now with the thought of doing some great work in the distant future. As those who trust in the Lord's timing, let us preach the word we must preach today and faithfully care for the souls we must care for today.

Jesus went the way to complete salvation in Jerusalem

Jesus said, "*Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow,*

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and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33). The destination of that way was Jerusalem. Jerusalem was rebuked as the city that killed the prophets and stoned those who were sent to it, but the Lord did not turn back even though He knew that history of rejection. The journey of Jesus was not a flight after being driven out by Herod, but a way He chose according to the will of the Father in order to save sinners.

That way is not separated from the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist. Jesus Christ, the true God, came into the world in flesh like ours and went to John the Baptist. The Lord received baptism from John, saying, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. With that baptism Jesus received all the sins of mankind passed on to His own body. Because the sinless Lord received sin passed on to Him, He went toward Jerusalem as the Lamb of God who took upon Himself the sin of the world.

In Jerusalem Jesus was hung on the Cross carrying the sins that had been passed on to Him. He received the judgment of God in our place, shed His blood and died, and was buried in the tomb. But death could not end the way of the Lord. On the third day He actually rose again and overcame sin and death, and with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection He accomplished all the righteousness of God and eternal atonement and completed salvation. Neither the threat of Herod, nor the rejection of Jerusalem, nor the stone of the tomb could block this work the Lord had appointed.

The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart receives the remission of all his sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God. We do not obtain salvation by overcoming danger or by walking in His place the way Jesus went. We are saved by accepting by faith

what Jesus Himself took upon Himself and completed. After that, as children of God, we live following the way the Lord went. The saved person is one who has left the way of living only for himself and chosen the way of living for the Lord. Therefore it is fitting that he does not rely on his own ability but relies on the Lord and follows His will, serving the gospel and the church.

In the death of Jesus on the Cross the will of God to save sinners is clearly contained. According to the method God appointed, the Lord received our sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and, taking those sins upon Himself, paid the full price on the Cross. Because He received sin passed on to Him with His baptism, He actually died on the Cross and rose again, completing our salvation. Jesus knew all of this in advance, and He went that way willingly in order to give us life.

Jesus said that He must go that way without fail because He had to accomplish the salvation of sinners in the way the Father had appointed. The Lord knew both the history of Jerusalem, which had killed the prophets, and the suffering that awaited Him, but He chose that way in obedience to the will of the Father and in order to save sinners. Through that obedience the love of God toward us was also clearly revealed.

The Lord's remark that Jerusalem was the place that had rejected those entrusted with the word of God exposes the sin of that city. Jerusalem was the center of the religion that called on the name of God, but because it refused the word God sent, that name and that place could not save them. The Lord entered that very center of rejection and testified of the truth to the end and accomplished salvation. Therefore we must not be at ease merely because we are in the church, but must believe in the heart the Savior God sent and what He accomplished.

On what ground do you believe that you have been saved?

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Do you rely on the religious life you have led for a long time and on your own deeds, or do you believe what Jesus completed with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection? If you look only at whether your own deeds are good or bad, your heart wavers, but Jesus has already completed our salvation with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore accept in your heart the word of God that says all sins have been remitted. If you believe that word, you can live relying on the word of life without being shaken by the threats and evaluations of people.

The Lord who gathers us as a hen gathers her chicks

The Lord lamented, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Luke 13:34)*. In this word there is a rebuke for the sin of killing the prophets and stoning those who were sent, and at the same time there is a deep lament toward the children who refuse.

The figure of a hen gathering her chicks under her wings shows the protection and nearness of the Lord. When danger comes, the chicks cannot overcome that danger by their own strength, and so they go under the wings of their mother. We, too, cannot escape the judgment of sin by our own good deeds and righteousness, and we must rely on Jesus, who took our sins upon Himself in our place and saved us. Therefore the word about being gathered under the wings of the Lord means receiving the remission of sins by believing in the heart the salvation Jesus accomplished.

Jesus sent the prophets, came Himself and taught, healed the sick, and cast out demons, and finally went the way of giving up His own life. The Lord did not call only with words; He Himself accomplished everything in order to save sinners. God sent His Son, and Jesus received our sins passed on to His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. He took upon Himself those sins that had been passed on to Him and carried them all the way to the Cross, and there He was judged, shed His blood, and actually died. And by rising from the dead He overcame sin and death and opened the way of new life.

The Lord accomplished the work of salvation perfectly, but the children of Jerusalem did not want that gathering and insisted on their own way. The completed salvation becomes the remission of sins and life to the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart. Faith is not adding one's own deeds or merit to the salvation God has accomplished. It is accepting and believing with a pure heart the word that Jesus received all our sins passed on to His own body with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross in our place, and then rose again and completed salvation.

Today, too, the Lord calls with the word those who must be saved. To the person who still relies on his own good deeds and prayers of repentance, He says to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus completed and receive the remission of sins, and to the person who has already believed this gospel, He says to unite with the church and be guided by the word. The saved person does not live relying only on his own strength, but is guided by the Holy Spirit who dwells in his heart and keeps and preaches the gospel together with the members of the church. In this way the person gathered under the wings of the Lord believes His protection and, forming one body with the church,

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carries out together the work of the gospel entrusted to him.

Those who have received the remission of sins by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ accomplished are united by the word in the church. The church, as the body of the Lord, preaches the truth, cares for its members, and calls the souls scattered in the world with the word of salvation. Since the name of the church or the authority of its leaders does not itself save souls, the church must exalt the righteousness the Savior accomplished and serve so that each soul believes that word in the heart.

To be under the wings of the Lord is to believe the salvation Jesus accomplished in whatever circumstances and live relying on that word. When Jesus received baptism from John, He received the sins of all mankind passed on to His own body. He carried those sins all the way to the Cross and received the judgment of sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying, and He rose from the dead and overcame sin and death and completed salvation. Therefore the child of God who believes this gospel lives without losing the hope of eternal life and resurrection even when he meets suffering and death.

Desolation remains in the house that has refused the wings of salvation

The lament of Jesus leads on to a solemn warning. The Lord said, *"See! Your house is left to you desolate" (Luke 13:35)*. God loves sinners and calls them to salvation, but He also clearly warns of the judgment they will receive when they refuse that salvation to the end. If the children of Jerusalem refused the call of the Lord and insisted on their own way, the city and the temple they believed in and relied on could not protect them either.

In Jerusalem there were the temple, a long religious history, and the word of the prophets. But even such religious conditions could not save the people who refused the Lord. Hearing the word often and staying close to the church is a great grace, but one does not receive the remission of sins by that alone. One must know and believe in the heart how Jesus took our sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, how He received that judgment on the Cross, and how He overcame death by the resurrection. If one calls on the name of the Lord and yet does not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit He accomplished, the form of religion remains, but sin still remains in the heart.

The Lord also said, *"You shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" (Luke 13:35)*. This word makes clear that Jesus is the One sent by the Father and the King who deserves to be praised. Jesus is not a prophet who was pushed aside and vanished under the threat of Herod, but the King who carried the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and rose again to reign forever. Therefore we must acknowledge Him as the Savior now, and believe in the heart the salvation He accomplished and live as the people of the kingdom of God.

Now, when we hear the warning of God, is exactly the time to believe the word of salvation. Just as the Lord repeatedly called and warned Jerusalem, we, too, must not insist on our own will but accept His word. Do not put it off, saying that you will believe after you have corrected your conduct more and reduced your sins. Because the Lord, who received all sins passed on to Him and received their judgment in our place, opened the way of life with the resurrection, the person who believes that word receives the remission of all his sins, receives the Holy Spirit,

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and becomes a child of God.

We who have already been gathered under the wings of the Lord must also not direct this warning only at others. The saved person has received the remission of all his sins by the ministry the Lord completed, but if he insists on the thoughts of the flesh and refuses the guidance of the word, his life of faith and the ministry entrusted to him gradually dry up. A child of God, when he hears rebuke, is not afraid that he must be saved again. Because he acknowledges that the word of the Father is right, he turns from his fault and, in union with the church, continues to carry out the work of the gospel the Lord has entrusted to him.

The confession *"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" (Luke 13:35)* contains the meaning of acknowledging Jesus as the true King and Savior sent by God. Therefore this word must not stop at praise sung only with the lips, but must lead on to believing in the heart the salvation Jesus accomplished. Jerusalem was the city to which the prophets were sent, but it did not accept the Lord who was now standing before it. We, too, must not speak only of the traditions of faith of the past, but believe and follow the word of the living Jesus.

We who are gathered under the protection of the Lord must follow His way

Even before the threat of Herod, Jesus continued the work He was doing and went toward Jerusalem. There He took upon Himself the judgment of our sins, died, and rose again, thereby completing salvation, and He gathered us who believe that gospel as His own people. Therefore we who have received the remission of sins do not live thinking only of avoiding the threats of the world. We remember how the Lord saved us, and set our

hearts on the work of preaching so that other souls, too, may hear and believe this gospel.

When the church preaches the gospel, it may meet opposition and misunderstanding. At such times we must preach the word of the Lord boldly while examining the situation wisely. We must ask God for wisdom and do the work He has entrusted to us today. Preaching the word, preparing materials that contain the gospel, building up the saved members, and reaching out to the souls who have not yet heard are all work the Lord has entrusted to the church. Therefore, rather than seeking the praise of people, we must unite with one another and carry out that work in order to accomplish the will of the Lord.

Such obedience is not a condition for maintaining salvation. It is because we have become children of God by believing the salvation Jesus has already completed that we live according to the will of the Father. By the strength of the flesh alone we cannot overcome fear and our own desires, but the Holy Spirit who dwells in us makes us remember the word and helps us live by faith through the church. While admitting our own weakness, we believe that the will of the Lord is right, obey the word, and continue to carry out the work entrusted to us.

The way of the Lord unites members entrusted with different offices and methods for the one gospel. When the one who preaches the word, the one who edits the literature, the one who cares for the church, and the one who opens the way with prayer and material means acknowledge one another, the gospel is preached farther. What matters is not whether my work is seen, but whether the salvation Jesus completed is conveyed accurately to souls.

Let us not abandon the work we must do today out of fear of what will happen in the future. Even on the day He heard the threat of Herod, the Lord continued the ministry of casting out

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demons and healing the sick. We, too, have people to meet and care for now, the word to preach and prepare, and work to carry out together with the church. If we believe the time and the result God has appointed and obey in the work entrusted to us today, we can follow the will of the Lord without being dragged along by the threats and evaluations of people.

We must also have the heart of the Lord, who looked at Jerusalem and lamented. We must not coldly push away the person who refuses the gospel as one who will perish, but, as the Lord tried many times to gather them, we must preach the truth clearly and be longsuffering. Without hiding judgment and desolation, we must make known all the more clearly the baptism from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus, who received that judgment in our place. The purpose lies in his believing the completed salvation and coming under the protection of the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, neither the threat of Herod nor the rejection of Jerusalem could block the way Jesus was going. The Lord took our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, was judged on the Cross, and then rose again and completed salvation, and He called us into that grace as a hen gathers her chicks. Do not insist on your own will, but believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit in your heart. We who have already received the remission of sins, let us gather together in the church and be guided by the word, and let us preach the gospel according to the will of the Father without being dragged along by fear. Let us believe in the Lord, who went to Jerusalem to give us life, and serve together the work of the gospel He has entrusted to us. ✉

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CHAPTER

14

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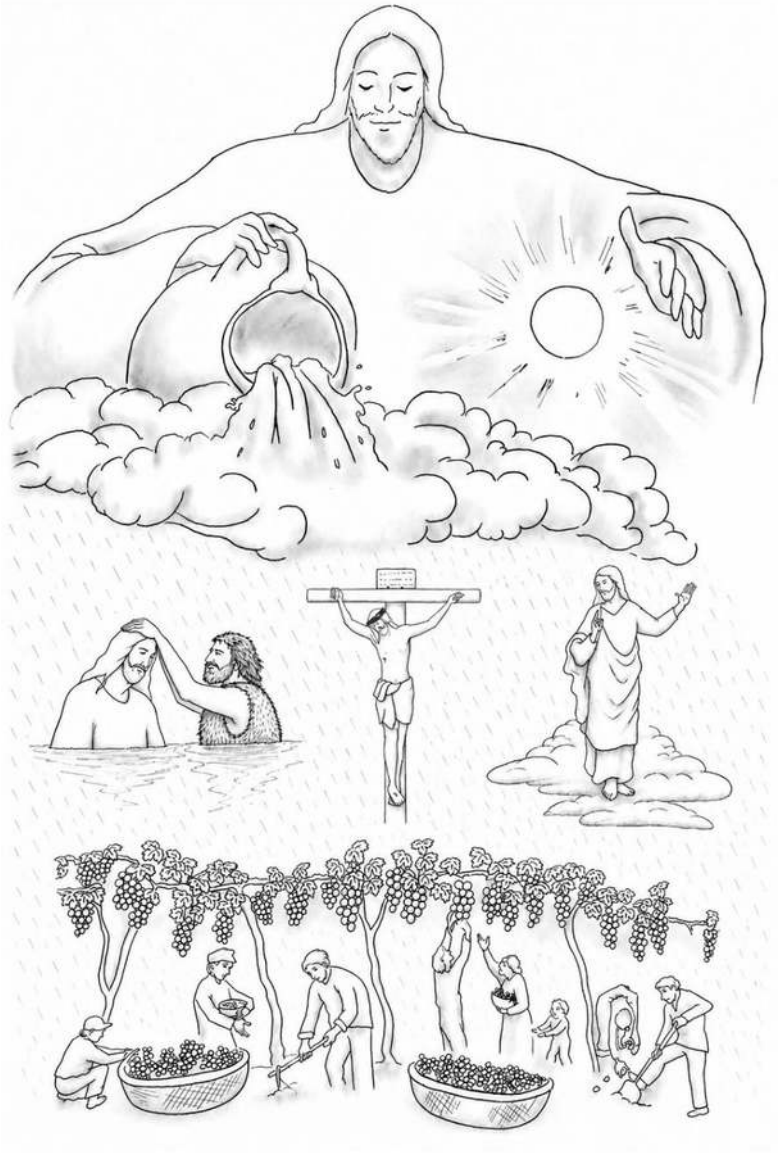

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Luke Chapter 14

Part 1. Understanding the text passage by passage and its gospel-based interpretation

Luke chapter 14 begins with the event of healing a sick man on the Sabbath, and goes on to show in turn the low place and service that does not look for repayment, the invitation to the kingdom of God where all things are ready, and the way of becoming a disciple of the Lord.

1. Healing a sick man on the Sabbath (14:1–6)

"Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?' But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go. Then He answered them, saying, 'Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?' And they could not answer Him regarding these things."

General interpretation of the text

Jesus eats a meal on the Sabbath in the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees. The people there were watching closely

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to see whether Jesus would break the regulations of the Sabbath.

Seeing a man who had dropsy, Jesus asks the lawyers and Pharisees whether it is right to heal on the Sabbath. When they do not answer, Jesus heals the sick man and lets him go.

Jesus asks whether, if their donkey or ox fell into a pit on the Sabbath, they would not pull it out at once. It means that if rescuing a person or an animal from danger is permitted, setting a suffering person free from illness is all the more fitting.

Jesus did not disregard the Sabbath; He showed its original purpose. The Sabbath is not a day for oppressing people with rules, but a day for life, rest, and restoration.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—True rest is being loosed from the bondage of sin

When Jesus went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees on the Sabbath, the people were watching Him, looking for something to accuse Him of, rather than welcoming Him and trying to hear His word. Before Him was a man who had dropsy.

Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees whether it was lawful to heal a sick man on the Sabbath, but they did not answer. After taking the sick man and healing him and letting him go, Jesus asked whether, if their son or ox fell into a pit, they would not immediately pull him or it out even on the Sabbath.

While they treasured the life and property that belonged to them, they tried to condemn the loosing of one suffering person. This is hypocrisy that keeps religious form while losing the compassion and salvation of God.

Jesus did not heal the sick man in order to abolish the

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Sabbath. He fulfilled and showed the true meaning of the Sabbath. Rest is not merely not doing physical work on a particular day, but the rest one enjoys in the heart by believing the fact that Jesus has solved the problem of sin.

Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John the Baptist. Then, carrying those sins, He was hung on the Cross and judged, and He rose from the dead. When we know and believe this salvation in the heart, we escape from the condemnation of sin and obtain true rest.

This event is not a promise that the physical illness of every believer will surely be healed. But it clearly shows that Jesus is God, who saves those under the power of sin, death, and Satan and gives them true rest.

2. The person who humbles himself (14:7–11)

"So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: 'When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, "Give place to this man," and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, "Friend, go up higher." Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'"

General interpretation of the text

Seeing the invited people choose the best places, Jesus tells a parable about a wedding feast.

The one who sits in a high place of his own accord must give up his place when a more honorable person comes, but the one who sits in a low place may be led by the host to a higher place.

This is not a worldly tactic of pretending to be humble outwardly in order to gain greater honor. It is a word warning against the heart that raises its own worth and tries to occupy a place superior to others.

In the kingdom of God the person who exalts himself is humbled, and the person who humbles himself is exalted. True humility is not regarding oneself as worthless, but the attitude of trusting the evaluation of God and respecting and serving others.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—Those who have humbled their hearts enter the kingdom of God

Jesus saw the invited people each trying to take the high places. And He told them not to sit first in a high place and then be told by the host to give up the place, but rather to sit in the lowest place and wait for the host to call them up.

This word does not teach only the manners to be kept at a feast. It speaks of where the heart of the person who comes before God must be.

a proud person / a person proud in heart regards himself as righteous and lacking nothing. Because he has believed in God for a long time, knows the Bible, and has done many religious acts, he thinks that he is qualified to sit in a higher place than

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others. It is hard for such a person to realize why the salvation Jesus accomplished is necessary for him.

On the other hand, the person who has humbled his heart is not a person who deliberately belittles himself in comparison with people. He is a person who admits his real state before the word of God. He knows that he cannot keep the Law completely, cannot escape the judgment of sin by himself, and is a person who absolutely needs the salvation of Jesus.

God lets the person who has laid down his own righteousness hear the word of the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished. When a sinner knows and believes in the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, God moves him from the place of a sinner to the place of a righteous person and exalts him as His child. It is not that a person climbs up to the place of a righteous person by himself; God exalts him.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, we must not raise our hearts. We must remember the fact that we, too, were originally people who had to be judged, but were saved by the grace of the Lord. We must not put forward office, knowledge, and labor, but treasure our brothers and sisters as coworkers and serve the gospel together.

3. Invite those who cannot repay (14:12–14)

"Then He also said to him who invited Him, 'When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.'"

General interpretation of the text

Jesus says that when giving a feast, one should not invite only friends, relatives, and rich neighbors, but should invite the poor and those whose bodies are impaired.

It does not mean that eating with family or friends is wrong. It means that one must not form all relationships on the standard of the repayment and profit that will come back to oneself.

The love of the kingdom of God does not choose people on the standard of social position or economic power. It bestows mercy and hospitality even on those who cannot repay immediately, and respects them as people who sit at the table as equals.

Such love is not an act done in order to be repaid by people. It is an act that trusts that God remembers hidden mercy and will acknowledge it at the resurrection of the just.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—Grace received freely leads on to service

Jesus said that when giving a feast, one should not call only those who can invite one back and repay, but should invite the poor, those whose bodies are impaired, and those who cannot see. This is because they have no ability to repay the one who gave the feast.

In this word there are both practical love and a spiritual lesson. A saint must not do good in order to gain the repayment and praise of people. Choosing to serve only those who will treat one in return can end up as a transaction of giving and receiving.

It is the same with serving the gospel and souls. We must not go only to those who will give us material benefit or raise our

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position. We must preach the gospel freely to the souls who are suffering before God because of their sins and their inability.

Even if we preach the gospel and serve a soul with our possessions and time, that person cannot repay the saint the price of salvation. This is because salvation is not something the evangelist or the church produces, but something Jesus accomplished. The saint, thankful for the grace he has received, shares the food of life without expecting any repayment.

But such service must not become the price for obtaining salvation. One does not buy the remission of sins by doing much charity and service. One must first know and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins. After that, remembering the fact that one has received a grace one cannot repay either, one serves other souls. God remembers such labor at the resurrection of the just.

4. The parable of the great supper (14:15–24)

"Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, 'Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!' Then He said to him, 'A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, "Come, for all things are now ready." But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused." And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused." Still another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, "Go

out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind." And the servant said, "Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room." Then the master said to the servant, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper."'"

General interpretation of the text

When someone says that the person who eats food in the kingdom of God is blessed, Jesus tells the parable of the great supper.

The host who has prepared the supper calls the invited people, but they refuse to attend on the grounds that they have bought a field, must test oxen, or have married. The field, the animals, and the marriage are not wrong in themselves. The problem is that they regarded their everyday possessions and plans as more important than the invitation of God.

The host brings in the poor and those whose bodies are impaired from the streets and lanes of the city, and when there is still room, he invites even those outside the city. This shows the fact that the invitation of the kingdom of God is widely extended to include the socially marginalized and the Gentiles.

The word to *"compel them to come in, that my house may be filled"* does not mean that violence or forced conversion is permitted. It means to persuade actively those who think that they cannot be invited to such a feast that the invitation of the host is sincere.

The invitation of God is given by grace, but it must actually be accepted. If one keeps putting off one's response, trusting

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only in one's religious background or the privilege of having been invited first, one can miss the feast of the kingdom of God.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—He calls sinners to the prepared feast of the gospel

Jesus told the parable of a host who prepared a great supper and invited many people. When supper time came, the host sent his servants to say that all things were ready, so come.

This supper represents the feast of salvation God has prepared for sinners. It is not the sinner who prepares by himself what is needed for salvation. God has prepared everything.

Jesus, who is God, came to this earth in the body of a man. By receiving baptism from John, He received the sins of all mankind passed on to Him, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead. Thereby He completed everything needed to save sinners. Therefore to take part in the feast of salvation is to know and believe in the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus completed.

But the people invited first all made excuses and refused. One had bought a field, one had to test five yoke of oxen, and another said that he could not go because he had married. The field, the business, and the marriage were not wrong in themselves. The problem lay in their regarding worldly possessions, work, and relationships as more important than the salvation of God.

People can keep putting off hearing the gospel on the grounds that they are busy with making a living, business, family, and future plans. But none of those things can take the place of the eternal remission of sins and life. If one keeps refusing the

opportunity of salvation, in the end one does not taste the prepared feast.

The host told his servants to go out into the streets and lanes and bring in the poor, those whose bodies are impaired, those who cannot see, and the lame. This does not mean that only people with particular physical circumstances are saved. It shows those who know their own spiritual poverty and inability.

The person whose heart is rich, thinking that he does not need the salvation of God, does not come to the feast. On the other hand, the person who knows that he cannot pay the debt of sin by his own righteousness, cannot find the truth by himself, and has nothing to put forward before God seeks the gospel of salvation.

The word of the host to compel people to come in does not mean to orce people to believe. It means not to give up on a soul after being refused once or twice, but to urge him in love so that he can keep hearing the word. The saved saint must patiently preach the gospel of the remission of sins to his family and neighbors.

5. The cost a disciple must pay (14:25–33)

"Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and

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was not able to finish." Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

General interpretation of the text

When great multitudes follow Jesus, Jesus says that one cannot be His disciple unless one hates one's family and even one's own life.

Here "to hate" does not mean to harbor hostility toward one's family or to abandon one's responsibilities. It is a strong comparative expression of ancient times, meaning that one must put Jesus before one's family and one's own life. When the demands of the family and the will of Jesus conflict, the disciple must choose loyalty to Jesus.

To bear one's cross goes beyond enduring everyday inconveniences. Since the cross at that time was a symbol of shame, suffering, and death, it means accepting even the possibility of losing safety, honor, and possessions in order to follow Jesus.

Through the parables of the man who builds a tower and the king who prepares for war, Jesus tells us to count the cost first. It means not to follow merely on momentary emotion or the enthusiasm of the crowd, but to think seriously about the commitment needed to follow to the end.

The word to forsake all that one has means that no possession must take precedence over Jesus or rule the disciple. It must not

remain merely an attitude of the heart, but must appear in actual sharing and sacrifice.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—We must distinguish between salvation and the life of a disciple

Though the multitude following Jesus was large, the Lord was not satisfied with the number of many people. He said that unless one hates one's father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even one's own life, one cannot be His disciple.

This word does not mean to actually hate one's family or abandon one's responsibilities. The parallel passage explains that the person who loves father or mother or children more than Jesus is not worthy of the Lord. It is a word that family, one's own life, and the safety of the world must not occupy a higher place than the will of the Lord.

Here we must clearly distinguish between salvation and the life of a disciple. The remission of sins is not obtained by the merit of abandoning family and property. Salvation is obtained by knowing and believing in the heart what Jesus completed with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. Human sacrifice cannot supplement the price of salvation.

But on the way of living as a disciple of the Lord after receiving the remission of sins, there is an actual cost. This is because one must put the word of the Lord before one's own thoughts and desires, worldly recognition and profit, and sometimes the opposition of those close to one.

The man who builds a tower first counts the cost of finishing it, and the king who goes to war first considers whether he can

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meet the enemy with his own army. Likewise, the person who wants to live as a disciple of the Lord must not lightly think that he can hold on to both the profit of the world and the will of the Lord. He must decide in his heart what he will treasure most and whom he will follow as master.

The word to forsake all that one has must not be understood either as a uniform command that one must physically dispose of all one's property. It is a word to lay down sovereignty not only over possessions, honor, and relationships, but also over one's own rightness, plans, and desires. One may keep the possessions God has entrusted, but they must not become the master of the heart.

To bear one's cross does not mean either that one pays the price of salvation by suffering much. It is denying oneself and choosing the will of the Lord when one's own desires and the will of the Lord conflict. This is not a condition of salvation, but the way of faith by which the saved person follows the Lord.

6. Salt that has lost its flavor (14:34–35)

"Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

General interpretation of the text

Salt fulfills its role when it adds flavor to food and prevents decay. But salt that has lost its flavor can no longer perform its original function.

This parable is connected with the teaching on discipleship

that comes immediately before it. If one says that one follows Jesus and yet gives up the decision to put the Lord before family, possessions, and one's own life, one loses the influence and the witness one has on the world as a disciple.

The final word, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* is a request not to take lightly the cost that accompanies the way of a disciple. A disciple of Jesus must not remain in momentary zeal, but must live a life of hearing His word seriously and following to the end.

The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—We must become saints who keep the truth and the mission of the gospel

Jesus said that if salt loses its flavor, it is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill and is thrown out. Salt, rather than displaying its own existence, gives a salty taste within the food and prevents decay.

The saint who has received the remission of sins by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit must show the truth of the gospel in his life in the world. He must not boast of his own position and righteousness, but preach how Jesus saved sinners, and serve the Lord, the gospel, and souls.

If one says that one has received the remission of sins and yet lives following only one's own desires and is ashamed of the gospel, it is hard to be used as a disciple of the Lord. One must not bury the life received by the grace of salvation in the desires of the world, but use it for the work of preaching the word of the remission of sins to other souls.

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Conclusion of Part 1—The gospel of the water and the Spirit that Luke chapter 14 conveys

Luke chapter 14 first shows Jesus, who treasures one soul bound by sin and suffering more than religious form. It then tells us not to exalt ourselves before God, but to admit that we are people who cannot escape from sin and judgment by ourselves.

God has already prepared the feast of salvation for sinners. Because Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with His baptism, received the judgment of sin on the Cross, and rose from the dead, everything needed for salvation has been completed. A person must lay down his own righteousness and the excuses of the world, and know and believe in the heart this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

After receiving the remission of sins, we must serve the gospel and souls without calculating the repayment of people. We must not exalt family, possessions, and our own desires above the Lord, but deny our own thoughts and follow the will of the Lord. Salvation is grace given freely, but the life of the saved saint must lead on to the life of a disciple who follows the truth and the mission of the gospel. ✉

Part 2. An expository sermon
following the text passage by passage

The prepared feast of salvation and the life of a disciple

Beginning the sermon

In Luke chapter 14, by healing a man who had dropsy on the Sabbath, Jesus revealed the will of God, who treasures life and mercy more than religious form. Then He told those who chose the high places at a feast to humble themselves, and taught them not to choose and entertain only those who had the ability to repay, but to serve the poor and the marginalized freely. Only when we lay down our own righteousness and the heart that seeks the reward of people can we rightly receive and show the grace of God.

In the parable of the great supper He showed that God had prepared everything necessary for salvation for sinners and invited them, but that people refused that invitation with the excuses of a field, oxen, and marriage. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River and took the sin of the world upon Himself, received the judgment of that sin by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rose from the dead and completed salvation. A person must not put the affairs of the world and his own righteousness first, but believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart and take part in the feast of the kingdom of God.

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Jesus told the great multitude following Him to put the Lord before family, their own lives, and all their possessions, and to bear their cross. The person who has freely received the remission of sins must acknowledge Jesus as the master of his life, abandon his own will and ease, and live according to the gospel and the word. The saved person must not become like salt that has lost its flavor, having only the name of disciple, but must give his life and possessions to the Lord and serve the gospel with truth and love.

Jesus, who healed a sick man on the Sabbath

"Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?' But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go. Then He answered them, saying, 'Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?' And they could not answer Him regarding these things" (Luke 14:1–6).

One Sabbath Jesus went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees and ate bread. This man was a person in a leading position among the Pharisees. Lawyers and Pharisees were also there together, and they were watching closely how Jesus would act.

A religious gaze that turned away from life

They were not looking at Him in order to believe and learn the word of Jesus, but watching in order to find grounds in His actions for accusing Him. Earlier in the Gospel of Luke, too, the religious leaders found fault with Jesus healing the sick on the Sabbath. In their gaze there was not faith but wariness and judgment.

Before Jesus there was a man who had dropsy. He was a person who could not cure his illness by his own strength, and he stood before Jesus while the religious leaders looked on.

After seeing the sick man, Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, *"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"* This question was not simply a matter of asking about the detailed interpretation of the regulations of the Sabbath. It was a question that exposed whether their hearts, which turned away from a suffering person while claiming to keep the commandment of God, were really in accordance with the will of God.

The Sabbath was a day God had given, and remembering the word of God and resting from the work of the body was a good thing. The problem lay not in the Law itself but in the fact that human interpretation and religious form came before the mercy of God. They were watching Jesus with an attitude that could find fault with the good work of healing a sick man on the grounds of keeping the Sabbath.

The lawyers and Pharisees kept silent at the question of Jesus. They prided themselves on keeping the Sabbath thoroughly, but before the work of giving life and the mercy of God they could give no answer at all. Their silence revealed the hardness of heart that, while claiming to hold on to the commandment of God, did not agree with the heart of God who gave that commandment.

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Will you not immediately pull him out even on the Sabbath?

Without waiting for their answer, Jesus took the sick man, healed him, and let him go. The Lord did not care about the reactions of the religious leaders or let Himself be bound by their wrong judgment. He had compassion on the suffering person and restored him immediately. The healing of Jesus revealed that God is the One who gives life and bestows mercy on those who suffer.

This healing is an event of the gospel that shows who Jesus, who came to the sick and to sinners, is. Just as He healed a person who could not cure his own illness, Jesus is God, who comes to sinners who cannot remove their sins by their own deeds and efforts and saves them. The heart that had compassion on the sick man reveals the love and power of the Lord, who came to save mankind lying under sin and death.

Jesus asked them whether, if their son or ox fell into a pit, they would not immediately pull it out even on the Sabbath. If their son or ox were left in a pit until the next day, it may lose its life or suffer great harm, so anyone would try to rescue it at once. Jesus exposed their contradiction: while they acknowledged that in matters concerning their own family or property an urgent rescue was necessary even on the Sabbath, in the suffering of others they put religious regulations first.

If one treasures one's own animals, pulling out one's own donkey or ox at once, while condemning the healing of a sick man, that is not faith that rightly keeps the commandment of God. Outwardly it looks like keeping holy rules, but in that heart there is no love and compassion. God does not take pleasure in oppressing people with religious form.

The lawyers and Pharisees could not answer the word of

Jesus. This was because His question clearly exposed their contradiction. They thought that they knew the Sabbath better than anyone, but they did not know the heart of God who gave the Sabbath. Through their example it appears that one can hold on to the letter of the commandment and religious rules and yet oppose the God who gave that commandment.

This event shows the fact that religious knowledge and high position do not automatically lead a person closer to God. The lawyers and Pharisees knew much of the word, but they tried to watch and condemn Jesus, the Master of that word. Even if a person has read the Bible for a long time and holds an office in the church, if he raises his own thinking above the word of God, he comes to go against the will of Jesus.

People easily judge the faith of others by looking only at outwardly visible actions. While regarding the form of worship, the feasts, dress, and rules of life as important, one may not know the gospel of Jesus, who saved sinners, or may turn away from suffering neighbors. The faith that rightly believes the word of God does not establish its own righteousness by outward forms, but follows the righteousness and mercy of God revealed in the word.

Jesus did not treat the one sick man as an object of people's judgment or a tool of controversy. He took him, healed him, and let him go. The people debated the regulations of the Sabbath around the sick man, but Jesus saw that man's suffering. The person who believes the gospel, too, must not make a person in difficulty a means of proving his own argument, but respect him as a soul and actually help him.

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The true rest the gospel of the water and the Spirit gives

The fundamental problem of human beings lies in the fact that they are sinners before God. A sinner cannot remove his sins by good deeds and religious acts, nor can he become a righteous person by himself by keeping the Law perfectly. Therefore a person must turn from establishing his own righteousness and come to Jesus Christ, who came to save sinners.

The Law makes us realize sin, but it does not wash away sin. The lawyers and Pharisees used the Law as a tool for establishing their own righteousness. While judging others they thought that they themselves were righteous before God, but before the question of Jesus the hypocrisy and lovelessness of their hearts were exposed. A person must not establish his own righteousness by comparing himself with others, but admit before the word of God that he is a sinner.

The event in which Jesus healed a sick man on the Sabbath shows the Savior, who gives true rest to those under sin and death. As long as there is sin in his heart, a sinner fears the judgment of God and cannot enjoy true rest. Even if one keeps religious rules and does many good deeds, if sin remains as it is, the soul cannot rest before God.

Before this event, Jesus had received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. The sinless Son of God took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. He was already walking the way to save sinners as the Lamb of God who carried the sin of the world.

After that, Jesus was hung on the Cross carrying the sin of the world He had taken upon Himself with His baptism. By shedding His blood and dying on the Cross He received the

punishment and judgment of all sins in our place, and after being buried, He rose again on the third day and overcame sin and death. The baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection accomplished perfect salvation for sinners.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a gospel that demands that a person keep religious rules well and wash away his own sins. It is the gospel that tells us to believe the righteousness of God: that Jesus took our sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again and completed salvation. The person who believes this gospel in the heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God.

The person who has received the remission of sins obtains true rest before God because he believes not his own deeds but the salvation Jesus completed. He escapes from the fear that salvation is maintained only by doing more religious acts, and lives with thankfulness, believing the righteousness of God that has already been completed. The saved person, thankful for the grace he has received, follows the guidance of the Holy Spirit, obeys the word of God, loves his neighbors, and serves the gospel.

Sharing the salvation we have received is love

The faith of the Pharisees leaned toward displaying their own image of having kept the rules rather than toward giving life to people. But the faith that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not boast of its own righteousness but exalts the righteousness of Jesus. Rather than looking for the shortcomings of others and condemning them, it remembers that it, too, was

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saved by grace, and embraces and helps the weak.

Believers today, too, must respect the order of worship, the order of the church, and its set rules. But they must not put these forward to turn away from the sick and neighbors in difficulty, or to oppress people. The order of the church exists to serve the gospel and the believers, and must not become a means for condemning people and establishing one's own authority.

We, too, can have the eyes of the Pharisees who watched others closely. While listening to a sermon, we can look only for wrong expressions rather than for the word we will believe and obey, or examine the faults of other believers and gather grounds for condemning them. We must first hold our own hearts up to the light of the word of God, believe the gospel Jesus accomplished, and turn from pride and hypocrisy.

Despite the silence and opposition of the lawyers and Pharisees, Jesus healed the sick man and let him go. His mercy was not decided by the approval of people. A worker of the gospel, too, must not hide or change the gospel of the water and the Spirit out of regard for what people think, but must clearly preach the righteousness of God, who saved sinners.

The person who preaches the truth must have compassion on souls like Jesus. While clearly exposing wrong faith, Jesus actually healed the sick man. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, too, must preach the truth clearly and embrace and help suffering people with love.

A person cannot escape from sin by religious form and his own righteousness. He must believe only the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed by taking all the sins of the world upon Himself with the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, receiving the judgment of those sins with the blood and death of the Cross, and rising again. The person who believes this gospel in the heart receives the remission of

all his sins, receives the Holy Spirit, and enjoys true rest in God.

The person who has received the remission of sins does not put forward his own religious righteousness to watch and condemn others. He remembers that he was first saved by the mercy of the Lord, has compassion on those who suffer, and actually helps them. He also does not change the gospel out of fear of the opposition and judgment of people, but lives clearly preaching the righteousness of God accomplished by the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and the resurrection.

The grace of God that exalts the lowly

"So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: 'When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, "Give place to this man," and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, "Friend, go up higher." Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'" (Luke 14:7–11).

Jesus was eating a meal in the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees on the Sabbath. The people there were watching closely how Jesus would act. But Jesus, too, was watching the invited people choose the best places. Seeing the attitude of self-exaltation revealed through their choice of places, Jesus spoke in a parable.

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The people who chose their own places first

At a feast there was an order determined by the host who had invited them. But the people did not wait for the judgment of the host and chose first the places that were higher and more honorable than others. In that action was revealed the heart that regarded itself as a person fit to sit in the best place and wanted to be recognized before people.

Jesus said not to sit down in the best place when invited to a wedding feast. When a more honorable person than oneself is invited and comes and the host says to give up the place, the person who took the high place first goes down to the lowest place before everyone and suffers shame. Even if a person evaluates himself highly, the host who invited him does not necessarily judge him highly.

On the other hand, when the host says to the person sitting in the lowest place, *"Friend, go up higher,"* he is exalted not by his own assertion but by the call of the host. Then the glory that comes to him, too, is not something he seized and obtained, but something the host acknowledged and gave. Jesus showed the fact that a person's true place is decided not by his own judgment and assertion but by the judgment of the host.

This word is not a teaching to put on a humble appearance in order to obtain a high place. Through the places at a wedding feast the Lord spoke of the place the heart must have when a person comes before the gospel. A person must not exalt himself as one who is already righteous and worthy of being saved, but must admit his true state before the word of God.

People try to take the best place in their hearts even before God. One may think that one is already a righteous person because one has attended church for a long time, knows much of the Bible, and has office and service. One may even claim that

God must accept one because one has committed fewer sins than others or done many good deeds.

But religious career and position, good deeds and service, do not remove a person's sins. When one holds oneself up to the light of the word of God, it is revealed that all people are born in sin as descendants of Adam and commit sin, and are beings who cannot escape the judgment of sin by their own deeds. The person who tries to take the best place before God by his own righteousness does not see his real state.

Sit in the lowest place of the heart before the Lord

To humble oneself spiritually is to admit before the word of God that one is originally a sinner and a being who can only be judged and go to hell unless the Lord saves one. Before people one may put forward one's good deeds and position, but before God one can boast of nothing. The person who admits this is the person who sits in the lowest place of the heart.

The tears one sheds while admitting that one is a sinner, or a lowly attitude in itself, does not pay the price of sin. Nor does the act of humbling oneself become the merit of salvation. To humble oneself is to give up one's own righteousness and merit and to stand in the place of faith that accepts the salvation God has prepared.

When the heart is high, even when one hears the gospel, one regards it as already known, or rejects the word of God on the grounds that it does not agree with one's own thinking. One may even judge the word of salvation God has testified, taking one's own religious experience and doctrine as the absolute standard. But the person who admits before God that he is a sinner who will be judged knows the fact that he needs a Savior, and comes to hear and believe not his own deeds but the salvation Jesus

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accomplished.

A person's humbling of his heart is not an act of paying the price of salvation, but laying down his own thoughts and accepting the word of salvation the Lord accomplished. God lets the person who admits his sinful state before the word hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and be saved by faith.

We are exalted by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Before the event of the text, Jesus had already received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, at the Jordan River. By receiving that baptism the sinless Son of God took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body. At the time of the text, Jesus was going the way of carrying the sin of the world He had taken upon Himself, to be hung on the Cross in the future and shed His blood and die, receiving the judgment of sin in our place, and to rise from the dead and overcome sin and death.

After that, Jesus was hung on the Cross carrying all the sins of the world He had taken upon Himself with His baptism, and by shedding His blood and dying He received all the punishment and judgment of those sins. After being buried, He rose from the dead on the third day, overcame sin and death, and completed salvation for sinners.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a word telling a person to put forward his own righteous deeds and take the best place in the kingdom of God. It is the gospel that tells us to believe the righteousness of God: that Jesus took all sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins with the blood and death of the Cross,

and rose from the dead and completed salvation.

The person who believes this gospel in the heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, not by his own merit but by the righteousness Jesus accomplished. God gives him the Holy Spirit as a gift and makes him His child. That a person who originally had to be judged because of sin is justified by believing the righteousness of Jesus Christ and comes to belong to the kingdom of God is the most fundamental exaltation God bestows.

The person who took a high place for himself was humbled, and the person who left his place to the judgment of the host was exalted by the host. In the same way, a sinner cannot take a place in the kingdom of God by his own righteousness; he abandons his self-exaltation, believes the grace the Lord accomplished, and is accepted into the kingdom of God.

Jesus, too, did not claim the glory of the world as His own, but served sinners in the form of a servant. The sinless Son of God received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, and was obedient even to the death of the Cross. God raised Jesus from the dead and gave Him the name which is above every name.

The person who has received the remission of sins is like the person God has called, saying, *"Friend, go up higher."* He has been moved from the place of a sinner to a child of God, from the power of darkness to the kingdom of the Son of God, and has been established as a worker of God who serves the gospel. Because he knows that all this exaltation was given not by his own ability but by the grace of the Lord, he cannot raise his heart.

The saved person lives humbly, remembering that he, too, was saved entirely by grace. Serving God, the gospel, and the saints from a low place is the fruit of faith that gives thanks for the salvation received.

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We must have the heart of a servant

In the church, too, people can want high office and important roles, the recognition and praise of others, and try to choose the best place. But the office and ministry of the church are not a place for displaying one's own glory, but a place for serving God, the gospel, and the believers. Even if the work entrusted to one is small and hardly noticed by people, if it is necessary for the work of the Lord, one must treasure it and be faithful.

When God entrusts a responsibility, one must carry it out faithfully, relying on the Lord. Without lording it over others by one's own authority, one must respect the brothers and sisters who work together as precious workers and coworkers of God, and gather hearts together to accomplish the will of the Lord.

A believer must not judge others by education and wealth, age and office, ability and social position either. Those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit are all the people of God who have received the remission of sins by the same grace. Though there are differences in roles and responsibilities, one cannot make light of the personhood of another believer because of one's position.

The fact of having believed the gospel for a long time and knowing much must not become a ground for pride either. If one despises a person who does not yet know the gospel on the grounds that one knows the gospel of the water and the Spirit, one has forgotten the grace that saved oneself. A believer must preach the truth clearly, but must serve souls with a gentle and patient heart, remembering that he, too, was saved entirely by grace.

The center of the word that God exalts the person who humbles himself lies in a sinner receiving the remission of sins by believing the righteousness of Jesus Christ and becoming a

child of God and a worker of the kingdom of God. God exalts from the place of a sinner to the place of a righteous person the one who humbles his heart before the Lord and accepts the gospel.

Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins with the blood and death of the Cross, and rose from the dead and completed salvation for sinners. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart receives the remission of all his sins, not by his own merit but by the grace of God, and is exalted as a child of God.

The person who has received the remission of sins does not exalt himself, but serves the gospel and the saints in the place God has entrusted to him. Remembering the grace of the Lord, who saved and exalted him, he joins hearts with the other workers and lives leaving to the Lord the final judgment that exalts and humbles him.

The faith that serves neighbors without repayment

"Then He also said to him who invited Him, 'When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.'" (Luke 14:12–14).

While eating in the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees, Jesus saw the invited people choose the best places. Earlier He had said not to take a high place for oneself but to humble oneself, and now He spoke to the master of the house who had

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invited Him about whom he should entertain. The earlier word deals with the self-exaltation of the invited person, and this text deals with the calculating heart of the person who invites.

The calculation of inviting only those who will repay

At that time a feast was not only a place for eating food together, but also a place for confirming social relationships and honor. A person could try to widen his relationships and raise his position by entertaining friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors who could invite him again. Even if outwardly it looked like generous giving, in the heart one could expect that someday they would repay with better entertainment.

Jesus said, *"Lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid."* A good deed done in hope of the praise and repayment of people becomes a transaction for one's own benefit, even if it looks good outwardly. The Lord told us to escape from the calculating love that cares only for those close to us, and to widen our love even to those who have nothing with which to repay.

Serve those who have nothing with which to repay

The *"maimed"* of the text refers to people whose bodies were impaired and who were easily excluded from feasts at that time. Jesus said to invite to the feast the poor, those whose bodies are impaired, those who have difficulty walking, and those who cannot see.

Jesus did not treasure only those who had power and position in the world. People who were despised because they were poor

or their bodies were impaired are also precious lives God has made. People choose whom to invite on the standard of the ability to repay and social influence, but Jesus said to look first to those who cannot repay.

The word that they have nothing with which to repay does not mean either that their personhood or worth is lacking. It means that they are in no position to hold a feast of the same scale for the one who invited them or to repay with social benefit. Precisely for that reason, in entertaining them there is less room for worldly calculation to enter. The one who entertains must serve, looking at the need of the other person without expecting anything in return.

This word is a command to actually look after neighbors who are physically poor and weak, and it is also connected with the parable of the great supper that follows. Just as one entertains those who have nothing with which to repay in the world, God calls to the feast of the gospel sinners who have no righteousness and merit of their own and cannot repay the price of salvation.

A person cannot pay the price of sin or buy eternal life by his own good deeds and religious acts. The person who admits his own lack and sinfulness and knows that he has no hope apart from God comes to seek the grace of salvation the Lord bestows. God seeks sinners who are poor in body and heart and saves them with the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Therefore the believer needs both kinds of service, spiritual and physical. He must look after the actual needs of the poor and those whose bodies are impaired, and he must preach the gospel of life to those who have lost their way because of sin and long for salvation.

Jesus said, *"And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you."* The person who serves those who cannot repay may not be repaid by people immediately. No one may acknowledge

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him, and he may not hear even a word of thanks. But God knows all the service and the labor of love that people do not see.

God, who repays at the resurrection of the just

Jesus said that the repayment would be *"at the resurrection of the just."* This means that present profit and the praise of people are not the final reward of faith. Even if they receive no reward at all in this world, God will not forget the love and service that came from their faith when He raises the righteous in the future.

A righteous person is not a person who has become righteous by piling up many good deeds, but a person who has received the remission of sins by believing the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ accomplished. He does not serve those who cannot repay in order to be saved. He serves his neighbors because he has first received the grace of God that cannot be repaid. The grace of salvation comes first, and the act of love is the fruit that appears from that faith.

Before the event of the text, Jesus had already received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, at the Jordan River. By receiving that baptism Jesus took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body. At the time of the text He was going the way of carrying those sins, to be hung on the Cross in the future and shed His blood and die, receiving the judgment of sin in our place, and to rise from the dead and complete salvation.

A sinner receives the remission of all his sins once and for all by believing in the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, accomplished by the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection. A person

cannot repay this price of salvation received from God. The weight of the sins Jesus took upon Himself and the judgment He received on the Cross cannot be compensated by human service, offerings, and charity.

Salvation is grace for which Jesus paid the price and which He gives freely to sinners. The believer does not put forward his own merit but accepts the righteousness Jesus completed. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God.

Therefore service after salvation, too, must be not a means for boasting of one's own righteousness but the fruit of faith that appears out of thankfulness for the grace already received. Jesus first came and bestowed salvation when the sinner could repay nothing to God. The saved believer remembers the fact that he has received such mercy, and does not love only those who are useful to him.

We must help with the needs of the flesh and preach the gospel

The church, too, must not give special treatment only to influential people and those who can give large offerings. It must respect equally those who are economically hard-pressed, whose bodies are impaired, and who have few social relationships. The church must also see to it that no one is excluded from its meals and gatherings, its education and its environment of worship because of disability or poverty.

Helping people in difficulty must not be used as a means of boasting of the name of the church or of one's personal good deeds either. If one carelessly exposes the person who received

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help, or expects that person to thank and praise one publicly, the center of mercy is blurred. A believer must respect the dignity and circumstances of the other person and give quiet and practical help.

Material help and the preaching of the gospel must not be seen as things opposed to each other either. Providing food to the hungry, caring for the sick, and helping with the needs of those whose lives are hard are practical expressions of love. At the same time, since the most fundamental problem of human beings is the sin of the heart and the judgment of God, the gospel accomplished by the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection must also be clearly preached.

A believer helps with the actual needs of neighbors in difficulty without demanding any price, and preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit with a heart that loves their souls.

A believer must not treat the other person as someone lower than himself while giving help either. This is because he himself was also a sinner who could repay nothing before God and was saved only by grace. Both the one who helps and the one who receives help are beings who need the grace of God. Today I may be able to help someone, but at another time I may have to receive the help of others.

When one receives no thanks or repayment at all from people, hurt feelings may arise. At that time the believer must examine whose praise he was looking to as he served. If being recognized by people was the purpose, one becomes discouraged or angry when there is no thanks. But if one served out of thankfulness for the grace of God, one can believe that God knows that labor even if the response of people is lacking.

God remembers and repays the labor of faith and love of the saints at the resurrection of the just. That reward is not wages that buy salvation, but the praise of God the Father, who takes

pleasure in the service of the children saved by grace.

With the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection, Jesus saved sinners who could repay nothing. The person who has received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit by believing this gospel of the water and the Spirit serves poor, weak, and marginalized neighbors out of thankfulness for the mercy of God he first received. Looking not to the repayment he will receive from people but to God, who will remember all the labor of faith at the resurrection of the just, he loves the gospel and his neighbors.

Take part in the prepared feast of salvation

"Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, 'Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!' Then He said to him, 'A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, "Come, for all things are now ready." But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused." And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused." Still another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind." And the servant said, "Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room." Then the master said to the servant, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my

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house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper."'" (Luke 14:15–24).

Earlier Jesus had said that when giving a feast, one should not invite only those who can repay, but invite the poor and those whose bodies are impaired. He said that because they cannot entertain the one who invited them in return and repay him, God would repay the entertaining of them at the resurrection of the just. One of those who heard this word said, *"Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"*

As he said, the person who enters the kingdom of God and takes part in the feast of that kingdom is a blessed person. But saying that the kingdom of God is blessed is different from actually accepting the invitation of salvation God has prepared. What matters is not to remain at acknowledging the blessing of heaven only in words, but to believe the prepared gospel in the heart and take part in that feast.

"Come, for all things are now ready"

A certain man in the parable of Jesus gave a great supper and invited many people. This supper shows the grace of salvation God has prepared for sinners and the joy of the kingdom of God. The host of the supper points to God, who prepares salvation and calls people, and the servant who is sent shows the mission of delivering the news of the prepared salvation.

When supper time came, the host sent his servant to those who had been invited first, saying, *"Come, for all things are now ready."* He did not say that the invited people had to come and pay the cost or prepare the food. Everything needed for holding the supper had been prepared by the host. What the invited people needed was to believe the word of the host and come to

the supper.

This word clearly shows the character of the salvation God bestows. It is not the sinner who prepares the feast of salvation by his own deeds and merit. A sinner can neither wash away his own sins by himself nor pay the price of sin and make himself qualified to enter the kingdom of God. God prepared and completed salvation for sinners, and the sinner receives it by believing the word of that grace.

At the time Jesus told this parable, it was already after He had received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. The sinless Jesus took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. At the time of the text, Jesus was going the way of carrying the sins He had taken upon Himself with His baptism, to be hung on the Cross in the future and shed His blood and die, and to rise from the dead and complete salvation.

Seen in the light of the completed gospel, the word *"all things are now ready"* makes us look to the salvation Jesus accomplished. Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself with His baptism, received all the punishment and judgment of those sins with the blood and death of the Cross, and rose from the dead and overcame sin and death. There is no sacrifice of atonement that must be added in order to save sinners. Jesus perfectly accomplished all the work of salvation.

Now what the sinner must do is to eat by faith the bread of life and salvation the Lord has prepared. If one believes in the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection, one receives the remission of all one's sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a righteous person of God.

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Those who refused the supper with the excuse of worldly affairs

But those who were invited first all alike made excuses. The first man said that he had bought a piece of ground and so had to go and see it, and the second said that he had bought five yoke of oxen and so had to go and test them. The third man said that he could not come because he had married. They all put their own affairs before the supper.

The field and the oxen represent the business and material affairs of the world, and the marriage shows matters related to the life of the flesh. God prepared the feast of the kingdom of heaven and called them in order to give the remission of sins and eternal life, but these people put the affairs of the world and the problems of the flesh before salvation and refused the invitation.

These people did not quarrel with the host or openly mock the invitation. Two of them said politely, *"I ask you to have me excused."* But the polite expression did not change the fact that they had refused the invitation. Today, too, a person can put off the gospel without publicly opposing God, saying, "I am still busy," "I will believe a little later," or "I will think about it when my life is settled." But even a courteous refusal is in the end unbelief that does not accept the invitation of salvation.

The master of the house was angry when he heard that all the invited people had made excuses. The anger of the master was not merely a feeling that arose because the cost that had gone into preparing the supper was wasted. It was a solemn response to the unbelief that took the prepared grace lightly and refused the invitation of the master. God has prepared perfect salvation in order to save sinners, but if a person despises that grace and refuses it to the end, he cannot escape judgment.

Compel the poor in spirit to come in

The master commanded his servant to go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and the maimed and the blind and the lame. These people show the sinners who have nothing to boast of or to repay in the world, and who know that before God, too, they cannot be saved by their own righteousness and merit.

These people can be understood as the poor in spirit who know their own lack and sinfulness. A sinner has no righteousness and merit to repay to God. He cannot keep the Law perfectly, nor can he pay the price for his own sin with good deeds, service, and repeated prayers of repentance. The person who admits that he has no ability to bring about salvation for himself accepts with thankfulness the gospel God has prepared freely.

On the other hand, the person who relies on his own deeds and religious career may think that he is already sufficient even while receiving the invitation of God. He may judge and reject the word of the gospel on the grounds that he knows much of the Bible, has attended church for a long time, and has done much service. But one's own righteousness cannot pay the price of the feast of the kingdom of God. A person must lay down his own righteousness and believe the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished.

When there was still room even after people had been brought in from the streets and lanes of the city, the master said to go out again into the highways and hedges and bring people in. A worker of the gospel must actively seek out the souls who are not satisfied with the things of the world, who have wounds and pain in their hearts, and who realize their own sin and destruction and seek the kingdom of God. He must preach to

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them the gospel that the feast of salvation has been prepared.

The word to *"compel them to come in, that my house may be filled"* means not to urge once or twice and then give up, but to invite again and again until the soul hears the word of God. One must teach what kind of sinner that person is before God and why he needs salvation, and let him hear the gospel that all his sins have disappeared through the baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection. Evangelism is the work of continually urging with love and patience so that a lost soul may hear the word and receive the remission of sins.

The master wanted his house to be filled. God wants the souls who know their own sin and inability and seek the grace of salvation to hear the gospel and take part in the feast of the kingdom of heaven. The person who accepts the invitation takes part in the feast, but the person who refuses it, putting the affairs of the world first, never tastes the feast.

Those who refuse the invitation of salvation do not taste the feast

The word *"none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper"* teaches the fact that the result of refusing the invitation of the gospel is solemn. The invitation of the kingdom of God is not a word to be heard lightly and put off indefinitely. A person cannot know how long he will be able to hear the gospel, and after death or the final judgment he cannot ask for another chance after settling the affairs of the world.

To take part in the feast does not mean only entering a church building or attending a meeting. Even if one has heard sermons in the church and taken part in various religious activities, if one has not believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart,

one has not tasted the feast of salvation. On the other hand, the person who hears the gospel and believes the fact that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself, was judged, and rose again receives the remission of all his sins and takes part in the life and joy of the kingdom of God.

Eating bread at the feast of the kingdom of God makes us think of receiving and enjoying by faith the salvation God has prepared. A person must not remain at looking at the gospel from outside and analyzing it. Just as food does not become life by merely being looked at but must be eaten, the gospel, too, must not be merely known as knowledge but believed in the heart.

We must believe the fact that all our sins were passed on to Jesus through the baptism He received from John, that Jesus received all the judgment by carrying those sins and shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and that He rose from the dead and gave us eternal life. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, not by his own deeds but by the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished. This is eating and enjoying by faith the feast of salvation God has prepared.

For the saved person, the field, the oxen, and his own household can no longer be the master of his heart. While carrying out by faith the life God has entrusted to him, he lives treasuring the gospel and the kingdom of God most of all.

Also, remembering that he, too, was invited to the feast of the kingdom of heaven without any merit, he seeks out poor, weak, and wounded souls. He looks after their actual needs and serves them sincerely so that they may realize what kind of sinners they are before God and believe the prepared gospel.

Also, the church must not change the content of the feast in order to gather many people. If it hides the word about sin and

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judgment, leaves out the baptism of Jesus and speaks only of the Cross, and draws people in with worldly success and blessing, it is not delivering the feast God has prepared. It must clearly preach the fact that a sinner must abandon his own righteousness and believe the righteousness of God completed by the baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection.

Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, received all the judgment of those sins with the blood and death of the Cross, and rose from the dead and prepared everything of salvation. A sinner must not put forward his own merit, but must believe in the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has already prepared and receive the remission of all his sins.

Therefore we must not put the invitation of salvation behind the affairs of the world. We must believe the prepared gospel in the heart now and take part in the feast of the kingdom of heaven. The person who has already received the remission of sins must keep seeking out the family and neighbors who have not yet taken part in the feast and preach the gospel to them, and in particular must earnestly urge who are poor in spirit, who have realized their sin and lack and seek salvation, and lead them to the church of God and the feast of grace.

The saved disciple follows the Lord

"Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first

and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. 'Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'" (Luke 14:25–35).

Earlier Jesus had spoken about the people who, though invited to the great supper, refused the invitation with the excuses of a field, oxen, and marriage. Buying a field, testing oxen, and marrying were not sins in themselves, but they put what they possessed and enjoyed before the invitation of God. In the text that follows, great multitudes were going along the way with Jesus. Jesus said that simply walking in the same direction as Him and truly becoming His disciple and following Him are different.

Throughout the Gospel of Luke, many people came to Jesus to hear His word or to see miracles and healings. But not everyone who walked with Jesus was a disciple who believed and obeyed His word. Jesus did not speak only the words they liked to hear, satisfied with the fact that many people had gathered. He revealed without concealment what a person who wants to be a disciple must treasure most.

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There is nothing more precious than the Lord

When Jesus said to hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even one's own life, He meant to choose the Lord even when family and life stand in the way of following the Lord. One must treasure the Lord more than parents, spouse, children, brothers and sisters, and one's own life. The person who will believe and follow the word of the Lord even if he comes to lose everything can become a disciple of the Lord.

A disciple does not abandon the Lord even if, because of believing in and following the Lord, he meets the opposition of his family and the hatred of the world, the loss of property and honor, and threats to his life. This is because he believes that the Lord is the One who gives life, eternal life, and every blessing. If one loses the Lord one loses everything, but if one believes in and follows the Lord one obtains eternal life and comes to enjoy what is true.

To bear one's cross is to accept the hardships and sacrifices one meets while following the Lord, to deny one's own thoughts, desires, and stubbornness, and to obey the word. To serve the gospel, there are times when one must endure the misunderstanding and opposition of people and give up one's own interests and preferences. The person who believes and follows the command of the Lord even while paying such a price is a disciple of the Lord.

At the time of the text, Jesus had already received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. The sinless Son of God took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. And carrying those sins, He was walking the way of going to Jerusalem in the future to be hung on the Cross and shed His blood and die, and to rise from the

dead and overcome sin and death.

After that, Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself with His baptism, received all the punishment and judgment of those sins with the blood and death of the Cross, and rose from the dead and completed salvation. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, not by the merit of his own deeds but by the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished.

The Cross Jesus bore is the Cross of atonement on which He took all the sins of the world upon Himself and was judged. Salvation is received only by believing the baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection. Because the saint who has received the remission of sins believes the grace of the Lord who saved him, he denies his own thoughts, bears the cross given to him, and follows the Lord.

The person who has truly believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit knows how great the grace is by which Jesus took all sins upon Himself and was judged for him. Therefore, even when he stumbles and falls short, he does not justify his own desires, but turns back before the word and follows the Lord again.

Abandon your own strength and follow the Lord by faith

Jesus told the parable of a man who intends to build a tower. The man who intends to build a tower must first sit down and count the cost, whether he can finish the construction with what he has. If he begins the construction without any calculation and stops after laying only the foundation, he is mocked by people.

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This parable teaches the fact that becoming a disciple of the Lord must not be begun with momentary emotion or light zeal.

When a person calculates whether he can follow the Lord to the end with the talents, will, and wealth he has, he reaches the conclusion that his own strength is insufficient. Therefore he must not trust his own ability and resolution, but believe in the Lord, who saves him, holds him, and leads him. When he lays down everything of his own, asks the Lord for help, and follows by faith, he can walk the way of a disciple.

In the parable of the two kings that follows, too, one king first considers whether he can meet with ten thousand the opponent coming with twenty thousand. If he cannot win, he must send a delegation and ask for conditions of peace while the opponent is still a great way off. This is because starting a war out of reckless pride plunges himself and his people into destruction.

This parable teaches us not to try to oppose the Lord with our own thoughts and strength, but to surrender early and believe the word of the Lord. A person can neither overcome sin nor accomplish the will of the Lord by his own righteousness and ability. He must admit his own lack, entrust himself to the Lord, and follow with the faith that says, "I cannot, but the Lord saves me and leads me."

Forsake all that you have and keep the truth and the mission of the gospel

Jesus said, *"Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."* Here what one has does not refer only to property. It includes everything one puts before the Lord: one's own righteousness and stubbornness, knowledge and

ability, honor and plans, attachment to family, and even ownership of one's own life. A person must treasure the Lord more than everything he regards as belonging to him.

To forsake all that one has is to empty oneself of one's own righteousness and excellence, one's thoughts, plans, and stubbornness, and to give the throne of the heart to the Lord. One must lay down the thought, "I will use my time, wealth, and talents as I please," and if it is the work the Lord wants, use everything entrusted to one for the gospel.

Today people easily put the expectations of family, career success, property and stability, social recognition, and their own safety before the Lord. If one tries to obey only when believing in and following the gospel does not interfere with one's own plans, in the end one becomes one's own master. A believer must make the priorities of his heart clear so that, without neglecting family, work, and property, they do not become idols that make him disobey the word of God.

Finally, Jesus told the parable of salt. Salt is useful for giving flavor to food and preventing decay. But if salt loses its flavor, it is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill and is thrown out. This solemnly reminds us of what role a disciple of the Lord must play in the world.

The person who has received the remission of sins by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit is a person who keeps the truth of the gospel and delivers it to the world. In his own life, too, he must show not his own righteousness but the righteousness of Jesus, and reveal the truth and love of the gospel through his life in the midst of a corrupt world. But if he hides or compromises the truth of the gospel in order to gain the recognition and desires of the world, he loses his distinct flavor and usefulness as a disciple.

Salt that has lost its flavor warns the saint who, even after

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receiving the remission of sins, holds on to his own thoughts and desires and refuses to believe, follow, and obey the Lord. Even a saved person, if he abandons the mission of the gospel and insists only on his own will, cannot be used in the work of the kingdom of God. A saint must want to suffer with the Lord and be glorified with Him, keep the truth and the mission of the gospel, and obey the command of the Lord.

The final word, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* is a request not to let this teaching pass as mere information. Even if one thinks that one already knows much and is close to Jesus, one must examine what one actually treasures most and whose will one lives by. One must not be satisfied with being mixed in among the great multitude, but become a disciple who believes and follows the word of Jesus.

Luke chapter 14 verses 25–35 teach us not to put family and our own lives before the Lord, to bear our cross even in the midst of hardship, and to forsake our own righteousness and all that we have and follow the Lord by faith. We must admit that we cannot go this way by our own strength, believe the help of the Lord, and serve the mission of the gospel.

Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins with the blood and death of the Cross, and rose from the dead and accomplished perfect salvation. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit. Believing the grace of the Lord who saved him, he treasures the Lord most, above family, work, property, and his own safety, uses everything entrusted to him for the gospel, and bears his cross with the help of the Holy Spirit and follows the Lord. ✉

Questions and Answers on Luke Chapter 14

[Question] 1. What teachings of Jesus are recorded in Luke chapter 14?

In Luke chapter 14 are recorded the true meaning of the Sabbath, the humility that humbles oneself, the love that serves those who cannot repay, the faith that responds to the great supper of the kingdom of God, the life of a disciple who forsakes all that he has and follows Jesus, and the lesson not to lose the flavor and the mission of salt.

First, Jesus healed a man who had dropsy in the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees. The lawyers and Pharisees watched Jesus closely, but Jesus asked whether, if **a donkey or an ox** fell into **a pit**, they would not pull it out even on the Sabbath, and showed that the work of giving life to a suffering person does not go against the meaning of the Sabbath.

"And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?' But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go. Then He answered them, saying, 'Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?' And they could not answer Him regarding these things" (Luke 14:3–6).

Next He told those who chose the high places at a feast to humble themselves. Before God, it is not the person who exalts his own righteousness and honor, but the person who knows his own lack and seeks grace, who is exalted.

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"For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'" (Luke 14:11).

Jesus said not to entertain only those who can repay, but to invite the poor and those whose bodies are impaired, who have nothing with which to repay. This is a lesson not to calculate the repayment of people, but to share practical help and the gospel according to the love God bestowed on sinners who had no merit.

In the parable of the great supper, the host prepared everything and called people, but those invited first declined for the reasons of a field, oxen, and marriage. Then the host had the people of the streets and lanes, the highways and hedges called in to fill his house. The feast of the kingdom of heaven is the feast of salvation God has prepared, and if one refuses the invitation, putting one's own righteousness and the affairs of the world first, one cannot take part in it.

"Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'" (Luke 14:23–24).

Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and accomplished everything needed for salvation by rising from the dead. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and takes part in the feast of the kingdom of God.

Finally, Jesus said that to become a disciple, one must not put family and even one's own life before the Lord, must bear one's cross, and must forsake all that one has. This is a word that one must not make one's own thoughts and desires, property, relationships, and plans one's master, but must follow the will of Jesus even if there is actual loss and sacrifice.

"So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has

cannot be My disciple. 'Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'" (Luke 14:33–35).

Therefore Luke chapter 14 teaches us to accept by faith the invitation of salvation God has entirely prepared, and after being saved, to humble ourselves, to serve those who cannot repay, and to treasure Jesus most and follow Him to the end. A disciple is not a person who buys salvation with a price, but a person who, thankful for the grace received, obeys the will of the Lord and shows the flavor of the gospel in the world.

[Question] 2. In Luke chapter 14 verse 1, for what purpose did one of the rulers of the Pharisees invite Jesus to his house on the Sabbath?

Judging from the circumstances of the text, one of the rulers of the Pharisees invited Jesus to a place for watching how Jesus would act on the Sabbath, rather than to serve and learn from Him sincerely. The Gospel of Luke records that the lawyers and Pharisees gathered in that house were watching Jesus closely.

"Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely" (Luke 14:1).

There was a man who had dropsy there. Jesus asked whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath, and when they kept silent, He healed the sick man and let him go. Then He asked whether, if a donkey or an ox fell into a pit, they would not immediately pull it out even on the Sabbath, but they could not answer.

"And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and

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Pharisees, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?' But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go. Then He answered them, saying, 'Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?' And they could not answer Him regarding these things" (Luke 14:2–6).

While they would rescue their own animal even on the Sabbath if it fell into danger, they tried to condemn Jesus, who healed a suffering person. Through this question Jesus exposed their contradiction of holding on to the form of the Sabbath while turning away from its meaning of compassion and life.

Another Sabbath event in the Gospel of Luke shows more directly the purpose for which the religious leaders watched Jesus closely.

"So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him" (Luke 6:7).

Therefore this invitation was not a simple invitation to a meal, but was connected with hostile surveillance seeking grounds for accusation in the actions of Jesus. But Jesus was not shaken by their gaze, and had compassion on the sick man and healed him.

The Pharisees knew the Scriptures, but they did not examine themselves by the word; they used it to condemn others. We, too, must not make the word a tool for self-justification or for catching faults, but must first examine our own hardness and bestow compassion on those who suffer.

Jesus did not leave sinners under condemnation, but gave true rest and life with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We must accept the salvation Jesus accomplished not with an attitude of testing it, but with an attitude of believing and following the written word in the heart.

[Question] 3. In Luke chapter 14 verse 12, why did Jesus say not to invite friends, brothers, relatives, or rich neighbors when giving a feast?

The reason Jesus said not to invite only friends, brothers, relatives, or rich neighbors is that they can invite one again and repay the entertainment. Jesus taught us not to entertain in expectation of repayment and benefit, but to bestow love on those who have nothing with which to repay.

"Then He also said to him who invited Him, 'When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid" (Luke 14:12).

This word did not forbid eating together with family or friends. It means to abandon the calculating heart that chooses to serve only those who can return help and honor to oneself. Entertainment given in hope of a reward from people can end with receiving that repayment.

Jesus said rather to invite the poor and those whose bodies were impaired, who were marginalized in the society of that time and could hardly repay a feast.

"But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:13–14).

This word teaches both spiritual and physical service together. We must share the food and help that are actually needed, and give the feast of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven to those who realize their sin and lack and seek the grace of God. Even if they cannot repay what they have received from us, God repays that labor at the resurrection of the just.

This service is not merit that buys salvation and reward.

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Jesus received baptism from John and took sin upon Himself, was judged on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. The person who has received the remission of sins by believing this gospel of the water and the Spirit serves others out of thankfulness for the love received.

Since God is kind even to those who are unthankful, a saint must not love only those who are useful to him.

"But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil" (Luke 6:35).

Therefore the church, too, must not treasure people with property and position more, or neglect the poor and weak. Without calculating the repayment of people, it must look after actual needs and serve with love so that anyone may hear and believe the gospel God has prepared.

[Question] 4. In Luke chapter 14 verses 18–20, what reasons did the people give for refusing the invitation to the host's supper?

The people refused the invitation to the host's supper, giving the reasons that one had bought a field and so had to go and see it, that one had bought five yoke of oxen and so had to go and test them, and that one had married and so could not come.

"And sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.'

Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'" (Luke 14:17–20).

Buying a field, procuring what is needed for one's livelihood, and marrying and forming a family are not sins in themselves. The problem lies in their regarding property, business, and family life as more important than the invitation of the host and refusing the call to come to the supper that had already been prepared.

The circumstances of the three men were different, but they all alike declined. Even though they politely asked to be excused or gave plausible reasons, the fact that they chose their own plans over the invitation of the host was the same.

In this parable the great supper is the feast of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven that God has prepared. The word that all things are ready does not mean that a sinner must add his own merit or deeds for salvation, but that Jesus has accomplished everything needed for the remission of sins.

Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and opened the way to enter the kingdom of God by rising from the dead. What a person needs is not to think about the gospel after finishing all his own affairs, but to accept the gospel of the water and the Spirit by faith when he hears it.

"For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'" (Luke 14:24).

The reason they did not taste the supper was not that the host had not prepared it or had not invited them. It was that they refused the invitation, putting their own possessions, livelihood, and family first. We, too, must not put it off, saying that we will believe after our circumstances improve, but must believe the gospel now, when God calls.

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[Question] 5. In Luke chapter 14 verse 23, what did the host command his servant to do in order to fill the remaining room?

The host commanded his servant to go out into the highways and hedges and compel people to come in and fill his house. When those invited first refused the supper, he had the people in the streets and lanes of the city brought in, and when there was still room, he widened the invitation even to those farther away.

"So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled" (Luke 14:21–23).

The poor and those whose bodies were impaired had no ability to repay the supper, and may themselves have thought that they were not qualified to be invited. But the host, without regard to their property and status, told the servant to call them and fill his house. This shows that the invitation of the kingdom of God is not bound to one's own righteousness and the conditions of the world.

The people of the highways and hedges refer to those who know their own sin and lack and need the word of salvation. The servant had to seek them out and make clearly known to them the fact that God had really prepared the feast and was calling them.

The command to compel them to come in means not to stop at announcing the news once, but to urge them sincerely and earnestly to come in because the feast is prepared. One must not give up easily because of the other person's circumstances and

distance, but must clearly preach the word so that he can understand the gospel and believe.

In the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew, too, the servants brought to the feast the people they met on the highways.

"Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests" (Matthew 22:9–10).

The great supper is the feast of salvation Jesus prepared with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. No one comes in by paying his own price; one receives by faith the salvation Jesus completed by taking sin upon Himself, being judged, and rising from the dead.

Therefore a saint must not seek only familiar and comfortable people, but must also go to those who are poor, sick, and marginalized and feel that there is a high barrier to entering the church. He must not see them as a means of filling numbers, but look after their actual needs and preach the gospel God has prepared with love and patience.

The word to fill the host's house shows together the wide will of God toward the souls who need salvation and the responsibility of the saint entrusted with that invitation. We must preach the gospel even to those far away and earnestly urge them to take part in the feast by faith.

[Question] 6. In Luke chapter 14 verse 24, can those who were invited first and yet refused take part in the host's supper?

Those who were invited first and yet refused to the end

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cannot take part in the host's supper. Jesus said that not one of them would taste the host's supper.

"And sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'" (Luke 14:17–20).

They were not people who did not know that there was a supper. They had already been invited, and when supper time came they even heard the news that all things were ready. But putting the field, the oxen, and the marriage first, they all declined.

Managing property and looking after one's livelihood and family are necessary, but if one puts all these before the invitation of the host, they become excuses for refusing the supper. Polite words and plausible circumstances cannot take the place of the faith that actually responds to the invitation.

When those invited first refused, the host called other people and filled the empty places. The supper was not canceled, and the people who could not put forward their own righteousness and qualifications were invited and took part.

"For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'" (Luke 14:24).

This conclusion is a solemn warning not to take lightly the invitation of God to salvation. Jesus received baptism from John and took the sin of the world upon Himself, was judged on the Cross, and prepared everything needed for salvation by rising from the dead.

The fact of having been invited first, the experience of

having attended church for a long time, or Bible knowledge and office do not guarantee taking part in the feast. One must respond to the invitation of God by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart.

Therefore one must not put it off, saying that one will believe after the affairs of the world are settled. Now, when God has prepared everything and calls, one must lay down one's own thoughts and excuses, believe the gospel, and take part in the joy of the kingdom of God.

[Question] 7. In Luke chapter 14 verse 33, concluding the two preceding parables, what kind of person did Jesus say cannot be His disciple?

Jesus said that the person who does not forsake all that he has cannot be His disciple. If one holds on to one's rights over property, relationships, plans, thoughts, and desires to the end, and puts them before Jesus, one cannot follow the way of the Lord to the end.

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'" (Luke 14:28–30).

The man who intends to build a tower must first consider whether he has enough funds to finish the construction. If he lays only the foundation without thinking sufficiently and cannot complete it, he is mocked by people. Becoming a disciple of Jesus, too, is not something to begin on momentary emotion; one must count the cost that will accompany following the Lord.

"Or what king, going to make war against another king, does

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not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace" (Luke 14:31–32).

The king who has ten thousand calculates whether he can fight and win against the opponent coming with twenty thousand, and if he cannot cope, he must seek peace while the opponent is far away. This parable shows that one must not be confident that one can become a disciple of the Lord by one's own strength and will, but must admit one's limits and entrust oneself to the Lord.

The conclusion of the two parables is clear.

"So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33).

All that one has includes not only property but also time and ability, honor and position, family and human relationships, future plans and one's own thoughts. To forsake what one has is not to hold on to these things only for oneself, but to place them under the will of the Lord.

This word does not limit discipleship to a resolution of the heart only. On the way of following Jesus there can be actual loss and labor, the misunderstanding and opposition of people, and there are times when one must lay down time, possessions, and one's own plans in order to serve the gospel. A disciple must be ready to actually sacrifice and obey when necessary.

But the amount of possessions forsaken or the size of the sacrifice is not the price that buys salvation. Jesus received baptism from John and took sin upon Himself, was judged on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. A person receives the remission of sins by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and follows the Lord out of thankfulness for the grace received.

A true disciple does not make Jesus a means of achieving his own purposes, but believes in Him as the master of his life. When his own benefit and the will of the Lord conflict, he lays down his own desires, obeys the written word, and uses what is his for the gospel and souls.

Therefore the person who does not forsake all that he has and puts his own rights and plans before Jesus cannot be a disciple of the Lord. A disciple is a person who does not rely on his own strength and possessions, but treasures Jesus most, places everything under His will, and follows Him to the end.

[Question] 8. In Luke chapter 14 verse 34, in order to understand this parable, for what purposes did the Jews of that time use salt?

The Jews of that time used salt as a material of daily life for flavoring and preserving food, and they also put it on the offerings offered to God. The Bible also uses salt as an expression representing an unchanging covenant. Luke chapter 14 shows that salt was also used in connection with the land and the dunghill.

"Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Luke 14:34–35).

Salt was first used for giving flavor to food. Job speaks of the flavorlessness of food without salt.

"Can flavorless food be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" (Job 6:6).

Salt was also an important material of daily life for keeping foods such as meat and fish for a long time. But the purpose for

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which Jesus spoke the parable of salt lay not in teaching its uses in daily life in detail, but in showing the fact that salt plays its role only when it has flavor and effect.

Under the Law, all grain offerings and gifts were seasoned with salt and offered to God.

"And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt" (Leviticus 2:13).

Salt was a material actually used in the offerings offered to God, and at the same time it became a sign representing an unchanging covenant.

"All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD with you and your descendants with you" (Numbers 18:19).

The immediate context of Luke chapter 14 is the cost of discipleship. Right after saying that one cannot be a disciple unless one forsakes all that one has, Jesus spoke the word about salt. A disciple must not have only the name, but must have the flavor of faith and obedience that treasures Jesus most and follows the word.

The person who believes the salvation Jesus completed by receiving baptism from John and taking sin upon Himself, being judged on the Cross, and rising from the dead carries out the mission of salt out of thankfulness for the grace received. Without compromising the truth, he must serve his neighbors and preach the gospel with humility and love.

Therefore the Jews of that time used salt for food and preservation, put it on offerings, and also understood it as a word representing an unchanging covenant. Taking this familiar

function of salt, Jesus taught that a disciple must not lose the flavor of faith and obedience.

[Question] 9. In Luke chapter 14 verses 34–35, what becomes of salt that has lost its flavor?

Salt that has lost its flavor cannot be made salty again, and being fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill, it is thrown out. Even if the name and the shape of salt remain, if it loses its distinctive flavor and effect, it cannot play its original role.

"Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Luke 14:34–35).

The immediate context in which Jesus spoke this parable is the way of becoming a disciple. Earlier He said that one cannot be a disciple unless one puts the Lord before family and one's own life, bears one's cross, and forsakes all that one has.

Salt is valuable not because of its name but because of its salty taste and function. Likewise, a person does not accomplish the will of the Lord merely by calling himself a disciple or a Christian. If one puts property, honor, and one's own plans before Jesus and has no actual obedience to the word, one cannot carry out the mission of a disciple.

The parallel word in Matthew also clearly shows the result of salt that has lost its flavor.

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men" (Matthew 5:13).

The result of salt being thrown out is a solemn warning not to lose faith and mission as a disciple of the Lord. If one

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disregards the word of the Lord and treasures one's own possessions and desires more, one departs from the way of a disciple and is thrown out like salt that has lost its flavor.

A disciple who has flavor does not follow the desires of the world as they are, but holds on to the written word as the truth. He lives honestly and faithfully in the home, the workplace, and the church, serves his neighbors with love, and delivers the news of the salvation Jesus accomplished.

This life is not an effort to obtain salvation by good deeds and sacrifice. It is the fruit of faith borne with thankfulness by the person who has been saved by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed by receiving baptism from John and taking the sin of the world upon Himself, being judged on the Cross, and rising from the dead.

Therefore salt that has lost its flavor is good for nothing and is thrown out. We must not leave only the name of disciple, but treasure Jesus most, lay down our own desires, and show the flavor of the gospel, of love, and of obedience to the end. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

He who humbles himself will be exalted

< Luke 14:7-11 >

"So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: 'When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, "Give place to this man," and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, "Friend, go up higher." Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'"

On this first day of the meeting I have read the word of Luke chapter 14 verses 7 to 11. This word says that he who humbles himself before God will be exalted, and he who exalts himself will be humbled. To put it in a word, that is what it is. Seeing the invited people each choose the best place, Jesus spoke to them in a parable.

He said that when you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, you should not sit down in the best place. Otherwise, He said, when one more honorable than you has been invited, he who invited you and him will come and say to you to give place

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to this man, and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. So He said that when you are invited, you should rather go and sit down in the lowest place. Then, He said, he who invited you will come and say, “Friend, go up higher,” and only then will you have glory in the presence of all who sit at the table with you.

When people are invited to a wedding feast, each tries to choose a high place. In people there is a heart that wants to pick out the best place and sit in it by themselves. But the Lord said not to choose the best place by oneself. He said that when you are invited to a feast, you should take the invitation card, go, and rather sit in the lowest place. Then the host will come and ask you not to stay sitting there but to come up higher. It is a word to go up and sit in the high place at that time, according to the will of the host. He was telling us not to try to take the high place first as we please.

This word is not a mere exhortation to show a humble attitude. This word is a truly important word. It is a word that teaches what kind of heart we must have when we are invited before the Lord, that is, when we are called before God and first believe in Jesus. It is a word that makes clear what attitude of heart a person invited before God must have. What did the Lord say? He said that when you are invited, you should rather go and sit down in the lowest place.

It is a word that when we are invited before the Lord, we should know our own state and know our own position. So it is a word to go and sit in the place where we ought to sit. And it is a word to be exalted at the time when we receive the pity of the Lord and the Lord exalts us. Whenever I look at this word, my appearance in the old days and now comes to mind together. Even now, when I stand before God and think, there is truly much that I lack.

Is there anyone who has something to put forward before the Lord?

However busy I have been, when I bow down to pray before the Lord, I groan for a long while. It is because there are many things weighing on my heart. Yet I have never told the Lord that I was sorry about the times I spoke carelessly. I do not mean that I think I did well. I only mean that I have so much more that is lacking than that, that even to say, "While calling myself Your servant, I have blackened Your name," falls short.

When I try to go before the Lord to pray and ask, what I see first is myself bound up in work. Whatever it is, it must be done by faith, but once I take on a task, I must see it through to the end. I must keep others from having a hard time, and whether one is capable or not, one must get the work entrusted to oneself done. When I hold on to the work entrusted to me to the end, there are times when I get irritated and my shortcomings are exposed. And sometimes my heart becomes a mess.

Living like that, I come to ask myself whether I am doing things properly before the Lord. It is not that I do so out of doubt. Since no one knows what will happen in the future, I must prepare for that, and if the world becomes hard, we become hard-pressed too, so I come to think about what we will serve the gospel with at that time. Can it be done with the heart alone? Can we serve the Lord with zeal alone? Since we must live in spirit and in flesh together, what must be prepared must clearly be prepared. Even if we do not prepare in advance, the Lord will accomplish it, but the Lord gives us the thought and makes us prepare.

Since running a business is not simple, there are many times when my heart is heavy. Working at a job is relatively simple. You go at the set time, do the work entrusted to you, and receive

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wages for the work you did. But is running a business simple? It is truly not simple. So I respect those who run businesses.

These days my heart has changed whenever I pass in front of a shop. In the old days, passing in front of a department store and looking at the displays, I made light of it, thinking what there was to spend money on in putting up a display. But these days the thoughts that come first are: how much did they pay to get that shop, how much was the key money, how much are those goods worth? If they cannot sell those goods properly, that house collapses. So I respect them. It must be the same for you.

If you make a lot of goods, will they all sell? Making the goods is something almost anyone can do. But selling is the problem. Everyone makes goods in his own way. But selling is not something done by shouting hard. So I respect them, and at times I feel the limits of my strength. When we all pray together, I do ask God to help. But there is hardly ever a time when I pray so earnestly that my insides ache. I simply ask Him to make it go well, since it is work done in order to preach the gospel. And since I have the heart and the faith that God makes it go well, I look ahead to the result. It is just as the word says, that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

But you cannot imagine how hard it is until that work is accomplished by faith. It is work that absolutely must be done. If it goes wrong, we lose all the money. How much time, human labor, and loss would there be? Truly much. So this work must succeed. That is how my heart is.

Living with such a heart, there are times when I do not know whether I am a pastor who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit and preaches the word, or a man working on a construction site. Since I have no strength, I also get irritated. It would be enough to hold on until that work is finished, but if one only works, one gets worn out. Still, one must make a plan, look

ahead to the end, and set up a framework. One must put things in order and establish a system. If we work hard today and the situation turns bad tomorrow, would it not collapse? So whatever it is, we must set up a system and create a flow so that it runs even with our eyes closed. After that, I think about how to sell these goods and how to serve the gospel.

I also think about how all of us will live. Everyone is doing well. Still, with so many thoughts, my body gets tired. But nothing serious has happened. There was also a time when I had trouble because goods made before did not satisfy me.

But what I have said just now is only the story that appears on the outside. But the true worry in my heart lies elsewhere. It is whether, before God, in the old days or now, there is anything in me worth exalting. It is that the state of my heart is not one fit to be exalted before God. The Lord spoke of what a person who comes before God must do with his heart.

As we go before God, as we go before Jesus Christ, are we people fit to raise our hearts and sit in the best place? Is the state of our hearts like that? It is just as one sister said a little while ago. We are shallow, base, and servile, and we have not a single thing to boast of. It is a life in which we are born into the world in vain, must go in vain, and must go miserably, having lived without any reward and with nothing to show. The older we get and the more the years pass, the more we see ourselves becoming more miserable. Do you see such an appearance of yourselves before God? Do you come before the Lord with such a heart? The question is whether, when invited before the Lord, we come with such a heart. Whether when we first believe in the Lord or when we go before the Lord after believing, are we people fit to sit in the best place, or people fit to sit in the lowest place? The Lord spoke of exactly that point.

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We are those who cannot keep even the first commandment, however hard we try to keep the Ten Commandments

Let us look back at our appearance before we were born again, and look at our present appearance as well. What is our appearance when we go before the Lord? We are people who have nothing at all to boast of before God. If there were no word of God and no Jesus Christ, a person would regard himself as having nothing to be ashamed of. He might even say that there is something in him better than others. His heart might be raised higher, and he might regard himself as qualified to sit in the best place. But is it truly so? Is it so before the Lord as well? Are we people qualified to sit in a high place before the Lord?

When we examine ourselves before the Lord, we know from experience that we are worthless. Standing before the word of God, what is there in that written word that we have kept? We keep a little, then break one thing and lose all the rest. Looking at the Ten Commandments, it is so. They begin with the word *"You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3)* and go on to the last word, not to covet. We strive to live purely enough not to serve other gods before God and not to blacken the name of God, and we strive to keep the ordinances too. Then come the commandments to honor your parents, not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal. At times we keep the first commandment, keep the second, and get past the third somehow. Then we come to the fourth commandment, the Sabbath. In religious terms, it is to keep the Lord's Day holy. Does keeping the Lord's Day holy go well? That does not work either.

Since it says to keep the Lord's Day holy, they say that on that day you must not go to the shop to buy things even if a guest comes. I lived my life of faith in a denomination that kept the

Law strictly. It was thoroughgoing legalism. Can a person keep all the Law? He cannot. Then a person collapses. In religious terms, my going before God while keeping the word is my own righteousness. So everyone who is not born again goes before God holding on to his own righteousness.

Going on keeping the Law, in some months one goes well up to the third commandment and then collapses at the fourth. Having gotten safely past the fourth commandment, one sometimes stumbles and collapses before one's parents. One collapses over a matter of the opposite sex, collapses because one's heart is taken by what is visible to the eyes, or collapses while quarreling. So a person's life is like a squirrel running on a wheel. Religious people begin by saying that they will keep the Ten Commandments. Since He says to have no other gods before Him, they tell Him that they will never have other gods. They say that they will do everything that pleases God. They resolve that neither parents nor children nor anything else must be put before God. People are naturally good at keeping the big things. Since the big things look so big, the heart is moved to keep them well.

Coming down the commandments one by one, one arrives at about the fourth commandment. Up to the third commandment, they seem so close to the name of God that one keeps them, if only out of fear. Then, as soon as one passes the third commandment, one slackens from the fourth commandment on. One interprets it as one pleases and attaches plausible reasons. One says, what is wrong with going out to have fun for one day? One says, do we not hold worship morning and evening? I am not saying this about us who are now born again. Before being born again, one is taught that one must keep that day holy. It is right there that one begins to collapse. Today one collapses at the fourth commandment, the day after tomorrow at the fifth,

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and the next day at the sixth. Some set out intending to push on all the way to the eighth commandment and sit down in defeat at the first commandment on the first day. Then they begin again. They tell God that they have done wrong. They do not tell Him only with words; they tell Him from the heart. They actually know that they have no qualification to go before God. They know that they are not people fit to sit in the best place before God. It means they are not people who deserve to be acknowledged that much.

If we supposed that God did not exist and measured ourselves against one another like acorns comparing heights, there would be things each of us is good at, and strengths and weaknesses. But before God, however much one jumps and flies and rolls, there is no one who passes even the first commandment. There is truly nothing to be proud of. Whether one lives sixty years, eighty years, or a hundred and twenty years, even if one challenges oneself once a day to try to keep the commandments of God, there is not a single day of success.

That we cannot keep all the commandments is not only a matter of that being God's way of reckoning. It means that in fact our hearts collapse every day. Before God I am a lacking person. I am a lacking person before the Lord. So I have nothing to boast of to others and nothing to talk big about. Rather, when I look at myself, it is miserable. The feeling comes that I will live as I am, in my lacking state, and then go. Then one uselessly wants at least one's office to be raised. As one attends church, one wants one's office to be raised. Since it does not work by one's own strength, one wishes that at least one's office would go up, and one feels that because of that office one would live rightly before God. But the heart that tries to live rightly through office is all vain.

We were those who could only sit in the lowest place

When we are invited by the Lord and go before the Lord, we are not people fit to sit in a high place. It is so with me, and it is so with you. We have no ability and nothing to be proud of. If there is one thing we can tell the Lord, it is that we are lacking. We are truly lacking before the Lord. There is nothing at all to be proud of. So we tell Him, 'I will believe, as much as I know, what the Lord has accomplished for me.' It is holding on to the righteousness of the Lord and holding on to the rightness of the Lord. This heart that holds on to the righteousness of the Lord is the faith of the one who believes in the Lord.

When we went before the Lord, in what state of heart did we come? Are we ready in heart to sit in the best place and have nothing to be ashamed of before God? Or are we in a position where we must sit in the lowest place? When we examine ourselves before the Lord, we were those who could only go to hell.

In Galatians God said as follows: *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7)*. It is a word not to make light of God. It is a word not to try to deceive God and not to lie. Can we deceive God? However much we put on an outward form and go before God, before God we had sin and were those who could only go to hell. We were those who could only be cursed. Did we not think it a great mercy if only He did not send us to hell? We were such people before God.

But because we were such people, we needed the grace of the Lord. We needed the gift of salvation the Lord gave us. That is why we came before the Lord. Today's word is speaking of exactly that story.

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The gospel of the water and the Spirit, which seated in the best place those who could only sit in the lowest place

Since today is an evangelistic meeting, I tell you this word clearly. When you first came before the Lord, with what attitude did you come? Did you come with a heart fit to sit in the best place? Or did you come knowing that you were a person going to hell and a lowly person? The Lord gave us the gospel of the water and the Spirit and saved us, and told us, who had been sitting in the lowest place, to come up and sit in the high place. He said, "You are My child." That is why we have gone up and are sitting here now. With what heart did we first come before the Lord? That heart we first had is truly important.

We were those who could only go to hell, lowly and servile people. But the Lord had compassion on such people as us. He delivered us from that curse and that misery, and saved us from every curse and sin. With the word of truth called the gospel of the water and the Spirit He gave us the gift of salvation. The Lord came to this earth for us. He received baptism from John and took our sins upon Himself, was hung on the Cross and died, and rose from the dead and saved us.

The Lord says to us as follows. If I do not save you, you can only remain a miserable person. You are too miserable to be left as you are. I simply cannot help but save you. So I came to this earth for someone like you. I received baptism from John and received all your sins passed on to Me. Not only your sins, but your curse and all your misery, too, I have taken upon Myself. I shed My blood on the Cross and received that judgment in your place. And I rose again and became your Savior. I came to this earth for you, received baptism from John for you, shed My blood for you, and went to death for you. And I rose again for

you. I give you salvation. I am your Savior. I have saved you. The Lord speaks this salvation to us.

Since He says that when the Lord received baptism from John He took our sins upon Himself, that word is true, and so we are thankful. Because the Lord took our sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, those sins were passed on to Jesus Christ. It is like a child moving what he held in his hand somewhere else, so that it no longer remains in that hand. The Lord carried those sins away, was nailed to the Cross, and shed His blood. And He died and rose again from the dead. Since the Lord did all that for me, I have no sin. So we give thanks and believe in the Lord. The Lord gave us the grace of salvation and the gift of salvation. Before we believed in the Lord, we had sin and could only go to hell, but now, by believing that truth, we have received the remission of sins in our hearts and have become people who do not have to go to hell.

The question is what the attitude of our hearts is. How long one has believed in Jesus is not what matters. Whether one has believed ten years, twenty years, forty years, or fifty years, the number of years one has believed does not matter. It is what one can confess about oneself when one stands right before the Lord now.

Peter admitted the fact that he was a person who could only go to hell

Peter confessed before the Lord as follows: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*. To that Peter the Lord said to come walking on the water. The waves were rising on the Sea of Galilee, and the Lord said, *"Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:27)*. When Peter said,

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"Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water," the Lord said to come. Peter got down out of the boat and walked on the water to go to Jesus. The first man on this earth to walk on water was Peter.

Are you confident? If He told you to come walking on the water, are you confident you would walk? Even if He tells us to come walking on the water, our thoughts come first. Lord, have You not spoken wrongly? If I step into the water now I will sink right away, and You tell me to walk? Rather tell me to swim. But since it is the word of the Lord, I will go in, and if I sink I will swim. There would be many people who would go with such thoughts.

But Peter went. Since He said to come walking on the water, he stepped out. Before his right foot sank he put out his left foot, and before his left foot sank he put out his right foot. Looking at the Bible, Peter walked some way on the water. Then he looked down at his feet. The waves bared their white teeth and slapped against his knees. At that moment this thought came into Peter's heart. Am I in my right mind now? How can a person walk on water? He had believed and walked because the Lord told him to come walking, but when he looked at the situation before his eyes, it was absurd. He did not say it, but his heart went limp. When he let go of the faith that believes in the Lord, he sank into the water at once.

The Lord stretched out His hand to the sinking Peter, caught him, and lifted him out. At another time Peter fell down at the knees of the Lord and said as follows: *"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8)*. At the moment he was sinking into the water, the heart of Peter was that very confession. He saw the height of the Lord and his own misery and inability at the same time.

Lord, You are the Son of God and truly the Savior. You are

the Master who made the whole universe and made me. So do You not rule over all things? You said to come walking on the sea, and You told the storm to be still, and it became still. The Lord accomplishes everything if only He speaks. But he himself, though he said he believed the word of the Lord and stepped out, could not go even a few steps before sinking into the water. Peter saw that appearance of himself. It was not because he had failed to walk on the water. He saw that he was an incapable person, fundamentally a creature, and a weak person. He saw that he was a person who could only sink into the water. Because he saw his own appearance, he said, *"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8).*

Peter truly believed the word of the Lord and followed. Brothers and sisters, this very heart is faith. The faith that believes in the Lord is this very heart. It is seeing one's own appearance, one's own weakness, misery, and inability. It is seeing oneself, who only commits sin, seeing the result that the wages of sin is death, and admitting the fact that one is a person who can only go to hell. And at the same time it is seeing the Lord. The Lord is the King of kings, the One who created the whole universe, and the Savior who came to this earth to save us from sin. He came to this earth, received baptism from John the Baptist, and received our sins passed on to Him. And He was hung on the Cross, received the judgment for those sins, went to death, and rose again, and became the true Savior of you and me. When he saw those two things at the same time, Peter truly believed in the Lord in his heart and received the remission of sins. He believed that the Lord had come to this earth to save him, who could only go to hell.

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Peter said that the baptism Jesus received from John is the sign of salvation

Peter believed that the Lord is truly the Master of the whole universe. Before God the Father He is the Son, but to us He is forever God, our Savior, and our Master. He is the Master who saved him from sin, and the Savior who came to save all sinners from sin. Peter knew and believed the Lord in that way.

So what did Peter say his testimony of salvation was? He said that he had been born again of incorruptible seed. *"Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:23)*. It means that he was saved by believing the word the Lord spoke.

And Peter says that the baptism Jesus received from John is the sign of salvation. *"There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21)*. It is not making our conduct clean, but making the conscience of our hearts clean. Peter believed that He is the Savior who made us people lacking nothing at all for going before God.

Brothers and sisters, even thinking about our present appearance, is there anything to be proud of before the Lord? When we stand right before the Lord and think, is there truly anything to be proud of? We are often bound by circumstances and bound by weakness. We are those who at any time are bound by our own weakness, misery, and inability. Even so, the Lord saved you and me with the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, made us the people of God, and made us people who have received the remission of sins. That is how we were saved.

Before we were saved or after we were saved, is there anything we did well? If there is anything to be proud of now,

that one thing is the faith that holds on to and believes the righteousness of the Lord. It is because, even if we have nothing else at all, we have the faith that the Lord has saved me from sin. The Lord put on human flesh, came to this earth, and received baptism from John the Baptist. When He received that baptism, He took our sins upon His own body. He said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).* And when Jesus had been baptized by John and came up immediately from the water, the heavens were opened and the Spirit of God descended like a dove and alighted upon Him. And there was a voice from heaven saying, this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

In the Old Testament, when the high priest laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering, all the sins of the people of Israel were passed on to that lamb or goat. In the same way, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to this earth and received baptism from John. In order to save from sin people like you and me, that is, the miserable and incapable people who had to go to hell, He received all those sins passed on to His own body. The next day, John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and testified as follows: *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).* When the Lord received baptism from John the Baptist, the sins of you and me were passed on to Jesus Christ.

Because we believe that fact, and because we have the faith that the Lord received baptism from John, carried our sins away, was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and rose again and became the true Savior, we have nothing to be ashamed of. Because we have that faith, we can look you in the eye, talk, and laugh. We can serve God, do righteous work together, unite our hearts in righteous work, and live with righteous work as our goal. Is it not so? If it were not for this faith, how could we live looking one another in the face? We are incapable people.

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The love of God, who saved the weak

You may perhaps think like this: “You may be incapable, but we are not incapable.” But in fact we are incapable. Even when we try to do one thing, if the support falls short even a little, we cannot get it done. That appearance of not being able to get it done is incapability. And incapability is sin. Weakness is sin. Among ourselves, since we are all weak, that weakness is at times regarded as pitiable and even as a human quality. But when we go before the perfect One, incapability is the heaviest sin. Brothers and sisters, is it not because people are weak that they commit sin? When you look at people committing sin, they commit sin because they are weak. You may think that they commit many sins because they are strong, but that is not so. They commit sin because they are captured by the devil, but everyone commits sin because they are weak.

Therefore the Lord came to this earth to save us, who are weak beyond measure, from sin. He received baptism from John and took our sins upon Himself, went to the Cross, shed His blood, and went to death. And He rose again from the dead by His own power and became our Savior. This salvation is the love of God and the gift of salvation God gives us.

Because we believe that love, we give thanks before God, have strength in our hearts, stand with nothing to be ashamed of, and live for what is right. The Lord says to us as follows. “Sit in the best place. You are My child. You have not a single sin. Sit in My place. Sit beside Me. However much love I bestow on you and however unsparingly I treasure you, it is not in the least too much. My love will never leave you for eternity. You are a truly precious person. You are one who will sit beside Me and one fit to live in the kingdom of God. Not by your weakness but by My power, by My love, by My righteous salvation, I have saved you.

Because you believed that fact, you have become a truly honored person." The Lord speaks this word to us.

So today you and I live by this faith. We truly live by that faith. So we work today and we work tomorrow. We are weak, but we live working.

"He who humbles himself will be exalted"

Saints, I ask you to engrave well in your hearts the word of Luke chapter 14 verse 11, *"For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11)*. If only one knows the meaning of this word properly, anyone is saved. Anyone abides in the love of God, anyone is clothed with the almighty power of God, and anyone becomes a perfect person.

I intend to finish this evangelistic meeting before nine o'clock. If it goes on long, everyone has a hard time. You have come after working all day, and there are times when I feel sorry to ask you to keep your eyes open and listen. Still, for you this time is the best time. It is because the only time of rest is the time of worship. That is why you come confessing that the house of the Father is good. The person who dozes and yet says that the word is right is far better than the person who listens with ears wide open and yet does not believe. What is truly important is believing in the heart. God has given us a heart. Believing in the heart is important.

Whether I think about myself, think about you, or think about us as we are now, we are weak. So we cannot do anything perfectly before the Lord. But the Lord loved us and took our sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John. And He was hung on the Cross and received the judgment for our sins.

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And He did not leave us in death but raised us again. He said that He Himself rose again and will raise us on the last day, raise our bodies too, raise our hearts now, and give us eternal life. I truly believe it.

The older I get, one hope arises in me. It is the hope that just as the Lord rose again, my body, too, will rise again on the last day. I truly like the word “eternal life” in the Bible. When I was young, the word eternal life did not enter my heart well. Since they said we live forever, I just thought, so it seems. But now the word eternal life truly enters my heart.

So the feeling comes that the Lord has risen. The feeling comes that He died and rose again to give us eternal life. The feeling comes that this is why He speaks to us again and again. It is engraved in my heart that now we live forever. I come to know and to feel in my heart how good it is to live forever. Above all, when I hold an evangelistic meeting, I am most thankful that He saved me. I am thankful that He saved you from sin. I am thankful that He saved me from weakness, and thankful that He saved you from weakness. I am so thankful that He made us the children of God. I believe the love with which the Lord loves us. I believe and give thanks.

By all means, as today’s word says, he who has been humbled before the Lord is exalted. But the one who exalts himself from the beginning and never once humbles himself cannot be exalted. It is not that one cannot turn back because the years have passed. Even today, at this hour, in this place, one can become a humbled person as much as one wishes. And one can receive the grace of being exalted again by faith and sitting in the best place where the Lord tells one to sit. Not only at this hour but at any time in the future, if one wants it in the heart, one can become a humbled person and be exalted.

The Lord has given us this amazing opportunity and grace. I

ask you not to lose this opportunity. Knowing the fact that it is not someone else's problem but your own problem, I ask you to take stock of your own hearts. I ask you to be those who honestly admit their own weakness and believe the love of the Lord and the salvation the Lord has bestowed on us. I want God to give that blessing to you, and to all of us. I will close the message here. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Give all that you have to the Lord and humble your heart

< Luke 14:7-11 >

"So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: 'When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, "Give place to this man," and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, "Friend, go up higher." Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'"

This word was not spoken about the seats at a worldly feast

The word we read today is a word the Lord spoke to all of us. This word does not mean that when we go to a worldly feast we should physically sit in a lower seat. What the Lord taught us through this word is that when we are invited before the word of the Lord, that is, when we believe in God, we must not raise our

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hearts. It is to hear the word with the attitude of not raising our hearts but knowing our own appearance and learning. It is to accept it as the word God has spoken, believe it, and acknowledge it, and so be saved. And it is a word to be exalted at the time when God exalts us.

People may think of this word only as a matter of the flesh, but this word was not spoken about matters of the flesh. Every word of the Bible is a word for teaching the people of God. And every word of God is a word for removing all our sins and saving us. We have only to know this fact and believe it as it is.

From whom did you hear the gospel?

This time a brother came up, so I called him and asked him. I asked him whether, though I had led him, his faith had still not been established, so that he had come to hear the gospel again this time. Then the answer of that brother was truly unexpected. He said that before I preached the gospel to him, he had first heard the gospel from someone else. It was so long ago that even the name is hazy, but in the old days there was a brother who worked at a certain hospital. He said that before I preached the gospel to this brother, that brother had first told him the gospel. I did not know that that person had told him first.

In the old days I went to universities a lot in order to preach the gospel. So I picked many spiritual fights with the students. At that time, on a university athletic field, a certain mission organization had set out tables and was holding a book exhibition. So I deliberately struck up a conversation, called them out, and shared the word. I thought that at that time I had preached the gospel to this brother for the first time, but it was not so. This time I asked him, “I pulled you out of that

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organization and led you, so how did this come about?" Then he said that he had already heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit from that brother, and that I, too, spoke of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and kept saying that sins had disappeared. So he said he had thought, I already know all this, so why does he keep talking about it? I realized that I had misunderstood. And it became clear that the line through which the gospel had been delivered had gone wrong.

That brother who preached the gospel to this brother in the old days had also heard the gospel from yet another brother. But he had not received the remission of sins. At first he followed a little, and later he forsook the gospel. The thought came to me that because the chain through which the gospel had been passed down was wrong, this brother had wandered around for as many as 17 years before coming. So from whom one hears is truly important. The gospel heard from a person who had not received the remission of sins had become poison instead. He also said that he had listened many times to recordings of the sermons of a certain minister, and the thought came to me that that person had done a lot of his own work. Without my knowing, he had made recordings of his own sermons, distributed them to others, and set up his own line. If one hears the gospel from a person who has not been saved, people know the gospel of the water and the Spirit well but do not actually receive the remission of sins. Many members of a certain local church not only listened to those recordings but also heard many of his sermons directly. So salvation had not come about. So I realized anew how important the line is.

I used to go to universities often in order to preach the gospel. I am not a person who fights with fists, but a person who picks quarrels and fights spiritually. If there were students, I deliberately struck up a conversation. I asked, do you think it

will work to evangelize with something that does not even work? Do you have sin or not? If they said they had sin, I told them to come out, and that I would preach the gospel to them. I asked, are you a staff worker of a mission organization? Do you have sin or not? If they said they had sin, I said, what kind of staff worker is a person who has sin? With such questions I struck up conversations and preached the gospel to university students. In this area, too, there are several such mission organizations, and such people are very reluctant to meet me. They say that when they meet me, they are uneasy in heart all day long. They say it is as if they had met a person from another world. They say that we believe in Jesus by the same word of the Bible, yet what we say is so different and our point of view is different. Anyway, I thought that I had preached the gospel to that brother for the first time, but it was not so.

With a heart that defends itself, one cannot be saved

Brothers and sisters, when you and I are invited by the Lord, we must humble our hearts. The Lord is telling us that if the other person seems better than I am, we must lower the attitude of our hearts. It is to sit rather in the lowest place when invited to a wedding feast. It is to humble the heart and hear the word well. If the word this person preaches seems more right than what I know, I must humble my heart and lie flat. I must hear and learn as if hearing it for the first time, and hear it as if hearing the word before God. At such a time the word of God becomes beneficial to us, and the word of God comes into our hearts and works.

The word we read today is exactly such a word. When we

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hold an evangelistic meeting, people come. For example, suppose we hold an evangelistic meeting under the title, examine your own faith, examine your salvation. Then the hearer must focus on that title and humble himself. He must hear the word with the attitude, "What is God really saying to me?" There are people who hear with such a heart, but most are not so. When we invite people to an evangelistic meeting, preach the word, and have personal fellowship with them, the hearer is already sitting in a high place. I see them claiming that they are saved, as if everything were already done.

So you cannot imagine how hard it is when we try to have fellowship in the gospel. We must pull the other person down again and make him a sinner, put him into hell and pull him out, repeating this many times. It is hard because only when the field of the heart is plowed like that can we speak of the gospel. It is hard for the one who preaches the gospel, but it is the one who hears the gospel who finds it hard to be saved. Why is that? It is because he defends himself. Before the word of God, one must not defend oneself. One must say that however the word of God deals with me, I will hear that word. One must hear with the attitude that I am Your servant, so I will kneel before You and learn. But people cannot do that and hold out from the beginning. The reason those who believe in Jesus do not receive salvation even after believing in Jesus for a long time is that they keep holding out before the Lord.

It is like an owner pulling a goat. He pulls the rope, saying, if you go that way you will fall off the cliff and die, so come this way. Then it would be enough to be pulled along as it is, but the goat braces itself with its two legs and backs up as far as it can. And where is it trying to go? It intends to go that way. If it goes that way just a little, there is a cliff and it dies.

Brothers and sisters, mountain goats climb cliffs well, like

wild goats. Their hooves are very hard, so that if even the tip catches a little, they climb up the mountain. They climb even nearly vertical cliffs. Goats are like that. But even though they are goats that climb cliffs so well, when you go to the foot of a cliff, there are very many goats that have fallen and died. It is because they think they are great. They go around dangerous places well and go down slopes well. So they are not afraid. Then one day they fall and die.

A person who believes in Jesus as a religion always has sin in his heart, and yet when true servants of God try to preach the gospel to him, he does not listen. Even if he listens, he holds out so as not to believe. Even if one has heard the gospel, it is not enough just to know it now. After knowing, that word must be planted in the heart. And one must admit the fact that one is truly such a person. Until the word is planted in the heart, there are people for whom it happens in the first hour, but usually it takes a long time. So the hearer must have the attitude of a learner. He must humble his heart. But people cannot do that. A person who has not been saved acts as if he were saved, regards himself as knowing everything, and tries to stay only in the high place. He regards himself as having already received the remission of sins and as already a worker of God and a servant of God. The Lord spoke precisely to such people. He said that when invited to a wedding feast, they should not sit in the high place but go and sit in the lowest place.

Sit in the lowest place and hear the word with the attitude of a learner

It seems that when the Jews held a feast, there were the best seats and the lowest seats. It is the same in our country. I am a

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person who ran many errands at houses holding feasts when I was young. There are rooms where only the elders of the village gather. Food must be brought to such rooms first. But in our country it seems that within the same room the high seats and the low seats are not greatly divided. The Jews held many feasts in the synagogue, and it seems that there were high seats and low seats. So the Lord must have spoken in this parable.

People strive to sit in the best place. Instead of that, would it not be enough to sit in a low seat and then go up when the Lord tells you to come up and sit? Brothers and sisters, we, too, were like that when we first believed in the Lord. When we first came to church, when we had not received the remission of sins, we sat in the lowest place. At that time those who were ahead of us had fellowship with us in the word, told us what we were like, and told us that we had sin. We must acknowledge and accept those words as the word of God. As we listened with such an attitude, we came to know and believe the word. So we also came to acknowledge our own appearance, and receive the remission of sins by faith. Then the church exalts that person. If he has clearly received the remission of sins, the church exalts him, asking him to do this work of God. Then it is enough to do that work, saying, "I cannot do it well," yet pretending to be unable to refuse.

But some people insist on their own way to the end. Though they have not been saved, they hold out as if they had. If the servants of God say, "What you have received is not salvation," then it is not salvation. Why is that? The servants of God say so because they know. The servants of God also make mistakes, but they know just by listening to what is said. They know all of it—whether this person is speaking having received the remission of sins, or is imitating one who has received the remission of sins, or truly believes. When a servant of God pricks up his ears and

listens, even hearing what people say among themselves in passing, something catches. He thinks it a little strange, and then passes by, thinking it is probably nothing. But if he listens not just once but continually, it is revealed that that person is immature in the matter of salvation. So the servants of God sense that there is a problem in the part of how that person lives.

Therefore it is good to humble the heart and hear the gospel. One must admit the fact that one is still a sinner. Even the gospel does not work just by hearing it unconditionally. One must hear it from the place of knowing that one is a person going to hell. Only then is one saved. If one hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit in a state where the heart is not prepared, it stops at merely knowing, and nothing is accomplished. So while knowing the gospel and living, one comes to feel that one is a sinner who always commits sin. Then, while hearing the word, that the word is truly so is planted in the heart and accepted in the heart, and there are many people in the church who thus receive the remission of sins.

It is a very good thing that this time many people in the church changed their line and were put in good order. God gave special grace within the church of God. He gave a blessing. It is so for you and for me. People for whom it happened all at once are rare. It took me 10 years until I received the remission of sins. I am a person who held on to the word of the Bible alone and agonized over it. Because of that, I know your hearts well.

Therefore we must humble our hearts. When doing the work of the world, there are things you do better than I do. But when you meet the righteous and talk, have fellowship, and receive counsel, you must humble your hearts. You must hear and accept with the attitude of hearing the word of God. Only then does blessing come, and the word of God comes upon your souls. Only when you accept the word do you accept the Lord. If you

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do not accept the word, you are not accepting the Lord. Accepting the word is accepting the Lord.

So in today's word He said, *"For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11)*. Brothers and sisters, one must humble oneself in order to be exalted. It is the Lord who exalts; one is not exalted by trying to exalt oneself. If one humbles oneself and keeps hearing and accepting the word of the Lord, the Lord gives faith to that heart, so faith arises within the word. Then the Lord exalts. He said that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. So we must not stop at knowing this word. It must strike our hearts that this word is the word of the Lord and the truth. If this word is the truth, we also come to know with what attitude of heart we must live. The answer has already been given. The life of faith must be lived like that, by humbling the heart. Can one be exalted by exalting oneself? One cannot. It is truly a miracle that this time many people changed their line and heard the gospel properly.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit given to us, who could only sit in the lowest place

Brothers and sisters, I have told you that we are people who can only sit in the lowest place. Then how did the Lord seat us, who could only sit in the lowest place, in the best place? What must we hear and what must we believe, humbling our hearts, in order to receive the remission of sins? I intend to go over that story clearly.

At the age of 30, Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River and received baptism from John the Baptist. John tried to prevent Him, saying, I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming

to me? At that time Jesus answered as follows: *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. Here the word to fulfill all righteousness means that Jesus receives all the sins of the world passed on to His own body.

In the Old Testament, when the high priest laid his hands on the head of the sin offering, the year's sins of the people of Israel were all passed on to that offering. In exactly the same way, when John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, baptized Jesus, the sins of the whole world were transferred to the body of Jesus. So the next day John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and testified as follows: *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).*

Jesus, who had carried all the sin of the world, went to the Cross carrying that sin. He was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood, receiving the judgment for that sin in our place. And He said, "It is finished," and died. On the third day He rose from the dead and became the Savior of you and me. The Apostle John testified of Jesus Christ, *"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood" (1 John 5:6 ASV)*. Here the water is the baptism Jesus received from John, and the blood is the blood He shed on the Cross. Therefore believing in the Cross alone is not complete. Believing together in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The Lord also said to Nicodemus as follows: *"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)*. When we believe this word in our hearts, all the sins of the heart are washed away. Since our sins have all been passed on to Jesus, no sin remains in our hearts. So we become people who have received the remission of sins and become the children

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of God. We, who could only sit in the lowest place, have come to go up and sit in the best place, to which the Lord calls us.

Therefore to humble the heart is not merely a matter of lowering one's attitude. It is to lay down all one's own righteousness and to receive and put on, as it is, the righteousness the Lord accomplished. It is to accept as it is that I was a person going to hell, but the Lord received baptism from John and received my sins passed on to Him, received that judgment on the Cross, and rose again and saved me. This faith leads us to the remission of sins.

This word being heard now is the word of God

Brothers and sisters, when I preach the word, there are people who have come out and sit in order to hear the word of God. There are people who know that the word I preach is the word of God, and believe and accept it. There are people who come out to the time of worship and to the time of fellowship with such a heart. But some people sit thinking that since it is the time of worship, there will naturally be a message. They regard it as simply listening, since in Christian worship one must naturally hear a discourse. There are also people who listen thinking that the sermon, too, is one part of the ritual of worship.

Brothers and sisters, those two are different. The person who listens regarding the word being heard now as the word of God accepts it in his heart as he hears the word. If one accepts it in the heart, the change that takes place in that heart is different. Hearing the word as a part of the ritual of worship and hearing it with the attitude of continually accepting the word in the heart show different results. So some people, when I preach the word, hear it as the word of God, accept it, and receive the remission

of sins. But some people think that whoever preaches it is all the same, only that that person's way of preaching the word is a little different. They think it must be because of his peculiar personality. Such a person does not receive the remission of sins.

Anyone can preach the word, but not everyone preaches the word of God. First, the one who preaches must properly know and believe the word of God and preach it. Only when he believes and preaches is that word the word of God. The word of God is spiritual, not fleshly. Therefore the one who preaches first knows what the word of God says, and so preaches it according to its meaning.

Brothers and sisters, let us go over the word of verses 7 to 11, which we read today, word for word. It is a word that when invited to a wedding feast, you should not try to sit in a high place but go and sit in the lowest place. It is a word to be humble. It is a word that then, when the host comes and calls you up to a high place, it is enough to go up. Word for word, it can be explained like that. The core is simple. What is He speaking of? He is speaking of a wedding feast.

When we hear the word of God, that place is the wedding feast. We hear the word in order to be married to the Lord. We hear the word in order to become one body and one heart with the Lord. So we must think spiritually. At any time we must regard it as that I am hearing the word of God now. If one merely thinks, "It is the time of worship, so let the time pass. In a little while the time of worship will be over," there is no benefit at all.

When I preach the word, if the other person does not accept the word of God, I talk a little about something else and finish. If the other person's heart is like that, there is nothing more to say. So I say that the text is such and such a word, and let us finish quickly and have a meal. But when I officiate at a wedding, I say what the Bible intends to say, whether the other people

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listen or not. If one speaks spiritual things as they are before people who do not believe, they are not accepted. One cannot preach, and it is awkward. At such times one must speak in the words of the world for those people to listen. But in fact such an occasion is of no benefit at all. It ends with their having heard well with their ears at that time and its having been refreshing.

Brothers and sisters, by all means we must consider whether we ourselves, among us, are such people, and apply it to ourselves. You and I, whoever preaches the word, must hear it in the time of worship when the word is heard with the heart that I am hearing the word of God. Otherwise there are people who listen with the thought that since it is the ritual of worship, I am doing the favor of listening to the word. I ask you to consider which side you are on.

The person who does not break his heart is never saved in the end

Brothers and sisters, when you hear the word, hearing it as the word of God is beneficial to yourselves. Even if you know nothing else, when you hear the word you must accept it in your hearts. Even if the one who preaches speaks lightly with an illustration, that story is all the word of God. But if one judges whether it suits one's taste or not, that heart has already gone astray. If one listens in a state where the heart is high, one is not saved even if one listens for a hundred years.

Some person has heard the word from me for 20 years. And yet he is not saved. It is because he raised his own heart when he heard the word. He heard the word with the attitude that I already know and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and I am already saved. When the gospel of the water and the Spirit is

spoken of, he listens to the sermon with the attitude that he knows it all, thinking, that gospel is something I know all about, and that person preaches in that manner.

We always hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even if we have already believed and received the remission of sins, we must ask whether we ourselves have ever truly become sinners as the word of God says. We must admit once again how great a sinner we were, and when the gospel of the water and the Spirit is preached, accept it once again and keep on accepting it. Only when we accept that the Lord has saved me, so full of sin, like this does it become beneficial to us. Hebrews, too, says, today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.

But some person has heard the word for 20 years and yet it is not salvation. Why is that? It does not work because he regards himself as already saved. The person who says of himself that he is saved has nothing to accept when he hears the gospel. Some person, when he hears the gospel, has the field of his heart plowed very shallowly, so that he does not know how great a sinner he is, but knows only that he is a little bit of a sinner. Still, there are people who know that they are going to hell and accept the gospel of the water and the Spirit and are saved. Such a person must keep plowing up the field of his heart every time he hears the gospel. And in life, too, the Lord plows up the field of that heart. He keeps plowing it up, saying, this is exactly what you are. Then when one hears the gospel, one becomes truly thankful.

But some person has heard the gospel for 20 years and yet is not saved. So this time those people left the church. What is their characteristic? It is that they do not break their hearts. It is that they hate to break their hearts. They themselves hate to break their hearts, and they say they hope that their children, too, will never break their hearts before the church. Brothers and sisters, who is there that can live the life of faith without breaking his

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own heart? Do I not have to break my heart? I, too, if the other person says what is right, immediately lay myself down, saying, "What you say seems right," even if I have my own thoughts. Brothers and sisters, we must deny ourselves every day. If someone says that what I am doing is not right, and that doing it differently is a glory before God, I must break my heart at once. What else is there to say?

But the person whose heart is high regards himself as already saved. He decides for himself that the life of faith is such and such, and sets its purpose, too, on oppressing others and exalting himself for the sake of his own flesh. That is why it is wrong. Because he already harbors such a heart, however much the word is spoken, he passes it over, saying that the word has nothing to do with him. Brothers and sisters, it is the word of God, and it has nothing to do with you? It has to do with everyone. Can there be a person who has nothing to do with the word of God? It has to do with everyone. Then he ought to accept all of that word, but he keeps turning it to others, saying that that word is needed by someone other than himself, and this word is needed by someone else again. He says that it is not himself. So in the end he is not saved.

If one has been in the church of God for 20 years and has not been saved, it is because one's heart is high. It is because one has already set one's heart as one pleases. It is because one is so very great. It is because one relies on one's own strength, like Esau. That person says that when he calculates, the reckoning is exact. If a person has such self-conceit, when he makes a mistake, he makes an enormous mistake. One must recognize for oneself that one can be wrong at any time. It is so with me too. Regarding that I, too, can be wrong at any time because I am a human being, I keep asking the other person. I keep asking, what do you think about this matter? There was a sister in our church. That sister,

even after saying something herself, would frequently ask, “Is what I said right?” That question makes considerable sense.

Brothers and sisters, why do you regard only yourselves as great and only yourselves as smart? Can you truly be perfect? You are full of flaws. However well you calculate, holes open up. A person cannot even trust the words he himself says. Words spoken humanly are often wrong. Words spoken humanly and words spoken by the faith that believes the word of God are different. While saying that you believe in God, how can you believe in yourself more? Does that make sense? Such a person ends up never being saved. Such people are those who belong to Esau. They are people who have much to be proud of.

A person does many things wrong and has many shortcomings. When you come to know it, he is full of shortcomings. If one reckons them one by one, are there no wrong things done in the course of a day? There are many. Is it not human to say that everything advantageous to oneself is all right, and that what is disadvantageous to oneself is not? It is human to say that even what is not right is right if it benefits oneself. That is why there must be the word of God. The standard is the word of God. Therefore a wise person regards the word of God as important, and regards as important what the word of God says. A foolish person focuses on how I think rather than on the word of God. That is wrong.

Those who left the church because they did not believe have left. But we must examine ourselves well as to whether even among us there are those who, without having been saved, exalt themselves as if they were saved and are in the church. We must humble our hearts. Brothers and sisters, does the thought come to you, why am I such a low person in the church? What would it matter if one became a high person in the church? Only the work entrusted to one increases.

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If you give what you have to the Lord, all that is the Lord's becomes yours

What was it said today during the day that one must do if one wants to follow the Lord? It was said that one must forsake what one has. *"So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33)*. It is a word that one must forsake what one has, bear one's cross, and follow. What is forsaking what one has? It is that if I divide what is mine and what is the Lord's separately, I come to treasure what is mine more, so that my heart is divided from the Lord.

Let me give an example. In a family there are a husband and a wife, and some families keep their money in one bankbook and run the household. But some homes have separate bankbooks. They keep my money, your money, and the money used together separately. Like this, if one has one's own money separately, one treasures one's own money and spends the money used together lavishly, regarding it as not one's own money. The human heart becomes like that.

We are living the life of faith, serving the Lord in the church. Then we must live the life of faith with the heart that what belongs to the church is mine, what belongs to the church is God's, and what is mine is also God's. I must first give what is mine to God. Then, since what belongs to the church is also mine and what is mine is also God's, everything becomes mine and I come to manage everything as my own. When you come to church and look, all of this is your own. So everything is precious. But if one divides what belongs to the church and what is one's own separately, one regards what is one's own as precious and what belongs to the church as not so precious. One comes to treat what belongs to the church as if looking at someone else's. One comes to manage it, too, like a person

entrusted with someone else's things. It is truly a strange thing. The point of view changes according to the attitude of the heart.

Did I not tell you? Several of our brothers sleep in a room in the church. Although they sleep in a room of only a few pyeong, in fact they live in this whole building. In the world, if one says one lives in a somewhat spacious house, one may even throw one's shoulders back. It is because it is expensive. If someone says he lives in a very spacious house, people marvel. If there were such a house in a good location in a big city, the price of that house alone would be tremendous. Then in how many pyeong do our brothers live? Since this whole building is ours, if you add up the stairs and the yard, in fact they live in a very spacious place.

Brothers and sisters, if you bring all that you have before the Lord and live, such things happen. Since I have given all that is mine before the Lord, what is the Lord's is mine and what is mine is also the Lord's. As a result, that is how the reckoning works out. The heart becomes like that. If one regards oneself as a person living in such a spacious place, one does not envy the people of the world. I do not regard the head of a famous large corporation as impressive. All the churches across the country are mine and all the brothers and sisters are my family, so with whom would I compare myself? And God is my Father, so what would I envy? It is not that I make light of a person who has much in worldly terms because I have much or because much is in my name. I do not regard myself as in the least inferior to that person. So it differs according to the attitude of the heart.

Brothers and sisters, we have received the remission of sins and are serving the gospel in the church. The place where you live is here. If I regard the room where I sleep as only two pyeong, how envious would I be when I saw a person living in a spacious house in the world? I would come to regard that

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person as rich and myself as poor. But in reality, you and I are richer. If one sleeps in that room and then comes out and sleeps here, who would say anything? Is only that room yours? If you live in the church, this whole church is yours. Do I come here and claim that anything is mine? Is not what is the Lord's ours, and what is ours the Lord's?

So if our hearts change, things become different. If we give all that is ours to the Lord, live united with the Lord, live by faith, and live for the Lord, the Lord is for us. We are for the Lord and the Lord is for us, so as a result we are rich. There is no need to insist only on what is one's own. If we unite with the Lord, the kingdom of heaven also becomes ours, the power of the Lord also becomes ours, and we also receive the protection of the Lord.

Therefore the question is how you live the life of faith. Are you a person who gives what is yours before the Lord and lives? Or are you a person who sets aside what is yours as your own? The life of faith differs according to which side you are on. If, while in the church, what is the Lord's is separate, what belongs to the church is separate, and what is one's own is separate, that person cannot yet be said to live united with the church. That person is poor in heart and poor physically as well. In that person many desires of the world arise. If what is the Lord's becomes one's own, there are no desires of the world. It is truly a strange thing.

We must know, accept, and believe the word of God

I am now talking about something very ordinary. Brothers and sisters, it is so. You and I are all rich. An evangelist who

lives down below there is also a person who lives in a very spacious place. Although it is a little noisy at night, in reality he lives in a spacious place. You and I are truly rich. Do you regard it so too? I truly regard it so.

Tonight I have something to discuss at our training center in the mountains, and I think I will have to look into various matters. A family has left the church, and since they may do something evil, I will have to watch carefully and look after things. That person, in the past too, after doing or saying something bad, would say, when confronted, did I say such a thing? If he did say such a thing, he says that it was not he who did it, but that a demon possessed him and the demon made him do it. If he did that thing because a demon possessed him, is the person who did that thing not himself? But that person says that it was not he who did it, but that a demon came to him and said those words through him. And he always slips out. Even when he has done wrong, he says that he has done nothing wrong. So he always regards himself as good and us as terribly evil. A person who thinks himself good always turns everything on others. He passes it off as a mere mistake. That person says that he has done nothing wrong and that his heart is very gentle. He says that there is no one as good as himself. So we cannot help being careful.

Brothers and sisters, admit before God that you are sinners. If you confess and admit that I am such a person, and accept the salvation the Lord has given and accept the remission of sins, a demon does not come upon you. Because one does not accept it, the demon comes to the place where there is uncleanness. He said that when an unclean spirit goes out of a person, it goes through dry places seeking rest. The demon goes around seeking places where there is no gospel, the souls of people who have not received the remission of sins. So the demon goes even into that person’s heart and plays the master, and seizes him and

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makes him work, telling him to do evil.

But Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John and received that judgment on the Cross. And He rose again on the third day. In the heart that has received the remission of sins by believing that truth, the Holy Spirit dwells. In a heart that has no sin, a heart where the Holy Spirit dwells, there is no place for an unclean spirit to sit. Therefore humbling the heart and accepting this gospel is the way that protects us.

By all means, I ask you to remember this point. Our knowing the word of God is not the only thing that matters. We must know, accept, and believe the word of God. Within it we must learn the wisdom God gives, praise God, exalt God, and live with our hearts united. This way is the life of faith. Anyone can know the word of God if only he tries to know it. But we must not end with knowing the word. What matters is whether we actually know and believe, and live according to that faith.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord has given us salvation. And He has given us the Holy Spirit in our hearts. When the time comes, He will come to take us. We will go before the Lord. It may sound like a made-up story, but we actually go to the kingdom of the Lord. Just as there is a material world here, in the kingdom of the Lord, too, there is that place. We do not know where the Lord will take us to live forever, but there is something we know clearly. It is that just as God lives forever, we, too, live forever. Just as God reigns forever, we, too, reign. Just as God lives gloriously, we, too, live richly and gloriously. Just as God lives in a state without sin, we, too, live in a state without sin. Just as God lives without worry, we, too, live without worry for eternity. I will close the message here. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Those who have nothing with which to repay take part in the feast of the kingdom of heaven

< Luke 14:12-24 >

"Then He also said to him who invited Him, 'When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.' Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, 'Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!' Then He said to him, 'A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, "Come, for all things are now ready." But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused." And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused." Still another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being

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angry, said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind." And the servant said, "Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room." Then the master said to the servant, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper."'"

He told us to invite those who have nothing with which to repay

Our Lord told us to invite those who have nothing with which to repay and entertain them with food. He said that when you give a dinner or a supper, you should not invite your brothers, your relatives, or rich neighbors. It is because if you invite them, you will be repaid in return. So He said rather to invite the poor and those who have nothing with which to repay, and entertain them. Then, He said, at the resurrection of the just the Lord will repay that entertainment.

Our Lord also spoke about the work of evangelism. When we evangelize people, some say, "I have bought oxen, so I must test them." Others say, "I have to go to do business, so I am busy and cannot go." Others say, "I have things to attend to in the world, so I am busy and cannot go." It means not to invite such people. Rather, He told us to go out into the streets and crossroads and go to those who have nothing with which to repay, like the lame and the maimed. He told us to go to complete sinners, compel them, bring them in, and have them take part in the feast God has spread.

Brothers and sisters, we need both spirit and flesh. While we

live on this earth, we should refrain from inviting rich people and entertaining them with food. It is because if we entertain them, they can repay us in return. If they repay us in return, nothing remains. Therefore when we spend our possessions and entertain, we must spend them where we will not be repaid in return. What is that way? It is spending them for the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If we spend them for the gospel, who could repay us in return, saying that he had been entertained?

Let me give an example. We spend our possessions for the gospel of the water and the Spirit and also entertain people. Does that mean people thank us and reward us? Not so. If we invite rich people and entertain them only with material things, they receive that entertainment, feel burdened, and think of repaying. But if we spend our possessions in serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit and preaching the gospel to souls, people do not even know to be grateful, nor do they think of repaying. But on the last day, at the resurrection of the just, the Lord repays us.

So when we give a feast of the flesh, we go to a place like a home for the elderly and give it. It is good to go to a place where people who do not have enough to eat are gathered, give them food, preach the gospel, and come back. It means that there is no benefit in going to a place where one could be repaid in return and preaching the gospel there. He was saying that since the Lord will reward us with many things in the Millennial Kingdom at the coming resurrection, it is not right to receive repayment in advance.

"Come, for all things are now ready"

Today the Lord speaks of the feast of the kingdom of heaven while talking about eating. Looking at verse 16, it says that a

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certain man gave a great supper and invited many. Brothers and sisters, here *"A certain man"* refers to the Lord. This parable refers to the feast of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. After inviting many people, when supper time came, he sent his servant to those who were invited, saying, *"Come, for all things are now ready."* This feast of the kingdom of heaven is the gospel.

The word that all things are ready means that our Lord has removed all our sins. And He has saved us all. Is it not so? Brothers and sisters, is there sin in this world or not? In this world there is no sin. Therefore it is the word that all things are ready.

The Lord sends the servants of God and tells people to take part in that feast, eat the food of the great supper, and go. That place is precisely the feast of the kingdom of heaven and the feast of the gospel in this church. We have only to eat the bread of that grace by which the Lord has remitted the sins of all people. It is the bread of life, the bread of salvation, and the bread of blessing. We have only to believe. There is nothing of our effort to add in order to receive the remission of sins. It is because we receive the remission of sins not by effort but by faith. Therefore He told the servants of God to invite people, since all things are ready.

Some people in this world say that they are saved sinners. But there is no saved sinner. In the kingdom of God there are only saved righteous people; there are no saved sinners.

Today I went to a Christian bookstore to buy a Bible. Someone was speaking loudly, so I listened. The gist of what that person was saying was that since God had saved us from before the foundation of the world, what is there to be done by human deeds? That is right. So, listening beside him, I kept listening, thinking that for the first time in a long while I was

hearing words worth hearing. That person was evangelizing the owner of the bookstore.

So, listening beside him, I asked. I said that if what he said was right, then he must not have a single sin. Then he said, where is there a person without sin? So I asked, “Did you not just say that we are not saved by deeds? Did you not say that we are simply saved by faith, that He saved us all from before the foundation of the world?” Then he said that still, where in this world is there a person without sin? So I asked whether he had sin in his heart or not, and he said he had sin. So I told him that he, too, had not received the remission of sins. Then that person got angry and said he would not talk.

Then I said, what was that boldly shouting and evangelizing the bookstore owner, and what was that talk of being saved by grace? Still it was no use. That person was a person who had much with which to repay. He had many words to strike back with, too. As he went on about how such and such a denomination is and how such and such a sect is, I asked him, in conclusion, do you not have sin? He said, why do you ask such things as whether one has sin or not? Then I asked whether he was a righteous person or a sinner, and he said, where is there a righteous person, and quoted the word that there is none righteous, no, not one. He had picked up a few phrases somewhere and was talking because he liked those words.

What has the Lord prepared entirely?

Brothers and sisters, here we must go over one thing clearly. The servant went out and invited them, saying, Come, for all things are now ready. Then what does it mean that the host of that feast had prepared everything? The host had already paid

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the full price of the feast. Nothing at all remained for the invited person to add.

Our Lord came to this earth and at the age of 30 went to the Jordan River. And He received baptism from John the Baptist. When John tried to prevent Him, Jesus said as follows: *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. In the Old Testament, when the high priest laid his hands on the head of the sin offering, the sins of the people were all passed on to that offering. In exactly the same way, when John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, baptized Jesus, the sins of the whole world were transferred to the body of Jesus.

So the next day John the Baptist saw Jesus and testified as follows: *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. The Lord, who had carried all the sin of the world, went to the Cross carrying that sin. He was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood, and received the judgment for that sin. And at the last He said as follows: *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*. On the third day He rose from the dead and became the Savior of you and me.

Therefore the word, Come, for all things are now ready, is not an empty word. The washing away of our sins has been prepared, the judgment for those sins has already been paid, and the resurrection that gives us life has already been accomplished. Nothing at all remains for us to add. It is only to become people who have nothing with which to repay, and to go and sit in that place. This very gospel is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is believing this ministry, by which Jesus received our sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John, received that judgment on the Cross, and rose again and gave us life.

Those who refuse when the Lord has spread the feast of the kingdom of heaven and invites them

Now let us return to the word. The Lord had the servants of God invite many people. Our Lord came to this earth, removed all the sin of the world, spread the feast of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, and invited people. He said, *"Come, for all things are now ready."* But looking at verse 18, they all with one accord made excuses. One says, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it, so have me excused. Another says, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them, so have me excused. Another says, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. When the servant came back and reported these things to his master, the master of the house was angry and told him to go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and the maimed and the blind and the lame.

Brothers and sisters, as the Lord said, it means not to invite those who, even when invited to this feast of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, have much of their own work to do, much to say, and something with which to repay in return. Looking at the people in the text, they seem to divide into three kinds. What is the story of the first man? He bought a field. He says he cannot come because he is busy with business. And he says, have me excused. If one does not go when the host invites, it is hell.

Such a thing appears in the book of Esther too. King Ahasuerus gave a feast, and when his heart was merry with wine, he wanted to show the beauty of his queen to the people and the officials. So he commanded the eunuchs and summoned Queen Vashti. But at that time the queen, too, was holding a separate feast for the women. When they delivered the word that the king was telling her to come, the queen said she would not go. It was

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as if to say, are you the only one holding a feast? I am holding a feast too. If your feast is precious, my feast is precious too. But looking at the Bible, because she did not respond to the king's summons that one time, the queen was deposed. With that one refusal everything was over.

Because of that, a maiden called Esther was chosen and became queen. In later days, because of that, the feast of Purim came into being. When the people of Israel were in danger of being destroyed, Esther went before the king with the faith that said, if I perish, I perish, and told him the situation of her people. Seeing that faith and loyalty for her people as she prayed to God, God moved the heart of King Ahasuerus through Mordecai and Esther. And so the people of Israel were saved from the hand of the Gentiles.

Just as the queen was deposed because she did not go at the summons of the king, our Lord has spread the feast of the kingdom of heaven on this earth and invites people. He invites them to come and receive the remission of sins, to come and receive the salvation the Lord has accomplished. But there are three kinds of people who do not come even when invited. The first is the man who bought a field. He says that since he has bought a field, he has to go and see it now, so he cannot go. It is because of business. The second is the man who bought five yoke of oxen. He says he has to test whether the oxen obey well and whether they are healthy. The third is the man who married a wife. All of them say they cannot come because of the affairs of the flesh.

God has spread the feast of the kingdom of heaven and wants to give the remission of sins and eternal life, yet they say they cannot come. Because of what? They say they cannot come because they are busy with the affairs of the world. If they only go and take part, they are saved, obtain eternal life, have their

future guaranteed, and live forever, and yet they say they cannot come because of one material thing of the world—does that make sense? It does not make sense. How can there be such a thing? Yet they did not come. So what does our Lord say? He had the servants go out into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the maimed and the blind and the lame. What does this word mean?

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is needed by those who have nothing with which to repay

The maimed, the blind, and the lame—do such people have something with which to repay, or not? Do they have their own righteousness, or not? Earlier He said not to bring in the rich and feed them. If you bring in the rich and entertain them, they say they have eaten well and will invite you once next time, and go out. Having been entertained once, they entertain once, and it is even between them.

But to whom is this gospel of the water and the Spirit needed? In fact it is needed by those who have no righteousness of their own. It is needed by those who have committed many sins, the maimed, the blind, and those who have become spiritually lame. This gospel is needed by those who regard themselves as having committed many sins in this world, those who regard themselves as sinners, those who regard themselves as unable to do anything but go to hell. The gospel of the kingdom of heaven is needed by those who know themselves as ones who commit many sins. The gospel of the water and the Spirit, which gives the remission of sins by the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross, is needed by the person who has not a single bit of righteousness of his own. The Lord, too, said that those who are

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well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. He said, I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

In fact, religious people do not need this gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is because they regard themselves as having done nothing particularly wrong in their whole lives. But in reality they have very much that is lacking, and when held up to the light of the word of God and the law of God, they have done an enormous number of wrong things. Even before people, if one reckons strictly, the wrongs they have done are not one or two. There are people who admit that they are people who will be destroyed. God invited precisely such people and gave them salvation.

In this world there are many people who have much with which to repay. They are people who regard themselves as able to repay something to God by being great and smart and having done much good. There are many people who regard themselves as able to serve God well, people who regard themselves as having something to put forward before God. They regard themselves as lacking nothing at all. There are very many people who are so slippery that they cannot be grasped in the hand. If they hear even one word, they say they know it all. There are people who know everything thoroughly—that religion is like this, Buddhism is like that, what one must do when one goes to a temple, and what one must do again when one goes to church, and how the faith of Christianity is done.

Our Lord did not call such slippery and great people, people who regard themselves as having much goodness, people who regard themselves as good. In fact, what kind of people did He call? He called the maimed. He called people who have flaws in themselves as they live their whole lives. God called the people who tried to live well without spot or blemish or flaw before God but had flaws, people who had become spiritually lame, and

people who, like the blind, could not know the truth by themselves however much they sought God. So the people who could only come to the place where Jesus spreads the feast of the kingdom of heaven, the sinners who could be saved only by believing how the Lord had removed all their sins—such people sought God.

The maimed is a word opposite to a whole person

God called the maimed. The word maimed is a word opposite to a whole person, a sound person. There are people who, when they think of themselves, regard themselves as still whole and still all right. But the people who regard themselves as all right the Lord did not invite, and even when invited they did not come. The people the Lord invited here were the maimed. Brothers and sisters, He invited only the maimed, and those people responded and were saved.

Come to think of it, those sitting here, too, beginning with me, are all so. We were all maimed, were blind, and were lame. Brothers and sisters, when you think of yourselves, do you regard yourselves as somewhat great? Do you regard yourselves as all right? If you say you are all right, some other words will come out, and if you say you are not, will your pride be hurt? Still, as brothers and sisters, should we not make it clear? When you come to know it, we are the maimed. It means that we are not whole. I told you that the word maimed is a word opposite to a whole person. Then are you and I whole? We are not whole. If we had been whole, God would not have invited us either. Originally there is no one whole on this earth.

But there are very many people who regard themselves as somewhat whole. Most people in this world regard themselves

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as whole. Even if you go to the maimed and talk with them, they all say they are whole. Jesus went to the pool of Bethesda. There were five porches there, and in them lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, and paralyzed. But the people there, too, each had one thing to put forward. The blind man boasted that his hearing was keen, and the lame man boasted that his eyes were sound. The paralyzed man boasted that though his whole body was not sound, there was not one part that had become completely useless.

Brothers and sisters, everyone has something to say and is good at boasting. Do you know how smart these people regard themselves as being? Beginning with me, and including you, everyone who lives on this earth regards himself as smart. People of every country regard their own nation as the best and look down on other nations. They say they are the oldest nation, and that they were the first to make everything, and have a sense of superiority. But seen from the side, there is nothing so great. Brothers and sisters, how much do we, too, put on airs? If we have something the size of a speck, how much do we put on airs? As the saying goes, acorns measuring their heights against one another—when you think about it, it is laughable.

However big an acorn grows, how big can it be? If you go to the mountains, there are many acorns fallen on the ground. If you pick them up, there are small acorns, medium acorns, and big acorns. When we look at them, however big an acorn is, it is nothing. Yet how much must the acorns compare themselves with one another and make a fuss? Measured by width, I am wider, and measured by height, I am taller, they would say. Brothers and sisters, animals are the same. They say that even fish living in the water spread their fins to look big, and do not attack fish bigger than themselves. When you come to know it, whether big or small, it is nothing special, and yet it is so. People

are truly like that.

We are all maimed. Our Lord told us to bring in the maimed and the lame and the blind. When you come to know it, all are maimed, and yet when I see them not coming because they regard themselves as smart, it is truly frustrating. But the person who regards himself as maimed comes. People who have a flaw in their life, that is, people in whom a flaw has arisen because they committed a great sin, are the lame. The blind are people who say that however hard they try, they know nothing. And there are various kinds of the maimed. The person who pretends to be smart and great and is puffed up is also, when you come to know it, maimed. God told us to bring in all the maimed. Moreover, He told us to compel them to come in.

We who have received the remission of sins are all maimed. It is because we were maimed that we were invited by our Lord and saved. Do you understand? Do not pretend to be smart or great, but believe. Brothers and sisters, faith is better than your smartness.

We were not saved because we were great

Measuring with a ruler and judging is what a foolish person does. Is there anything a person can reckon like that before God? A foolish person is naturally like that. It is truly pitiful that they are investigating this gospel this way and that and judging it. Brothers and sisters, the person who really knows surrenders early. He asks early for mercy from the One who will bestow mercy. A foolish person goes before the king and reckons whether this king is really a king or not, whether he is great or not.

We were saved because we are all lacking people. If we had

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been great people, we would not have been saved. He cannot bestow such grace on great people. They cannot take part in the feast of the kingdom of heaven. He does not let them take part. If we had been great, He would not have invited us. Having been invited and received this salvation, we come to know that we were truly maimed. Because the Lord received baptism from John, carried all the sins of the maimed, and was judged on the Cross, we have lived. So we come to know the fact that He had us compelled to come and had the gospel preached to us, and so we were saved. We must know that fact. Do not receive the remission of sins and then pretend to be great. If you pretend to be great, God breaks you.

In particular, there are people who say that they have studied a little. Though they have been saved, they still regard themselves as having studied and received much of the benefit of learning, and so as having a lot of ink in them. They are under the delusion that though they received the same salvation, they are different from so-and-so. Brothers and sisters, what is different about them? If one has a lot of ink in one, one must draw out that black ink and put in white ink. Brothers and sisters, the person who has learned much has a harder time in the gospel. I am not saying not to learn much, but that what one learns in the world is in fact nothing special.

Brothers and sisters, even if you have finished graduate school, if someone tells you to produce a little of your ink, it does not amount to even one bowl. In fact there is nothing. Between a person who has finished high school and a person who has finished university, who has more ink? Of course, in quantity, the person who has finished graduate school would have more. But if you reckon who is smarter and who is greater before God, and reckon who has better faith and who believes better in living the life of faith, the person who has finished

graduate school is rather at a loss before God. Why is that? It is because the person who has only finished high school knows his own lack. He thinks, how many people in the world are greater than I am? A lacking person has an attitude of accepting. But once one has earned a doctorate, one has not an attitude of accepting but an attitude of judging.

Do not receive the remission of sins and then pretend to be great. Do not pretend to be great because you have learned a little. When I quietly watch people living the life of faith, the person with a lot of ink in him lives the life of faith worse. I see that the faith of such people does not grow well. The faith of a lacking person grows quickly, step by step, but the faith of a person with a lot of ink in him does not grow. It is because he thinks of everything only in theory. Since he tries to believe after understanding everything with his head—so this matter is like this—faith itself has already disappeared. When the intellectual desire of the head is fully satisfied, there is no need to believe in the heart.

So among those who have received the remission of sins, the person with a lot of ink in him has much loss in the life of faith. That does not mean not to learn. But the education of our country is in fact like that. Even if one has finished university, when one enters a company, does one not learn again from the beginning? It means that on the basis of what one learned as knowledge, one must learn practical things again.

Likewise, when we enter the life of faith, we must learn everything again. We must learn faith again, and the way of living again. God has saved us because we are all lacking people. Is it not so? He saved us because we were lacking people; if we had been great people, would we have been saved? A person is first when alone and last when among many.

What I want to say is that our salvation is by no means a

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salvation received because we were great. Brothers and sisters, if I were great, I would never sit in this place and preach. I would not even be able to. Because there is nothing great in me, among people as numerous as grains of sand, I have received the remission of sins and am now doing this work. I know a great many people in the Christian world. From those said to be capable to ordinary people, I know very many people. Among those many people, there is nothing great in me. Because there is nothing great in me, I received the remission of sins. Because there is nothing great in me, God made me His servant. If there had been much that was great in me, I would not be sitting here in this place.

But because I am lacking, I am in this place. You, too, because you are lacking, are now taking part in this feast of the kingdom of heaven in this place and eating manna. If you had had something great, you would have gone not to this place but to another place. You would have gone to a big sanctuary, a big denomination, and sat there pretending to be great. Great church members would have sat under a pastor pretending to be great, boasting to one another of their greatness, and gone down that road. But in us there is nothing great.

Evangelism is compelling

Our Lord tells us to go out into the lanes and crossroads and compel the maimed to come in. Evangelism must compel. It is not just saying a word or two and leaving it at that. It means that we must compel. It means that we must pester. Saying let us go, and again let us go, is evangelism. Brothers and sisters, the basis of evangelism is compelling. Compelling is evangelizing. Saying let us go and see, and again let us go and see, compelling

them like that, bringing them and seating them and having them hear the word, so that they receive the remission of sins. That work is evangelism.

This evangelistic meeting is being held in our church for the first time in 2 years. Should you not bring souls along? If you do not bring souls along, what would become of it? Only if you compel them do they come. People do not come when told once or twice. In particular, the people of our country must be compelled.

It is the same with meals. Asking, "Have you eaten?" three times is not enough. When an elder comes, you must ask him to come up onto the floor, and say, here is food, so sit down and let us eat together. You must say that at least seven or eight times, and if it takes long, up to ten times. Otherwise, if you ask, "Have you eaten?" and he says he has eaten, you say, I see, and eat alone, and that is the end of it. But to sinners you must say it about ten times. Evangelism must be done like that too. You must keep saying let us go to church. You must do it diligently.

I ask you also to speak of the good points about the atmosphere of the church and about the pastor. That work is doing well before God. But you must not boast about the pastor a great deal in terms of matters of the flesh. Say honestly that our church is very good because the atmosphere of worship is good, because it preaches with the word of God and centers on the word, and because it speaks clearly about salvation and about the life of faith. Say that it is very good because it is a church that believes the word of the Bible and does according to the Bible. Boasting about such things is good. But if you boast about the fleshly side of the pastor, they come, are greatly disappointed, and never come again.

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"Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled"

Anyway, evangelism must compel. It means that we must evangelize by urging strongly. Do you invite once or twice and stop? Even if they do not come when invited once or twice, try inviting them once again this time. Say, let us go once, please come once. Brothers and sisters, you must do the same with your families too. What became of the people who did not come even though invited? They all went to hell.

We preach the gospel, evangelize, and invite. When we say let us go, one says, I have bought oxen and must train them, so it will not do. Then we say, even if not you, let someone else go. He says, I am on my way to do business now, so it will not do. Then we say, then you go. He says, I too have bought a field, so it will not do. Not inviting once and leaving it at that, our Lord tells us to keep compelling. He tells us to keep inviting strongly.

To the person who does not come even when invited, I ask you to teach him that he is maimed. I ask you to teach him that he is lame and blind. Tell him, however much you try to believe, do you not fail to understand? Even when you look at the Bible, do you not fail to understand? Tell him that it is natural not to understand. And tell him that if one is born again and looks at the Bible, one can understand it all. Brothers and sisters, when you look at the Bible, it is not that you do not understand. You come to understand it thoroughly.

We must teach him that he is blind, lame, and maimed. We must teach him how great a sinner he is before God. And with that, we must invite him to go to the church of God and hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins, to hear the word. Brothers and sisters, evangelism is compelling. It is exhorting again and again. Exhorting and

exhorting again is evangelism. As for the person who pretends to be great, we exhort and compel him, and if in the end it does not work, we stop. That person's place is hell.

With families, too, it is not telling them once or twice and stopping. It is telling them continually. If you tell them continually, they come once or twice, if only to save face. Then there are many who come to church, hear the gospel, and receive the remission of sins. Those people came and heard the gospel and received the remission of sins because the one who evangelized them compelled them. If he had done it once or twice and stopped, they would have become tragic people who could not take part in the feast of our Lord, exactly like the people in the text. So that they do not become such people, we must very strongly compel people, take them to the church of God, and preach to them the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Keep exhorting your families too. Though she did not come when urged once and did not come when urged twice, I have been doing it with my mother for more than 10 years, and am still doing it now.

Brothers and sisters, will you tell your family once or twice and give up? Do you think giving up is doing well? What does the word of God say? Since they do not intend to follow, He said to compel them to come in, that His house may be filled. He said to go out into the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that His house may be filled. Did He say to try telling them once, and if they do not respond, to stop because it hurts your pride? No. He said to compel them to come in, that His house may be filled.

Brothers and sisters, by whatever means, even if they only come to church and hear the sermon and go, you must have them keep taking part. You must keep evangelizing. Only then do your families not go to hell. The families of us, the righteous, do

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not go to hell. If we do not compel them, they go to hell. We leave them alone because we are good-natured, but when you think about it, how terrible a thing it is. The feast of the kingdom of heaven speaks of the kingdom of heaven, and the person who cannot take part in it goes to hell. That person goes into the fire.

Therefore evangelize. If there is a soul in your family who has not yet received the remission of sins, you must evangelize. You must preach the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and have them receive the remission of sins. Also, we must know that we were all maimed, and yet God saved us.

There are several mothers here and elderly people too. If your children had not compelled you like that, you would have gone to hell. Your children spoke because their hearts burned at the thought that their parents might go to hell, and that is how you heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins. Yet do you have no desire to compel your children like that? Is it all right for your children to go to hell?

The person who believes this word can compel and fill the house of the Lord with souls. If one does not believe, one will just think in theory, “So there is such a thing,” and leave it at that, so there is no need to compel and one does not compel. Brothers and sisters, you must not know the word you heard today only to the extent of, “So that is how it is,” and leave it at that. You must hear the word in your heart and believe it, and with that faith compel souls, preach the gospel to them, and bring them. Let us know this fact and do it. Since we hold an evangelistic meeting next week, I ask you to invite many souls. I ask you to compel them and bring them. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Abandon your own righteousness before the Lord

< Luke 14:25-33 >

"Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

Three things needed to become a disciple

To become a disciple of the Lord, there are three things we must know. The Lord said, *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and*

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sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). It means that if one wants to become a disciple of the Lord, one must do like this. It is a word that if one wants to follow and go after the Lord, one must do like this.

Do you want to become a disciple of the Lord? Even though being saved and becoming the people of God is easy, becoming a disciple is not an easy thing. But here our Lord spoke of the three things needed to become a disciple. First, He said that if one wants to become a disciple of the Lord, one must hate one's father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even one's own life. What does this word mean? Since He tells us to hate our parents, wife and children, offspring, and even our own life, it may sound like a nihilism that says to hate everything and abandon everything, but that is not what it means. It is a word that when one's own life or one's parents or one's wife or children or brothers become a stumbling block in following the Lord, when they hinder and block one from following the Lord, one must hate them. This is the first condition needed to become a disciple of the Lord.

When we receive the remission of sins through the word, are born again, and try to follow the Lord, what is the first thing that becomes a stumbling block? It is one's own family. It is one's own parents. When we try to follow the will of God, it seems as if we are being undutiful to our parents, and when we try to follow the will of our parents, it seems as if we are being undutiful to God. This is the first thing we run into. When we truly tried to follow the Lord and become disciples, the very first thing we met was precisely this. That does not mean that since our Lord said to hate, we should hate blindly. It means that we must hate when they hinder and block the following of the Lord. Only then can we follow the will of the Lord. It means that at times one can follow the Lord only by hating even one's own life.

Come to think of it, is becoming a disciple of the Lord not something that is not easy? When one meets the Lord and wants to follow the Lord, the greatest worry is this. Before I met the Lord, I lived a religious life within Christianity for about ten years. But the first thing that came upon me after I met the Lord was that my parents and my brothers and sisters in the flesh became a stumbling block to me. "Did you not study? Why do you do that now, at this point? Would it not be enough to listen to your parents and do it within the range your parents permit? You could just live at home attending church, so just because the will of God is such, must you go out and plant a church, must you go out and preach the gospel, must you do things so peculiarly? And if you do that, it may be doing well by God, but as for your parents, would people not misunderstand?" I heard such words. When all of us tried to follow the Lord, only the person who can hate his family if their will truly goes against the will of the Lord can become a disciple of the Lord.

The person who bears his cross and follows

Second, to become a disciple of the Lord, He said, *"And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27)*. It means that one must bear one's cross and follow the Lord. Only then can one become a disciple of the Lord. Do we not like following the Lord in comfort more than following the Lord in hardship? For a person there are his own cross and hardships that he must bear in following the Lord. But it means that only when one bears the cross and follows does one become a disciple of the Lord. So becoming a disciple of the Lord is both easy and hard. The person who follows the Lord even in the midst of hardship becomes a disciple of the Lord.

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Third, what must one do to become a disciple of the Lord? He said, *"So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33)*. As the saying goes, the further you go, the higher the mountain—it is truly a great demand. But this is the word of the Lord. He said that unless one forsakes all that one has, one cannot be His disciple, but what is it to forsake what one has? Our Lord explains it with the parable of the tower that comes before. Someone intends to build a tower. A tower refers to a high structure from which one can see far away. It is a word that if one intends to build a tower, one must calculate before starting the construction how much money will go into it, and then start. If one rushes in without even calculating and builds and cannot complete it, would one not only become an object of ridicule to people? It is a word asking whether one would not become an object of ridicule, with people saying, *"This man began to build and was not able to finish" (Luke 14:30)*. Our Lord also explains with another parable. A king wages war against a king on the other side, and it is a word that before waging war, he must consider how many soldiers the other side and his own side have, and if there is no chance at all of fighting and winning, he must ask for peace early. And with that, He said that likewise, unless one forsakes all that one has, one cannot be His disciple. What does this word mean, that unless one forsakes all that one has, one cannot be His disciple?

Abandoning one's own righteousness

Our Lord is not speaking only about material things. Our Lord is rather the One who gives material things. But there is a third condition for becoming a disciple of the Lord, and what is it? Unless one abandons all one's own excellence, unless one

abandons all one's own righteousness, no one can follow the Lord. One cannot become a disciple. Even if one is born again, each person has his own pride and has much of his own excellence. And people hate to abandon their pride and their own excellence. They want to keep it and live. But unless one abandons all of it, no one can follow the Lord. One cannot become a disciple. Unless one abandons one's own pride or one's own excellence for the Lord, one cannot become a disciple of the Lord. A servant, but a very arrogant servant; a disciple, but a person whose own assertions are firm; a person who does not know how to bend his own assertion even if a knife comes to his throat—such a person cannot become a disciple of the Lord. Even if that is one's character, what the Lord demands of us as this third thing is precisely this.

After being saved, this third fight is the fiercest fight. It is the fight of whether, after receiving the remission of sins, one will keep asserting one's own righteousness, the fact that one has lived faithfully, and one's own excellence, or whether, as when going to fight with ten thousand soldiers against twenty thousand soldiers, one will send a delegation early and ask for peace and surrender before him. "God, I have no righteousness. I have nothing great. What I call my excellence is, before You, something worn out, like a piece of rag smeared with dung. There is nothing to boast of. My excellence is nothing before the Lord. Only the Lord is great, and only Your salvation and Your word of truth, only Your righteousness, is truly right." The person who has thus given up all his own pride or his own excellence and thrown it all away—such a person becomes a disciple of the Lord.

It is the same with the brothers and sisters who have received the remission of sins and are being trained as servants of God. If one has much of one's own excellence, it is hard to become a

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disciple. Do you understand what I mean? Rather, the person who has nothing great of his own is very good for becoming a disciple. Why is that? Since he has nothing great of his own, when the Lord tells him to do this, he has no answer but "Yes," and when the Lord tells him to do that, no answer but "Yes." But a servant who has much that is great, when the Lord says, "Do this," asks back, "Why do You do that?" and when He says, "Do it this way," asks back, "For what reason do You do that?" He picks a quarrel over every single matter, asking why, what, how come, and how. The person who obeys, saying, "Even if my thought is like this, Your word is right. Ah, so it is. The word of the Lord is right. Yes, I will do so," when the word of the Lord is the truth, is the servant of the Lord, but it means that even the servants of the Lord, if they have much that is great, put their own thoughts first, saying, "Why did the Lord say it like this? If it were me, I would not have said it like this. If it were me, I would have said it this way." The third is the hardest and most difficult, more than the first and the second. The person who has passed the first condition can, second, follow the Lord even in the midst of hardship. But if he gets caught at the third, the person who has much of his own righteousness gives up while following the Lord.

To become a servant and a disciple of the Lord, one must have all three. First, when one's family in the flesh hinders, if they truly hinder the will of the Lord, one must be able to hate them even if they are one's parents in the flesh. One must be a person who can hate them if they hinder the following of the Lord. Second, if there is hardship in following the Lord, one must become a person who can follow the Lord even though it is hard. Third, one must be a person who can abandon his own excellence. There would be no one in this world who has nothing great. There would also be many people who have not one or

two but various things that are great. Probably there are at least enough great things in oneself to count on the fingers. One regards oneself thus: I do this part well, I am honest, I am sincere, I am polite, I do not lie much, I do not sin much, and whatever happens, even if a knife comes to my throat, I am a person as straight as a split bamboo who never sins before the Lord. But would the Lord like that? The Lord rather does not like such a person. It means that if you are a teacher and I am a teacher too, there is no disciple to learn, so we cannot walk together.

We cannot become disciples because we are too great

When two people meet, one must become the teacher and the other must become the student who learns. But if, while trying to become disciples of the Lord and follow and walk with the Lord, we have too much that is great, the Lord finds it hard to walk with us. He also finds it hard to use us. It is to the point that He says, "You are so great that your qualifications are lacking. So I simply cannot use you. It would be better if I became your disciple instead. You teach. If your words seem to be the truth, I will follow you." But since our words are not the truth, the Lord cannot become our disciple either. That is why, among those born again, though there are very many smart and great people, they cannot serve the Lord. They cannot become disciples.

I, too, have something great. I have something great in my own way. I know that you have too. Everyone has something great in his own way. There is no one who thinks himself second. Everyone is first in his own way. Everyone has something great, but the Lord says this: "Will you abandon your greatness and become My disciple, or will you assert your greatness and, with you a teacher and Me a teacher, shall we part? Let us choose one

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of the two." The Lord is speaking like that in our hearts now. It means that if you keep insisting on your greatness and I insist on My greatness too, and both become teachers, both get tired and cannot go together.

The Lord gets tired. So I think it over. Will I assert my righteousness, or will I give up my righteousness? Giving up one's own righteousness is truly hateful. But what does the Lord demand of us who want to live the life of a disciple? It is: "Rather abandon your righteousness. Rather abandon your greatness, your righteousness. Abandon your righteousness and rather take My righteousness, and live obeying My word, doing as I tell you, and following Me, however lacking you are." Do you understand the will of the Lord? This is what pleases the Lord. Whether man or woman, people have much pride. Usually, if a person has even a speck of something great, if he has even a little more than others, it is human to boast of it. But the Lord wants us to abandon it. Rather than putting forward my greatness and my righteousness before the Lord, I truly want my many shortcomings to be revealed before the Lord, and for it to be revealed that I am a truly lacking person, and for my shortcomings to be revealed much before the brothers and sisters too, so that although I myself am a lacking person, before God I live the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ who follows God.

If God cannot use me because I have too much that is great, then not only I but you, too, must abandon your own righteousness. If there is so much that is great, if there is so much of your own righteousness that it is inconvenient and awkward for the Lord to use you, I know that it must be abandoned. The Lord wants us truly to abandon our own righteousness, to abandon before the Lord our own righteousness, our greatness, our rightness and goodness and kindness.

In fact, it is not because we are unworthy that we cannot

become disciples of the Lord. It is because we are too great that we cannot become disciples of the Lord. It is because we are too great, too smart, know too much, are too stubborn, or are too good that we cannot become disciples of the Lord. Rather, if a person seems simple and a little slow, he is good for the Lord to use, the Lord can make him a disciple, and can use us as His disciples. But if there is too much that is great, the Lord feels awkward. We must confess before God, "God, it is so. There is nothing great in me." He said that when going with ten thousand soldiers to fight twenty thousand soldiers, one should consider, and if it seems it will not work, quickly send a delegation and ask for peace. We must consider before God. We must consider how much righteousness we have. It means that we must consider how perfect our righteousness, our greatness, our goodness really are.

Consider in advance and surrender

Are you confident of being perfect until you die, until your life ends? Are you confident of keeping goodness to the end? If you are not confident, it means that you must surrender before God early and follow, saying, "Lord, I have no righteousness. I am not perfect. Lord, I am lacking. Only the Lord is right and only the word of the Lord is right. Lord, it is right. I believe." Though until now we have lived saying that we live according to the word of God, it means that we must consider in advance and surrender before God, saying, "God, until the day our Lord comes, I am a person who has not a single thing of human greatness or righteousness." To become a disciple, one must surrender. Do you understand?

Rather than talking about you, I intend to talk a little about

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myself. In fact, I have nothing great. The Lord came into me and gave me greatness, clothed me with the righteousness of the Lord so that I became righteous, gave me the salvation of the Lord so that I became a saved person, and the Lord made me His servant so that I became a servant of God. I can say before you and before God that I did not become a servant of God because I was great, and that I am not now doing the ministry because I am righteous, because everything about me is excellent. I have nothing righteous. I have no righteousness of my own. I am not saying this in theory. I have nothing great. Rather, because I have nothing great, there are many times when my heart is at ease. Before the brothers and sisters I honestly speak of my shortcomings too, I do not take a double attitude, and I simply show myself as I am and live at ease. In the Lord I am truly at ease.

I have lived like that until now, but in fact I was a person with a tremendous amount of my own righteousness. I was a person who, even if a knife came to my throat, said no if it was no and yes if it was yes. Speaking of stubbornness, it was tremendous. There is much talk that the people of a certain family are stubborn, but when I came to know it, stubbornness was the same in every family. A person as stubborn as this takes the lead well in anything. Having a hot-blooded temperament, he likes to take the lead, and steps forward saying he will give his life for righteousness.

We must abandon stubbornness too. We must abandon our greatness before God too. We must abandon our righteousness, our rightness, and the things we have done well. Only then can we hold on to the righteousness of the Lord and become servants of the Lord. Before the Lord we must abandon our own greatness and goodness too. Some people never abandon their own goodness. If one's own goodness blocks and opposes the goodness of God, one's own goodness is a great enemy before

God. It is a great wrong. One's own goodness becomes a goodness that commits high treason.

If one wants to become a disciple of the Lord, one must have three things. Whatever hindrance there is from people, even if there is the tearful dissuasion of one's own family, if that demand is not the will of the Lord, one must be able to hate boldly. So our Lord speaks about this part. Saying that if one wants to follow Him, one must hate one's parents or wife and children or offspring, He said, *"So He said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.'" (Luke 18:29–30)*. Therefore, first, one must become such a person; second, one must follow the Lord even in the midst of hardship; and third, one must abandon one's own righteousness. It means that one must abandon one's own righteousness in the Lord. Abandoning does not mean to be ruined any old way. It means to abandon one's own greatness.

Do you not also have much that is great? But you probably do not know that our greatness, our righteousness, is something that opposes the Lord. That is what opposes the Lord. That is why the Pharisees could not properly believe in Jesus. The Pharisees were people who kept the Law well. They were people who tried to follow the word of God in everything. But why did Jesus dislike these people the most? Why did He say to the scribes and Pharisees, *"Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:33)*. It was because they always had much of their own righteousness—their own righteousness that said, even if others cannot live that way, I live keeping the word of God even if a knife comes to my throat—that they could not accept the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the salvation that Jesus gives.

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One must abandon one's own righteousness in order to obtain salvation. Even when being saved, one must abandon one's own righteousness. Jesus received baptism from John and received all the sins of the world passed on to Him, carried those sins and was judged on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead, and so accomplished our salvation completely. The person who puts forward his own righteousness before this gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot accept the salvation the Lord has completed. Even after being saved, one must abandon one's own righteousness. This is the hardest thing. Satan the devil incites us to keep our own righteousness as it is. But the Lord says that whoever does not forsake all that he has cannot be His disciple. The person who can forsake what he has for the Lord becomes a disciple of the Lord. Do you believe?

Until now we have lived by the grace of the Lord. Do you have your own righteousness? Consider it. Can you keep that speck of righteousness you have until you die? You cannot. If you can keep it, assert that righteousness to the end. But if you cannot keep it, surrender. I ask you to give it up, saying, "Lord, I am a lacking person. I am a person who has nothing great either." I ask you to admit before God that you are a lacking person. "Lord, though I am lacking, I believe the word of the Lord, and although I cannot follow the Lord one hundred percent, I still believe that following the Lord is right. And I intend to follow. Even if I have no righteousness, I intend to follow the Lord. Even if I am lacking, even if I have nothing great and am a lacking person before the word of God, I intend to follow the Lord even in my lack." Such a person becomes a disciple of the Lord within the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and God uses such people and receives glory through such people. I ask you to believe. If one wants to become a disciple of the Lord, one must have all these three. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

To become a disciple of the Lord

< Luke 14:25-33 >

"Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

Who is a disciple?

The word says this about a disciple. A disciple refers to one who wants to follow his teacher, one who wants to resemble his teacher. If we want to become disciples of Jesus, we can say that

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we are those who want to follow and resemble Jesus.

Today the Lord spoke about disciples. He said, *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26–27)*. Becoming a disciple looks very hard. Moreover, becoming a disciple of the Lord is even more so. It means that if one wants to follow the Lord, one must become a disciple. It means that unless one becomes a disciple, one cannot follow the Lord. He said that in order to follow the Lord and become His disciple, the person who can forsake his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life becomes a disciple of the Lord. So the standard by which the Lord makes disciples is so high that most people all fall short.

Even when entering some company, there are set standards. When some companies select employees, there is even competition of two hundred to one. Just as the standard is high like that, the standard for following Jesus is also high. Looking at this word, I, too, realized that God had worked like this while I was following the Lord in a daze until now, and thought it over again. It is that if I had known all these standards when I started, how could I have followed the Lord? The standard is too high. That standard is that one must hate one's own parents, one's own wife, brothers and sisters, one's own household, and even one's own life. It means that if the Lord said that I must lose my life in order to follow the Lord, one must go that far in order to become a disciple of the Lord. The thought comes to me that if I had tried to decide to follow the Lord knowing all this, it would have been very hard.

Without knowing everything, I heard that if one believes in the Lord one is saved, and believed. But that faith was a vain

faith, so only ten years after I believed in Jesus did I meet the proper word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, believe it, and receive the remission of sins. After receiving the remission of sins, I followed the Lord. Since He said not to be yoked together with unbelievers, I did so; and since He said to deny oneself, I did so; and I followed, saying that if the Lord wanted it, I would do it. Truly, when I look back, I know that it is all the grace of the Lord. I did it because the Lord gave me strength.

When I followed the Lord, many people and friends turned their backs on me. I lost them all. I even left the mother who raised me in order to follow this gospel. Beside my mother there were many people to serve her even without me. Even if I left, she could get along well with no trouble. So since there was nothing to worry about in the fleshly part, I followed God in the spiritual part. For that I got plenty of abuse.

A certain pastor criticized me like that. They say he spoke ill of me a great deal before many people, saying that I was an ungrateful person who had left his aged parents behind and gone out against the will of his parents. But one day there was a death in that family, and I went to pay my condolences. The person who had thought of me like that was there, and he knew me but I did not know him. After being introduced, I said with a smile, "I hear you do not have a good impression of me," and he did not know what to do. I told him that he might think that way, but not to go too far with it, and that when he came to know, it might not be so. When I met him the second time, his thinking had changed a great deal. Even without me there were many people to serve her, and I had not abandoned my parents in order to serve the gospel; I had come out and lived. If my parents had had no meals, I would not have done so either.

While following the Lord, I followed the Lord not by my own strength but because the Lord spoke, because the Lord was

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so good, and the Lord led me. I believe that all of this is the guidance and blessing of God. The Lord said that if one wants to follow Him, one must do like this, but by the strength of the flesh one cannot possibly follow. It is because the Lord met me that I can follow. Even before I met the Lord, I did like this because I wanted to become a disciple of the Lord, wanted to become one of the people of the Lord, and wanted to become a worker of the Lord, but in any case I believe that I have followed by the grace of the Lord.

Only when born again can one follow the Lord

That we want to become disciples of the Lord means that we want to follow the Lord. A disciple is a person who resembles his teacher and believes and lives according to his standards and goals. On this earth there are many disciples of philosophers too. Because there were such disciples, the fields of learning have been handed down to this day. But we who believe in Jesus are disciples of the Lord. Whether we want it or not, we are disciples of the Lord. We are people who follow the Lord. It means that if we have received the remission of sins, we are people who follow the Lord. I believe that the Lord gives grace, power, and blessing, and the Lord helps, leads, holds us, and keeps our hearts and minds, so that as a result we follow the Lord.

But I know that anyone goes through such a process. Anyone goes through it. He said, *"And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27)*, which means that the person who does not bear his cross and follow the Lord cannot become a disciple of the Lord either. It means that one must follow the Lord even in the midst of hardship. Whether we want it or not, it is a process that everyone goes through. It

does not work for us in the flesh, but it works in the spirit. If one receives the remission of sins, it is possible. Any hardship can be overcome by faith, but if one is not born again, it does not go well. I believe that you, too, can surely become so. If you are together with the church, there is nothing to worry about either.

There are very many people in this world who believe in Jesus, but can people really follow the Lord? Following the Lord is too much without being born again. Only when born again can one follow the Lord. Many people say they follow the Lord, but in fact they cannot follow. How could they follow? As for the person who follows the Lord, even when others look at him, they come to know, 'That person is a person who follows the Lord.' But one can also tell by looking at the person who does not follow the Lord. One knows all about their only talking well, being plausible only on the outside, and deceiving. Even meeting for the first time, one knows by looking what kind of person that person is. Even just being within a short distance, one can tell by looking at what that person says or at his expression, and at what emanates from that person. One knows because it emanates from him: that person is a person who follows God, that person is not a person who follows God.

I sometimes eat at restaurants, and there I also see the pastors of the world eating. Their words and their bearing are oily and smooth. It is because they are people who do not follow the Lord but live by using the Lord. Since you and I have met the Lord, we must learn and know that there are such conditions for following the Lord and becoming disciples. But by our own strength we cannot follow. So we must follow by the strength of the Lord. I believe that the Lord loved us and saved us, gives us power, keeps us and blesses us, and also, being with us, keeps us stably and blesses us, and by that strength we follow the Lord.

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What it means to forsake what one has

I ask you to know that the person who follows the Lord while going through such a process is a disciple of the Lord. It means that we are so, not that we have already followed completely. In words, there is no one who can guarantee it and talk big. The Lord said, *"So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33),* and I know that forsaking what one has is the first thing in becoming a disciple of the Lord. What is forsaking what one has? In following the Lord one must forsake even one's own knowledge. Knowledge used for the gospel is all right, but if knowledge learned in the world is not fitting for the kingdom of the Lord, that too must be forsaken. And one's own stubbornness and one's own will—if the Lord does not want them, all these must be forsaken too. And then what one has, that is, material things. If a person has his own material things separately, it is hard to follow the Lord.

When people who want to follow the Lord wholly receive training, the first gate is putting forward what they have, that is, their own material things. Do you ask whether they put forward much? They would have to have something to put forward in order to put forward much. Some put forward much and some put forward little. Putting forward what is one's own even if it is little, and then, if God permits, receiving those material things and using them is all right, but if one tries to follow the Lord while wearing a separate purse, it is hard to follow the Lord because one has one's own things. This is a very strange thing. If one regards what I have as the Lord's and what is the Lord's as all mine, and wears one purse together, it is very easy to follow the Lord, but if one divides it, saying what is the Lord's is the Lord's and what is mine is mine, and has one's own things separately, one comes to treasure what is one's own and not to

treasure what is the Lord's. When the heart becomes like that, it is hard. One sees people greatly sparing their own material things while not treasuring what is the Lord's because it is not their own.

As we go forward following the Lord, we must give to the Lord and receive from the Lord and live. Only when what is the Lord's is mine and what is mine is the Lord's can one serve the Lord. When serving the Lord, if one has one's own things separately, one treasures one's own things, and so, trying to protect them, one comes to neglect what is the Lord's. Though we have received the remission of sins and come into the church, if we have our own things separately, we neglect what is the Lord's. That is a very strange thing. It becomes so even if one has only a very little.

Why did the people who could not be together with the church leave the church? It is because they have their own money separately. Whether they earned it themselves or inherited it from their parents, since they have their own things separately, they live a dualistic life. Because what belongs to the church is not their own, it is not precious and valuable. Because only what is their own is their own, they treasure what is their own. And they try to protect this. So they come not to do the work of serving the Lord, and their hearts become divided. Since they wear a separate purse, as a result they come to leave the Lord.

The Lord said that unless one forsakes all that one has, one cannot follow Him. Only the person who has experienced this knows it. I do not intend to say how much I have given to the Lord since I met the Lord. I do not mind even a large sum. Even if there is a lot of money in my pocket now, since it is all the Lord's, I think about where and how to use it for the Lord, and so I have no selfish motive at all. It is because what is the Lord's

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is mine and what is mine is the Lord's. It is because we wear the same purse. But if one has one's own things separately, it is hard.

The person who leaves the church and does not unite his heart does so because he has what is his own separately. The person who has not been saved, the person who does not move his position, has what is his own separately and has a different faith separately. He clearly does believe in the Lord, but it is not the faith the Lord wants; he has a different faith. He has a faith of his own kind. This, too, must be put forward before the Lord. Material things, too, and everything, are all the Lord's. Only then can one follow the Lord.

A life united with the Lord

You each do the work entrusted to you in the church and live in your own households, but how are your hearts? Do you regard only the one room you use as yours, or do you regard this whole church as the place where you live? It means that if you have put forward what is your own and united your hearts with the church, the pride arises that this whole place is where I live.

In the old days, while planting churches before I met you, I moved many times. At that time I saw the people of the world puffing themselves up because they lived in spacious houses. But I always have this heart. Among our churches there is hardly anything that is in my name. But I think that the churches in many places are all mine and also all the Lord's. So in that respect my heart is rich. How about you?

What is God's is all mine, and what is mine is all God's. That is the heart and faith of the person who has put forward what is his own and has nothing of his own. Is something one's own only if it is registered in one's own name? The person united

with the Lord is a person who has forsaken what he has. And he is united in heart with the Lord and has the same heart. Such a person is a disciple of the Lord. I think that all the people in the church are my household and my family, and that what is here is all mine and ours. It does not matter whether it is in my name or not. What matters is whether one lives as His disciple, united with the Lord. The life of a disciple is a life lived by faith. It is living a life united with the Lord, and following for the purpose of the Lord and for the will of the Lord.

I always live with such a heart. Wherever I go, that place is my home, and I live regarding what is God's as mine and what is mine as God's. Are you like me? Do you know and believe and live knowing that what belongs to the church is yours, what is yours is God's, and the church, too, is God's?

A disciple is a person who has received the salvation the Lord gave and who likes, admires, and loves the Lord so much that he wants to follow Him. Can one follow by force? Does one not follow because one loves and respects? Since the Lord saved us by the water and the blood, in all propriety one cannot assert anything else and cannot wear another purse. Is it not so? The person who has not become a disciple of the Lord wears another purse. Whatever we have, we put it all forward. When I had just received the remission of sins, like you, I was exactly the same. I put things forward even before being born again, and after being born again I put forward everything, even my heart. So I am not intimidated before people, and when I must fight, I fight strongly and boldly.

As we live, there are times when we quarrel, and at such times the person united with the Lord is different. As for the person not united with the Lord, he himself and the other party simply quarrel. But the person united with the Lord deals with it with the heart that I am a person of the Lord and a servant of

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God. The other party quarreling with me becomes not merely quarreling with me but quarreling with God. It is so because I have united with the Lord. If one stood against him personally, how frightening would it be? One has only one life. But if one unites with the Lord, the dimension changes. It means that the disciples of the Lord are all such people.

If things go well, the work of the Lord is going well, and if they do not go well, the work of the Lord is not going well, so we come to pray before the Lord for help. In everything we must unite with the Lord. He said, *"For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8)*. Did the Lord not actually receive baptism from John and receive our sins passed on to Him, and shed His blood and die on the Cross in our place? And He rose from the dead. The Lord's taking sin upon Himself was taking our sins upon Himself, the Lord's death was taking our death upon Himself, the Lord's dying and rising again was raising us again, and the Lord's enjoying glory was done so as to let us enjoy glory. It means that the person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit and follows is a disciple of the Lord. So becoming a disciple of the Lord is not only hard things; in practice there are a great many very good things.

A life lived together is a blessed life

We want the work of the Lord to go well. It is good because this work is my work and the work of the church. If we also earn much materially, it is good. And if it is hard, we have only to pray before God. This means that it is not something I go through alone, but something you and I go through together. So it means that this is not necessarily mine alone. When we come to regard

it as the Lord's, we come to pray boldly when we pray too. If it were mine alone, one might pray or not, and just do as one's heart wished. Because if this work does not go well, the work of the Lord does not go well, we pray for blessing so that the work goes well. So the united life, the life of a disciple, is truly happy. It is beautiful. It is without selfish motive.

When some matter becomes difficult, we must unite our hearts and pray, and also look for what we should do. We have only to do so according to the word of the Lord, who said, *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7)*. We have only to ask, seek, and knock. I ask you not to live carrying all the burdens alone by yourself. If you have put forward what you have to the Lord, then when it is needed, the Lord gives. So I ask you not to worry but to live the life of a disciple who follows the Lord. I myself want to live like that too. It is happy.

That we are saved and believe in and follow the Lord is not a life in which each lives separately, but a life lived together. I ask you to know this fact and to know that this is a blessed life. I ask you to believe. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The way to become a disciple of the Lord

< Luke 14:25-35 >

“Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, “This man began to build and was not able to finish.” Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. ‘Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’”

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Becoming a disciple

The subject of the word we will share today is becoming a disciple of Jesus. It is a matter of how one becomes a disciple, and looking at the text, becoming a disciple of Jesus is not an easy thing. Being saved by faith is easy, but becoming a disciple seems tremendously hard. *"Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them" (Luke 14:25)*. The Lord taught many things through some occasion or event. Jesus was going along the way with a multitude. At that time He looked at that multitude and spoke. *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26–27)*.

How hard it is to become a disciple! Obtaining salvation by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit is easy, but becoming a disciple seems extremely hard. It is because, looking at this word, He says that unless one hates one's father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even one's own life, one cannot become a disciple of the Lord. It means that to become a disciple, unless one hates the brothers and sisters, wife, children, and parents listed here, and even one's own life, one cannot become a disciple of the Lord. A disciple is a person who resembles and follows the Lord, and it means that if one wants to become a disciple, one must have nothing of one's own.

When we believe in the Lord, receive the remission of sins, and follow Him, we are sometimes blocked by some matter. Sometimes because of parents, sometimes because of one's wife, sometimes because of one's children, sometimes because of one's brothers, and sometimes there are times when even one's own life is placed in danger because of believing in the Lord.

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Unless, even then, even in such a situation, one denies everything and goes forward saying, “Only the Lord is my God and my Master, so if the Lord wants it, I will follow, I will serve,” one cannot become a disciple. It means that one must be a person who, rising above all this, says, “Even if I lose everything, I will uphold the command of the Lord and follow the Lord,” in order to become a disciple of the Lord.

So how hard and how difficult a thing it is to become a disciple! How many people could there really be who can become disciples of Jesus? Then does it not seem extremely hard? Is obtaining salvation not too easy? One obtains salvation by believing and obtains salvation by acknowledging, but following Jesus is different. A disciple is a person who follows the command of the Lord, wants to resemble the Lord and submit to that command, and believes in and follows the Lord as his God, his guide, and his life.

The place of choosing one of the two

When one tries to live like that, one sometimes comes to stand at a crossroads because of wealth. It is the crossroads of whether one will really follow the Lord, or whether one will choose wealth when one hears the words, “If you do not believe in Jesus, I will leave you my property.” One must choose one of the two between wealth and Jesus. If someone says he will give enormous wealth, saying, “If you do not follow and do not believe in that Jesus you now believe in, I will give you all this,” what would you do when placed in such a situation? If you choose the wealth, you are not a disciple of the Lord.

It is the same with power. It is a question of whether one can exchange Jesus for power. If there were those who demanded

that one choose one of the two—will you throw away power and follow Jesus, or will you abandon Jesus for power?—what would it be like? In that situation could one really throw away power and follow Jesus? It means that only by doing so can one become a disciple of the Lord. At times, while believing in the Lord, there are times when even one's life is in danger. There actually were such things as, "If you believe in Jesus, I will kill you, and if you do not believe, I will let you live and release you." It was so throughout the ages, and in the apostolic age, too, the Roman emperors persecuted the disciples of Jesus like that. "Will you acknowledge the emperor as god? Will you put the image of that Jesus you believe in on the ground, trample it underfoot, crush it, spit on it, and pass by? If you do so, I will let you live." There were many who received such trials, and there were many disciples of Jesus who suffered such things. So some disciples chose death. Though it looks easy in words, that is not an easy thing.

Becoming a disciple of Jesus looks easy if one obeys by faith, but that does not mean one can live as a disciple of Jesus without paying any price. So it is hard. But, seen in another way, it is also an easy thing. In fact, who is more precious than our life, than our existence, than our brothers and sisters in the flesh, than our own parents and our own property and power? Is it not the Lord? That Lord is the One who gives us everything, and if we believe in and follow that Lord, we become disciples, obtain eternal life, and come to have everything. But if we lose the Lord, we come to lose everything.

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Only by abandoning one's own thoughts can one follow

Becoming a disciple of the Lord does not mean that one can follow the Lord without hardship. He said, *"And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27)*, and one's cross refers to the suffering one must bear oneself. The hardships one goes through when following the Lord are many. First, one must fight with oneself. One must break oneself. One must abandon oneself. One must abandon one's own thoughts and abandon one's own desires too. Only then can one follow with the faith that believes in the Lord. Otherwise one cannot follow.

The greatest hindrance to following the Lord is our own thoughts and point of view. Unless one abandons one's own thoughts, one cannot follow. The Lord told us to preach the gospel to the whole world. But before the work of preaching the gospel to the whole world, how are we? There are many people who say that they cannot preach the gospel even in our own neighborhood, let alone the whole world, and who do that work first, saying that to preach the gospel in our neighborhood, they must first invite people, fill the sanctuary, and increase the members. As they go on doing so, they forget the command of the Lord, forget the work of preaching the gospel to the whole world, and concentrate only on their own problems of food, clothing, and shelter and their own ministry. Unless one abandons one's own thoughts, one cannot follow. If one thinks that one has only to obey the command of the Lord, it is rather simple. Since He told us to follow, we have only to say, "I will do as You tell me." Since He tells us to preach the gospel to the whole world, we have only to preach the gospel to the whole world. The rest is all the responsibility of the Lord. So we

decided to preach the gospel through literature and built a system and are running it. If we say, “Lord, bless this work. We are now doing as You want,” it is easy.

But if one thinks that the pews of the church, the offerings, and living expenses come before the work of preaching the gospel to the world through literature, what happens when one soul comes in? We say, “Welcome, come in,” but that person demands, “I already believe in Jesus. I have come from attending the church next door. I was a deacon in that church. I was an ordained deacon. I was an elder. If I come to this church, will you recognize me as an elder?” Then what would you do at that time? If that person is a sinner, does not yet know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and does not believe even when it is preached to him, must you recognize him as an elder? Must you recognize him as a deacon? Suppose that person gives a great deal of offerings to the church. Suppose he comes every week and gives a large sum. Could you say to such a person, “You are not even a layperson. You are still a sinner. You are not an elder. You are not a deacon either”? It means that such things are hard.

If one follows the command of the Lord, one loses that person. Not following the command of the Lord and saying, “For now I will recognize him like this, and later I can preach the gospel to him,” is human thinking. Because one did not first obey the command of the Lord, that person will later try to replace the pastor. It is, “I, too, believe the gospel, and does a person who recognizes me as an elder and lives by receiving the offerings I bring refuse my will?” In the end the elder becomes the owner of the church, and the replacing of pastors takes place. So pastors strive to humor them. If it comes to that, can that church be sound? So this means that there are hardships, too, in following the Lord.

In an individual’s following the Lord, too, each has his own

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hardships. There are times when one must give one's youth in one's own way, times when one must deny one's own thoughts, and times when one must lay down one's own preferences. One cannot follow the Lord without sacrifice. The Lord surely demands this. Without sacrifice one can never become a disciple of the Lord. Unless one denies one's own thoughts, abandons one's own stubbornness, gives up one's own power, one's own desire for honor, and one's own material things, gives up one's family in the flesh, and gives up even one's own life, one cannot become a disciple of the Lord. That is what He is saying to us. Even if we do not become so right away, if we hear the word and know that this is right, and then, when we run into some situation, the Holy Spirit in our hearts speaks, making our hearts uneasy, saying, "Yes, that is right. What you are doing now is wrong," I know that when we obey that word our hearts become at peace.

Sit down first and count

It means that if we want to follow the Lord, we must consider all this. Perhaps we have until now been following the Lord in the church just as things came. But it is that someday, as we live, would there not come a time when we must pay such a price? It is because the Lord said so. It is not that I demand it, but that there is a time when the Lord demands it of each of you. Just as He asked Peter, "Do you want to follow Me? Do you love Me? Do you really love Me more than these people?" there is a time when He asks us too. And there is a time when we must choose one of the two.

At such a time, if we have been hearing the word regularly, if we say we really believe in the Lord, though we do not know how things will turn out, we will at least be able to choose the

right side by faith. The hardships after that can be solved by asking the Lord for help. So we must consider. He said, *"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it" (Luke 14:28)*. Even today, does it not cost a lot to erect a single big steel tower? In the old days, building a tower cost even more than that. It was because people had to make it directly. These days it is done with machines and equipment, but at that time it was not so. So when one intends to build this, one must draw up a budget and calculate everything—how much will go into it, how much steel will go in, how much wood will go in, how much the wages of the workers will be—and then take on the challenge; but if one starts, saying one must build it unconditionally, and lays only the foundation and then has no money at all, what happens? It means that with no people, no materials, and nothing, one cannot complete it. Then, the word says, would people not mock him?

It is that in our following the Lord, too, should we not consider and draw up a budget and then follow? You may think, what budget is needed and what calculation is needed for following the Lord? One may also think that it is just closing one's eyes and believing unconditionally, but the Lord did not say so. He said to consider. It is, "Even if I demand of you such and such things as I have said, even if you lose because of Me, will you follow Me?" If one says, "Even if I lose, I will follow," one becomes a disciple of the Lord, and if one says, "I cannot follow," one does not become a disciple of the Lord.

Becoming a disciple of the Lord, following the Lord, is not an easy thing. But if one follows by faith, neither is it hard. Whatever it is, if it is done by faith, it is extremely easy. It is simple. When I followed the Lord, when I first faced it, it was enormously hard. It was really hard. I was hated by all the people

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who knew me. I was hated by my friends, by the people who knew me, even by the people who had been helping me until then, hated by the people who had respected me, hated by my colleagues, and hated by my wife, my children, and my relatives. It did not end there; I also had to lose much property I could have obtained, had to lose my honor, had to get abuse, had to become penniless, and, seen in one way, could even have lost my life. Having gone through it directly, it was a truly hard and difficult thing.

So now, while serving the church, I am doing this work regarding the problem of food, clothing, and shelter by which we live, and the work of earning material things through the literature ministry in order to preach the gospel to the whole world, as exactly the same as the work of serving the Lord. Otherwise, you, too, all run into that problem. And there you must choose one of the two. It is hard to live the life of faith. With an ordinary faith it is hard. When one loses everything—loses wife, loses children, loses parents, loses everything, may lose property, lose power, lose honor, and even lose one's own life—could one say, "Still, I will follow the Lord"? I know that there would be many such people. He said that the Lord does not judge by looking at a person's outward appearance.

Following by faith those who go ahead

The foregoing story is about when we meet such a situation, but even without meeting such a situation, there are many such things in our daily lives too. There are many times when we must deny ourselves. There are times when the one who goes ahead says, "Let us do it this way," but as I see it, it is something that seems as if it will not work. Even at such times, if the one who

goes ahead says, “Your thinking is right too, but I want you to do it just as I said,” it is not an easy thing to abandon one’s own thinking and do so. The person who does so is a person of great character. Following by faith and obeying the one who is ahead of oneself is a great thing. It is not only those who go ahead who are great; believing and following like that is also great. I know that it is not an easy thing to follow the opinion of a person that does not agree with one’s own thinking and follow his command.

It is so with me too. When I keep setting aside my own will, saying, “If the Lord is pleased with this, let us do it. It does not suit my heart, but if only the Lord is pleased, let us do it,” I become comfortable later. But breaking myself like that was hard, in my experience. But now it is comfortable. Even now, when something to break myself over approaches, it is hard. Not everything goes according to one’s own will. One must also listen to the opinion of the other person, and as one does so, there are many troublesome things too. Still, if by doing so and adjusting well it becomes beneficial to the Lord and beneficial to the brothers and sisters, one must accept that too. If one sets one’s heart like that, it is comfortable. Enduring well, being patient, praying, and also listening to that person’s opinion, and if it really seems a situation where one must grant that person’s words, granting them even if we lose a little—I know that we have only to accomplish the will of God.

What matters is whether the purpose of the heart is to follow God. Do you really want to follow? Do you really want to go after Him? Do you really believe? If we really believe and really want to follow and really want to obey and want to submit, there is nothing hard at all. But if it is not sincere and we merely follow and obey because we cannot help it, and follow in the manner of having to submit because our strength is weak, I know it is really hard. Even after passing one crisis, there is another crisis next,

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and after passing that crisis, there is yet another crisis.

So it is to consider from the outset. It is that a certain king intends to wage war with ten thousand soldiers against a country that has twenty thousand soldiers. So the Lord says that it is wise to consider before going to war whether one can actually engage and win, and if one cannot win, quickly to ask for peace. This word means that it is so in the relationship between us and the Lord. It means that only by abandoning our thoughts can we follow the Lord. By our own strength we cannot follow the Lord. It means that if we simply say we will give up everything in order to follow the Lord, and follow while asking for help, saying, "But Lord, help me. Help me so that I can live on this earth," we can follow. Our Lord said this to us.

And our Lord speaks. He said, *"'Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'" (Luke 14:34–35)*. It means that you are salt, and if salt loses its flavor, it is of no use at all. He is asking us: are you really those who have been saved; though you are those who have been saved, do you really want to believe in and follow the Lord, do you want to obey, do you want to submit, do you want to suffer with the Lord and be glorified with the Lord? "Yes, we want to become so. But we have no ability. We have no strength. So we want to abandon our thoughts and follow You even if we lose everything we have. Only, we want not only to follow on this earth but to obey Your command. In order to preach the gospel we need parents, we need material things, we need brothers and sisters, and we need our families in the flesh. Please permit them. Even if we have these things, we want to follow the Lord without leaning toward them." It means that when our hearts have become like this, our Lord helps us and blesses us.

It is a matter of the heart

It means that this is a matter of the heart. It is whether one will truly follow with the heart. The Lord asked Peter. *"So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs.'" (John 21:15)*. And He asked the same the second and third time, and saying, *"Tend My sheep" (John 21:16)* and *"Feed My sheep" (John 21:17)*, He entrusted the work of the Lord and the sheep to him. This is the faith of the disciples who follow the Lord. Peter tried to hold out by his own strength, and when someone tried to trouble Jesus, he even took up a sword and resisted, but in the end Jesus was arrested and died. Peter came to know that he could do nothing. But as for the heart, it is, "I love You. To me only You are my God, my life, and my everything." As for the rest, when he is tested he falls again, but still with the heart he believes in You and follows You.

The Lord entrusted His sheep to him, saying as many as three times, "Feed, tend, feed." It means that He does so to us today as well. You may ask how different the apostolic age and now are, whether now is not an age in which we sit and exchange news with the whole world, and whether the Lord would still demand such things of us now. Even now the Lord demands of us. There are many times when He demands at every moment. When desires boil up in our hearts and we want to live as we please, the Lord speaks. "Do you really love Me? Do you believe in Me? Do you want to follow Me?" Then we say, "Yes, I want to follow. But my state is this state." Then the Lord says, "That is enough. Wander a little and then stop right there." And so we again believe in and follow the Lord.

Neither I nor you can say that we are all done. Until we enter

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the kingdom of the Lord and actually meet the Lord, not spiritually but with this body resurrected, we are all lacking people. That is why we must strive to become disciples, and must seek faith in order to become disciples. I know that our Lord is saying this to us. And I believe it is so.

How hard it is to become a disciple of the Lord! And yet being saved is so easy. It is the same with all our coworkers in various parts of the world. If their faith grew just a little more and they wanted to become His disciples according to the will of the Lord, they would think, "Rather than my preaching the gospel alone, that coworker is now serving the church and preaching the gospel, so I am truly thankful." But they have not yet reached such a state. So they sometimes send us letters with the meaning of asking us to recognize them. Even though we are far apart, just by looking at that writing we know all about with what heart they are doing so now. But we do not say right or wrong about it.

There is exactly one way to go to the kingdom of heaven. One cannot go by believing in another god. Nor can one go by believing in any god that people have made. Only by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord accomplished can one go. Jesus received baptism from John and received all the sins of the world passed on to Him, carried those sins and shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so accomplished all our salvation. There is no other way than believing this gospel. Therefore we must preach this gospel to the whole world.

With faith as small as a mustard seed

The biggest problem in following the Lord is one's own thoughts and possessions. It means that if one sets one's heart to forsake what one has and follow the Lord, and decides one's heart like that by faith, there is nothing hard. If one has much of one's own, one has many thoughts of one's own. Whether property, power, or one's own thoughts, if one has much of one's own, it is hard to follow the Lord. So I ask you to strive to empty your hearts. You must empty the heart. It is hard to follow because one has much of one's own. Even now, the person who finds it hard to follow the Lord is the person who has much of his own. If one has many thoughts of one's own, one must empty them. In your hearts the Lord must sit on the throne. "Only the Lord is my King, and if the Lord wants it, I will do anything." With such a heart, with such faith, one must live. Do you want to live like that?

Whether it goes well in action is the next problem; first of all, the heart must be set like that. In the heart one must say 'Amen' and, "That is right. I will follow." When one does so, faith as small as a mustard seed arises, and as one keeps hearing, faith grows so that one can follow the Lord. There is no such thing as faith swelling up greatly overnight. The first is faith as small as a mustard seed. So that faith piles up and piles up, grows bigger and grows, and later becomes great faith. The Lord, too, said, *"If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20)*. I ask you not to say from the start, "I have none." I ask you to follow with faith, even if only a small part.

However much time remains for me together with you, I hope to serve the gospel well. Let us serve the Lord well and live like that. I want to follow the Lord until the day the Lord comes. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

To become one who gains the Lord

< Luke 14:25-35 >

“Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, “This man began to build and was not able to finish.” Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. ‘Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’”

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What must one be like to become one who gains the Lord?

Today's word is a word that teaches what one must be like to become one who gains the Lord. The Lord said as follows: *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26–27)*. Here the Lord uses the word *"whoever"* again and again.

For us to become those who believe in the Lord, it is enough to believe. But it is a word that in order to become one who follows according to the will of the Lord after believing, that is, to become one who gains the Lord, one must be like this. Unless one hates one's parents and wife and children, and even one's own life, one does not gain the Lord. The person who does not bear his cross as the Lord wants and follow the Lord does not gain the Lord either.

So in verse 33 He said, *"So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."* What must we be like in order to believe in the Lord, receive the remission of sins, gain the Lord, live walking with Him, enter the kingdom the Lord has prepared, and obtain eternal life? And what must we be like in order to live the life of a disciple on this earth? The Lord is saying that we must first calculate the cost that accompanies it.

If you intend to build a tower, first count the cost

If we look at the word from verse 28 to verse 32, the word about that calculation appears. He said, which of you, intending

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to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether what he has is enough to finish it? A tower is a high lookout. It is built so that one can go up high and see where a fire has broken out in some area, and see whether the enemy is coming to attack. It is a word asking whether, if one intends to build such a tower, one would not first think about whether one can manage it with one's own financial resources.

Our following the Lord is the same. Jesus Christ is our Savior, our God, and our Shepherd. Then it does not end with believing in that Lord. If one intends to follow the Lord, one must first calculate.

If one follows the Lord, one may be rejected by one's parents and may lose one's parents. One may lose one's brothers and may lose one's property. One may lose money, lose friends, and lose honor. Perhaps one may even lose one's life. It is a question of whether one will follow the Lord even if one loses all of that. It is a word that one must calculate what one will lose. It means that such resolve is needed in order to gain the Lord.

Our believing in the Lord looks very easy. In fact, since the work by which the Lord received baptism from John and received our sins passed on to Him, shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment for sin in our place, and rose from the dead and so washed away our sins was accomplished by the power of the Lord, it is easy for us. But following the Lord after believing is not easy. It is not easy for anyone. Since you are in the church at a place where the table has been completely set, it may feel easy. But it is not all easy. If you look at the process by which you have believed in and followed the Lord until now, you will know that it was not easy. It is truly hard.

One may be hated and may lose what one has. One may lose parents, children, wife and children, friends, honor, and love—all of them. So one must calculate and then follow. In order for

me to believe in the Lord and be saved, to have Him as my God, and truly to gain the Lord, I must lose many things. Since the Lord speaks like that, one must calculate whether one will still follow.

To have the Lord in our hearts and walk with Him, we must pay the price

If one calculates and thinks that one cannot possibly manage it, one believes only the gospel, and from then on retreats, saying, 'Why must I lose?' Brothers and sisters, in order to gain the Lord, in order to have that precious One in our hearts and walk with Him, we must pay the price. Just as one must pay a price to obtain something precious, it is a question of whether one will follow even if one loses much, in order to gain our precious Lord and walk together with Him.

The Lord speaks with one more example. When waging war, the soldiers I have are ten thousand, but on the other side there are twenty thousand soldiers. It is a word asking whether one would not first sit down and calculate before waging war. If one calculates well whether one has a chance of winning, one knows at once. If there is no chance of winning, one must quickly send a delegation and, rather than fighting, ask for peace. One must consider what each side wants, negotiate, and get along well. If one advances and fights unconditionally because one's feelings are hurt, though one has no ability, what would one gain?

How much more, even when building a single house, would one not draw up a budget? If one intends to build a five-story house, one considers how much the cost per pyeong and the total budget will be. One calculates everything, adding and subtracting even the land price, labor costs, and taxes. One

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calculates well whether one has that much money, whether one can pay the money on time, whether one has the ability to live in this house even after completing it, and whether one can also pay the taxes, and then builds the house.

In the same way, if we intend to believe in the Lord and follow the Lord, we must calculate. If one intends only to receive the remission of sins and not to follow the Lord, stopping at only being saved, it would be better not to know the Lord at all. Why is that? It is because if we betray the Lord on this earth, the Lord, too, does not acknowledge us. The Lord said as follows: *"But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:33)*.

Therefore one must calculate. If one intends to gain the Lord and follow the Lord, one must consider whether one can go as the Lord wants. It is a question of whether one will bear it even if one loses much while doing the work the Lord commands. So the Lord said that if anyone comes to Him and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, he cannot be His disciple, and asked whether one would follow Him even if one came to lose them. The Lord came to this earth and was hated by the devil and the people of the world. Therefore we, too, if we believe in the Lord, are hated by the people of the world. It is a word asking whether one will still follow.

Are only good things waiting in believing in and following the Lord? Is only happiness waiting? Is suffering not also waiting? Are hard things not also waiting? Is there not also loss, though there is also reward? One may lose friends one has known for decades, and even parents may come to dislike us. The adoptive parents who raised me, too, treated me like an enemy after I met the Lord.

Even if I lose everything, if I gain the Lord, I will follow the Lord. So I sought to be saved as the Lord wants, to gain the Lord,

and to live a life of walking with the Lord. I sought to go to the kingdom of heaven the Lord has prepared, to obtain the eternal life the Lord gave, and to live the life of a disciple while living on this earth. I hoped for all of that, considered it, and then followed. The Lord asks not only me but you as well.

The Lord first paid the full price to gain us

Here we must consider one more thing. Since the Lord told us to calculate the cost, then what price did the Lord pay to gain us? Before we consider the price we will pay, we must know the price the Lord paid first.

The Lord, though He was in essence the very form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but rather emptied Himself, took the form of a servant, and became like men. He laid down all the glory of heaven. And He came to this earth, and at the age of 30 went to the Jordan River and received baptism from John the Baptist. When John tried to prevent Him, the Lord said as follows: *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).*

In the Old Testament, when the high priest laid his hands on the head of the sin offering, the sins of the people were passed on to that offering. In the same way, when John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, baptized Jesus, the sins of the whole world were passed on to the body of Jesus. So the next day John the Baptist saw Jesus and testified as follows: *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).*

The Lord, who had carried all those sins, was nailed to the Cross. He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the Cross. He shed His blood on the Cross, received the judgment for our sins in our place, said it is

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finished, and died. And on the third day He rose from the dead and became the Savior of you and me. The faith that believes all this ministry—the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection—is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

The Lord paid His whole self as the price to gain us. He laid down the glory of heaven, received baptism from John and received our sins transferred to His body, poured out all His blood on the Cross, and paid even death as the price. And He rose again from the dead and gave us even the life of resurrection. We are people who have been bought with that price. Therefore this word telling us to calculate the cost is a word whose answer comes out by itself once we know the price the Lord paid first. For what would we exchange the Lord, who bought me by paying so great a price?

To regard it as finished with our being saved is truly laughable. Brothers and sisters, such a heart is trying to deceive the Lord. If one says, I will believe in You only that far, and after that my life is mine, so I will live as I please, one has already abandoned that Lord. It is saying, You saved me, so I believed in You and was saved; therefore You are no longer needed. If one abandons Him, saying, now that I am saved, what need do I have of the Lord, then the Lord, too, abandons us.

So He said that the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea. *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away" (Matthew 13:47–48)*. Words like this appear very often in the Bible. Why did the disciples of Jesus follow the Lord even in the

midst of such hardship? They did so in order to gain the Lord, in order not to lose the Lord.

If salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?

At the end the Lord speaks of salt. He said, salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? He said that it is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill and is thrown out. Salt is a truly good thing. Without salt, people die. Food has no flavor either. Without salt, everything decays and rots.

But what happens if salt loses its flavor? What does it mean to lose its flavor? Even salt, if it is mixed with the dust of the world, dung, poisonous things, and all kinds of filth, has lost its flavor. It cannot be eaten. Such salt produces no effect at all. Even after we have been saved, we come to want to follow our own desires and follow the world. Because we are human, we are instinctively like that.

But that heart is a momentary thing, a thought that surfaces for a moment. One may go wrong for a moment. But what is the fundamental purpose of us who have received the remission of sins? It is to walk with the Lord and have Him with us, live as the Lord wants, and enter the kingdom the Lord has permitted us. Ultimately it is the kingdom of heaven, and more ultimately it is eternal life. And while living on this earth, it is to live as a disciple, having the Lord with us and proclaiming the Lord.

Why do we follow the Lord?

The first is, of course, salvation. From after receiving salvation, everything is hard. Attending on a precious One is that

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laborious a task. We must know that fact. There are people who think, is it not enough to have been saved, so why do you live struggling so hard? Seeing us striving to earn money to become the calyx of the gospel, saying that we live according to the will of God after being saved, they regard it as foolish. They say, how plentifully we could eat and spend if we used those material things for ourselves. And they ask why we do not use them for ourselves but for the Lord, and why we strive so hard at the work of sending books, which is not even a matter of making our own name known.

We do so in order to gain the Lord. We do so in order not to be abandoned by the Lord. We do so in order to gain the love of the Lord. We do so in order to gain the heart of the Lord. Is it because we do not know how to reckon? We, too, know how to reckon. Everyone knows what is beneficial and what is harmful to him. Then why must we believe in the Lord and follow the Lord? Why must we serve? Why must we do according to the word of the Lord? Why must we live in order to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world? What is the reason? We live like that in order to gain that precious Lord and not to be abandoned by Him.

A person who regards his head as working somewhat well tries to quit after being saved. In the old days I preached the gospel to a certain person. Until he was saved, he earnestly asked me to preach the word to him, but after I had preached it all and he said he had received the remission of sins, from then on he refused, saying that it was no longer needed. And he said that he would go back to his old church. So I told him goodbye. And I added one word. You know that you have been saved, do you not? But the word of the Lord is that since you abandon Me, I, too, abandon you.

It is the same however much one has been saved. If we

abandon Him, the Lord, too, abandons us. If we do not treasure the Lord, the Lord, too, does not treasure us. Where is this word? It is the word that says, *"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12)*. This word is in the highest place among the teachings of God. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, and we believed in that only begotten Son and were saved. But if after being saved we do not live according to His will, it amounts to abandoning that only begotten Son.

Therefore pretending to be shrewd and smart is a foolish thing. However good one's head is, if one has no wisdom, that head only becomes poison to oneself. It is a foolish thing. That is why people who are said to be smart in this world do not accept the Lord. They do not believe. But people who are lacking, weak, and have nowhere to lean believe in the Lord. After believing, they come to know that the Lord is such a precious One.

Then they strive to live so as to please Him. Such people live the life of a disciple. So they live as the Lord wants, live accomplishing the will of the Lord, live losing many things, and on the other hand live gaining many things through the Lord. And they enter the kingdom the Lord has permitted, obtain eternal life, and enjoy everlasting life. This way is completely different from the former way. Therefore the person who lives by using his own head after being saved is, if one calculates well, rather a foolish person. There are people who say, I will believe in and follow the Lord, but I will follow after doing everything I want to do on this earth. The Lord does not let such a person follow. Such a person cannot follow either.

A certain rich young man came to Jesus and asked what he must do to obtain eternal life. To him, who said that he had kept the commandments, the Lord spoke as follows. *"If you want to*

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be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matthew 19:21). That young man began to worry. He went away worrying, thinking, how precious my property is, and it would be enough just to follow, so why does He tell me to give it all away and then follow?

Brothers and sisters, if you put your own wishes and your own desires first and do not make living so as to please the Lord your purpose, you cannot follow the Lord. The Lord demands much of us, but He also gives much. But if one tries to gain only what is the Lord's while keeping all of what is one's own as it is, the Lord is not One to be deceived by such a calculation. So the person who himself pretends to be smart is not in the kingdom of the Lord.

Such people know one thing and do not know ten things. There are many people who assert only what they know. There are many people who read one book and assert only the content of that one book. A person who really knows, knows many things and yet says one thing. The matter of trying to become a disciple of the Lord is the same. What is a disciple? A person who comes to resemble his teacher. The Lord, our Teacher, did the work of giving up His own life to save many people. Then what would the Lord demand of us who want to become disciples of that Jesus? He wants all our time, material things, and bodies.

Therefore we devote everything and serve the Lord. If the Lord wants it, we do this work and that work too. If the Lord wants it, we do even the work we dislike. We live like that. We follow the Lord like that.

The lacking person follows the Lord well instead

We have become beings truly needed in this world. We have become people who have received the remission of sins, people who can preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, serve that gospel, and live for the Lord. But if we give up this place, if we give up the life of a disciple, if we give up the heart that wants to gain the heart of the Lord, the Lord, too, will give us up.

In the Old Testament, Moses exhorted the people of Israel while speaking of the Law. He told them not to serve the gods of the Gentiles when they entered the land of Canaan. He told them not to intermarry with the Gentiles and not to follow their customs. He said that if they did so, the LORD would be angry and suddenly destroy them. But the people of Israel actually abandoned God, served other gods, and burned incense. They took Gentile women and took Gentile men. So God struck them by the hand of enemy armies.

He sent armies such as Babylon and Assyria to strike them, and had them taken away and made to serve as slaves for 70 years. Still, when they repented, He called them back again and let them return to the land of Canaan. But after listening well to the word for a while, they again abandoned God and repeated the same thing.

We must know. Receiving the remission of sins is easy. But following the Lord is, as this word says, a matter of losing many things. And at the same time as losing, it is a matter of gaining many things. One gains new things, that is, the things of heaven. So in the Beatitudes He said, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Poverty is the core. Only when one is poor does one gain the things of the kingdom of God. The person who has become rich in the things of the earth does not gain the things of heaven. A poor spirit is the core of the

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Beatitudes.

The things of heaven are filled according to whether one has lost for the Lord, whether one has sacrificed much for the Lord, whether one has lived for the Lord, whether one has believed in and followed the Lord, whether one has lived the life of a disciple. But if one has filled oneself with the things of the earth and not through what is the Lord's, there is nothing at all of the Lord's. Such a person perishes together with this earth. Today, sharing this word together, we have come to know what God wants.

We must want to become people truly needed in this world as true salt and live the life of a disciple. We must want to please the heart of the Lord. We must want the purpose of the Lord to become our purpose. Until the day the Lord comes, until the day we go before the Lord, we must want to live the life the Lord wants. That heart is the attitude of those who have become righteous.

The Lord is my everything and my all

The lack of us human beings does not matter at all. Rather, because a person is lacking, he can serve the Lord well. Brothers and sisters, a person who has strength and is full of vigor does not serve the Lord. So the Bible says as follows: *"And the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Corinthians 1:28–29).* That He called them *"things"* as if treating them as objects is a word that they were that much not treated as human beings.

Such people believed in the Lord and were saved because

they were lacking. But when they were saved, they found that the Lord was such a precious One. For fear of losing that Lord, they lived as the Lord wanted. But living like that, they gained so many things. It is the lacking person who follows the Lord well instead. The person who is said to be smart cannot follow the Lord well. The person who is said to be smart has no wisdom. In fact he is not smart.

While living in this world, a whole lifetime is all too predictable. A week passes in no time, a month in no time, and a year in no time. It passes without one even knowing when the year has all gone. Is it not so? In a very little while He who is coming will come. Moreover, in this present age it is a very clear fact that the Lord is coming near. It is something even a foolish person can know. In such an age, will you follow the desires of your own flesh instead of following the Lord? Will you follow your own purpose instead of following the purpose of the Lord? I ask you to consider well.

If we do not follow the Lord, the Lord saves other people. Now we are making and distributing the collected volume containing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and people who have received the remission of sins through that book will come in wanting to follow the Lord. Brothers and sisters, you must never be complacent. If you do not properly keep your own place, it is all taken away. You must know well the place where you are working.

Because the Lord is such a precious One, in order not to lose the Lord I follow today and follow tomorrow, though I am lacking. Some days I follow well, and some days I follow deficiently. Honestly, it is so. Still, what does not change is the fact that the Lord is a precious One. He is One who cannot be exchanged for the diamonds of this world, nor for gold, nor for anything one might give. He is my everything and my all. It is

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the same for you. Even after being saved through Him, if you lose Him, you lose everything. I ask you to know that. By all means, I will close the message here. Let us pray, thinking on the word we have heard. ✉

Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

Forsake all that you have

< Luke 14:31-35 >

"Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. 'Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'"

The person who empties himself becomes a disciple

Our Lord said that when the king of one country fights with another king, he should first consider whether he can meet twenty thousand soldiers with ten thousand soldiers, and if he cannot win, he should send a delegation and ask for peace before the opponent comes near. And with that He says, *"So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33)*. The Lord is speaking about becoming a disciple of the Lord. When a person tries to do something by his own strength, he keeps getting caught in snares and it is hard. In fact, emptying oneself is more important than a person having some will. It means that rather than saying that one can do something, it is right to empty oneself and live the life of faith

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relying on God.

Let us think about how you and I can become disciples if we go forward following the Lord and try to become disciples of the Lord. Rather than regarding ourselves as able to do something, we must quickly realize that we can do nothing by ourselves, and rather than going ahead saying that we must do something, we must empty ourselves and hope that the Lord will do it, and become saints who believe what the Lord has already accomplished and what He will accomplish in the future. If one tries willfully to do something, one cannot think of anything else until one has accomplished everything one has set one's heart on. Therefore the true life of faith is, rather than our saying what we will do and how, knowing that when we try it ourselves, there are limits. It is that one hopes to live the life of faith well, but it cannot go well as one thought. It is that there are limits. It is that our thoughts or will or ability surely run into limits, so that things do not go as we thought, as we set our hearts.

We are always lacking. We are not perfect and are always lacking. Therefore, if we truly want to follow the Lord, we must know that only when we first empty ourselves can we follow the Lord and become disciples of the Lord. If we empty ourselves, it becomes the prayer, 'Lord, please do it,' and the faith that the Lord will do it also arises. But when we try to do something, it seems as if we could do something, but it does not work. He says that this life of faith, becoming a disciple of the Lord, is such a thing. If our ability is ten thousand, what the Lord wants is twenty thousand, so it means that we must abandon our ability and our thoughts. Can we follow the Lord by our individual ability? We cannot follow.

Then how do we follow? There is nothing but emptying oneself. "Lord, I can do nothing. I believe that the Lord has saved me and that the Lord is the God who will lead me." It is

believing in Jesus, who has the ability of twenty thousand. Becoming a disciple of the Lord means believing. That is, it means emptying oneself and believing in the Lord. When we empty ourselves and ask the Lord, pray, and believe, we can become disciples of the Lord, and we can do the things the Lord did and can follow. It means that when we empty our hearts, we become disciples of faith. If we do not empty ourselves, we do not become disciples of the Lord.

It means that if one believes in and follows one's own will without the faith that believes in the Lord, it is impossible, because our strength has limits. So today our Lord says that if one wants to become His disciple, unless one forsakes all that one has, one cannot be His disciple. In this word, forsaking what one has does not speak of a level of merely forsaking wealth itself. Forsaking wealth is easy. Forsaking what I have is extremely easy. It is simple. But emptying the heart is different. It means that rather than saying what I will do, I empty my heart and say, "Lord, please do it," and believe that the Lord will do it and follow. It means that at such a time we can become disciples of the Lord. When one admits that one is really nothing and a terribly lacking person and follows the Lord, one can become a disciple of the Lord.

By our will we cannot follow the Lord

Among the hymns there is a confession that without the Lord we are worthless bodies that only make mistakes, and that without the Lord it is like a boat without a sail sailing the sea. It means that such a faith, in which one does not believe in the Lord and tries to do something oneself, is not right. Before we do anything, before we say we can do it, we must admit that we are

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those who can do nothing apart from the Lord. And it means that when we follow by faith that the Lord helps us and that the Lord accomplishes everything we hope for, we can follow the Lord and become disciples of the Lord. I ask you to think once about what we really can do. It means to think about whether we can follow the Lord with a faith that believes in ourselves and our will, not a faith that really believes in the Lord.

Apart from the faith that gives up our own will to do something and believes in the Lord, we cannot follow the Lord. We cannot become disciples of the Lord either. When we forsake what we have, our saying that we can do something, our very selves, and believe in and follow the Lord, we can become disciples of the Lord. As for the affairs of the world, we must strive and be diligent. It will not do if we do not lift a finger. All the work of the flesh must be done with effort and diligence. But it means that in our following the Lord, and in becoming disciples of the Lord, our will or our strength is of no use at all. Rather, it is cumbersome. In becoming a disciple of the Lord, our strength or our will is rather only a hindrance.

If we truly want to become disciples of the Lord, if we really want to follow the Lord to the end, we must believe in the Lord. It is a word that by emptying ourselves and our hearts and believing in the Lord, we become disciples of the Lord and can also follow the Lord to the end. Can we follow the Lord by our will? Do you think that you can do it—never denying, never being disappointed, never betraying, never leaving the church, not leaving God, not leaving the brothers and sisters, not leaving the servants of God? When the Apostle Peter had fellowship with Jesus, Jesus said that they would all forsake Him, but Peter said, *"Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble" (Matthew 26:33)*. But Jesus said, *"Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows,*

you will deny Me three times" (Matthew 26:34), and later Peter denied Him three times, very harshly. That is exactly our human will. It is wrong to follow the Lord with a faith of one's own kind, with one's own ability. Our ability has limits, and it is like the ten thousand soldiers spoken of here. It means that for following the will of the Lord, our faith, our ability, our will, and our strength are insufficient.

Then how can one be whole? The Bible says that one must surrender and make peace while the other is far away. It means that one must give up what is one's own, make peace, and believe in the other party. Only then can one not lose that war and survive without dying. If we intend to become true disciples of our Lord, believing the fact that the Lord saves us, keeps us, and blesses us is more important than our willful faith. We must quickly realize that our own ability is nothing. A human being is nothing. The will is nothing, human wisdom is nothing, and that human faith itself is nothing. It is only that the Lord is great; we humans are all only creatures and are nothing.

If we have a willful faith in following the Lord, we surely end up failing. But not something willful—the faith that believes that though one is lacking and a person who can do nothing, the Lord has saved one and will also bless and lead one, the faith that believes in the Lord, the faith that trusts the Lord, that one faith makes us disciples of the Lord and makes us follow the Lord. It means that you and I become whole by that one faith that believes what the Lord has done and what He will do in the future. If we believe in the Lord, we become disciples of the Lord, can follow the Lord to the end, and can live receiving and enjoying all the care and blessing the Lord gives. But it means that if we believe in ourselves rather than believing in the Lord, we fall.

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The trap of the words “I can do it”

Therefore I ask you and me not to follow our own will or our own faith in the life of faith, not to have the proud thought that I can do it, but to possess the faith that believes in that Lord—that I cannot, but the Lord has saved me, keeps me, and leads me to green pastures and beside still waters. Believe in the Lord. That faith will become yours. With such faith, with such belief, we must live the life of faith. We can also receive blessing, and above all we must quickly realize the fact that we ourselves are nothing. We may think that we ourselves can do something, that we are great, but we can do nothing. It is you and I who cannot do anything about the future that is coming, cannot do anything about tomorrow, and cannot do even a minute or a second by our own will. We only believe in the Lord and only rely on the Lord. Do you believe the fact that the faith that believes in the Lord let us receive the remission of sins, makes us happy, cares for us, and that by the faith that believes in the Lord we will live in the future? I ask you to have this faith.

At one time I saw the words “I can do it” written on the banner of a certain meeting. What can clearly be said is that the Lord can do it. The Lord does everything. He is the Almighty. But a strange saying has entered the world of faith. That is the saying, “I can do it.” This saying, interpreted in a good direction, is a very good saying, and interpreted in a bad direction, it is the word of the devil. “Man cannot, but God can”—that is right. But what can one do? One can do dawn prayer and can do a hundred days of all-night prayer. A certain world-famous preacher once wrote a book called I Can Do It, and after that many framed pieces bearing the words “I can do it” came to be hung. But what can a person do? He cannot. If we could do everything we set our hearts on, would this world be like this? It would become a

truly beautiful world. Is it not because we cannot that we live like this? Only when we believe in the Lord are beauty and blessing guaranteed. It is only by faith, and only the Lord can do it and does it.

Above all, we must quickly realize that we ourselves are nothing. It is not that we should not act. It is not a word saying not even to cook rice because we cannot, but that we cannot act perfectly. It is that we cannot do anything perfectly. That is why it says to know that we are lacking and believe in God. It is a word not to believe in ourselves but to believe in God. This is the way to become a disciple of the Lord. Only the person who quickly realizes that he is lacking becomes a disciple of the Lord. And he can follow the Lord. By our ability we cannot follow the Lord. By our ability we cannot keep ourselves. By our ability we cannot be saved.

The faith that believes the salvation the Lord accomplished

By giving up what is our own and believing in the Lord, everything comes about. It means that one becomes a disciple, receives salvation, becomes a child of God, receives care, receives blessing—everything comes about in the Lord. Do you want to become a disciple of the Lord? To become a disciple of the Lord, one must know that one is nothing. And one must not believe in one's own ability. One must believe in the Lord. One must always empty the heart. Have you and I not also had many things fail when we tried to do something? This is not a mere doctrine but the fact that we humans are nothing. It is that only believing in God is whole. It is that only when we believe can we become whole.

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When we say that we give up what is our own and believe in the Lord, what is it that we believe? It is what the Lord has accomplished entirely for us. Jesus received baptism from John and received all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. And by carrying those sins and being nailed to the Cross and shedding His blood and dying, He paid the full price of sin, and by rising from the dead on the third day He completely completed our salvation. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We did not obtain this salvation by doing something. Just as one considers that one cannot meet twenty thousand soldiers with ten thousand soldiers and asks for peace early, the person who lays down all his own ability and his own righteousness and believes this gospel the Lord has entirely accomplished becomes a disciple of the Lord.

So if you want to become a disciple of the Lord, know that you are nothing. Do not believe in your own ability, but believe in the Lord. Always empty your heart. By giving up what is our own and believing in the Lord, everything comes about. One becomes a disciple, receives salvation, becomes a child of God, receives care, receives blessing—everything comes about in the Lord. That one faith that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit makes us disciples of the Lord and makes us follow the Lord to the end. I ask you to believe. ✉

◇ About the Next Series

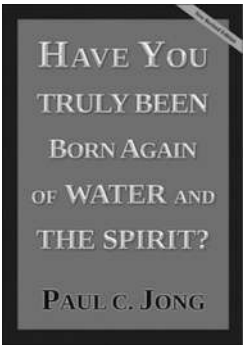
The ***'Biblical Exposition & Sermon Series from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit'*** will continue to be published following this book.

We sincerely hope that the books by Pastor Paul C. Jong, which will continue to be published, will serve as spiritual nourishment to strengthen your faith.

News about newly released books, as well as various ways to access them—including eBooks (PDF, EPUB), audiobooks (M4A, MP3), and online reading—can be found at **www.bjnewlife.org.**

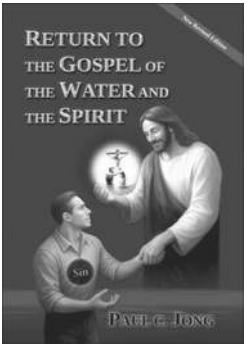
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

HAVE YOU TRULY BEEN BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT? [New Revised Edition]



Among many Christian books written about being born again, this is the first book of our time to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in strict accordance with the Scriptures. Man can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit. To be born again means that a sinner is saved from all his lifelong sins by believing in the baptism of Jesus and His blood of the Cross. Let's believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven as the righteous who have no sin.

RETURN TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT [New Revised Edition]



Let's return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Theology and doctrines themselves can't save us. However, many Christians still follow them, and consequently have not been born again yet. This book clearly tells us what mistakes theology and doctrines have made and how we can believe in Jesus in the most accurate and certain way.

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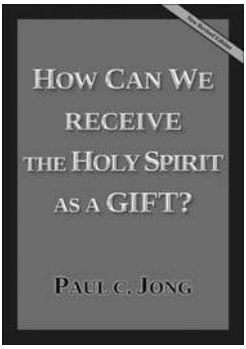
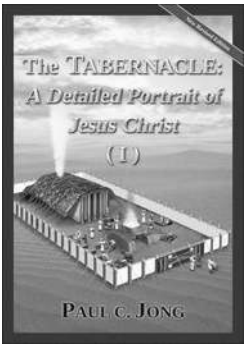
HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]



In Christianity, the most significantly discussed issue is salvation from sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However, few people have the exact knowledge of these two topics. Nevertheless, in reality people say that they believe in Jesus Christ while they are ignorant of true redemption and the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the true gospel that makes you receive the Holy Spirit? If you want to ask God for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then you must first know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and have faith in it. This book will certainly lead all Christians worldwide to receive the Holy Spirit through the washing away of all their sins.

The TABERNACLE : A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (I) [New Revised Edition]



How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

In fact, the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen manifested in the gate of the Tabernacle's court show us the works of Jesus Christ in the New Testament's time that have saved the mankind. In this way, the Old Testament's Word of the Tabernacle and the Word of the New Testament are closely and definitely related to each other, like fine woven linen. But, unfortunately, this truth has been hidden for a long time to every truth seeker in Christianity.

Coming to this earth, Jesus Christ was baptized by John and shed His blood on the Cross. Without understanding and believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, none of us can ever find out the truth revealed in the Tabernacle. We must now learn this truth of the Tabernacle and believe in it. We all need to realize and believe in the truth manifested in the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen of the gate of the Tabernacle's court.

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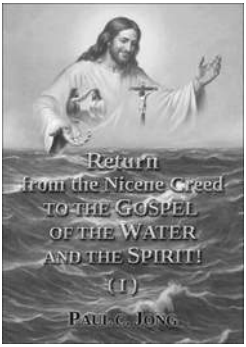
Return from the Nicene Creed TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT! (I)



-Why must we return from the Nicene Creed to the gospel of the water and the Spirit? –

The gospel that the early church preached was precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That gospel was the gospel that Jesus actually shouldered and washed away the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John.

The baptism Jesus received from John was to fulfill the law of the sacrificial system found in Leviticus. That is, just as sin was transferred to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, the substance of that sacrificial law was fulfilled through Jesus's baptism.

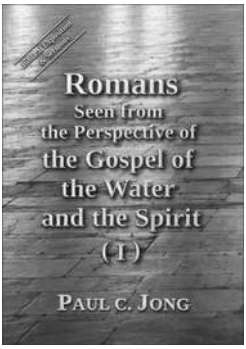
However, in the process of the Nicene Creed's formation, the ministry of Jesus having the sin of the world transferred to Him by being baptized by John was deleted from the creed's contents. As a result, this truth has been passed down in a hidden state within Christianity for about 1,700 years, reaching the present day.

Today, many people are struggling to receive the removal of their sins without knowing when their sins were transferred to Jesus. Because of this, even while saying they believe in the gospel of the cross, they fail to reach true assurance of salvation and live amidst repetitive repentance and the pangs of conscience.

The reason we must return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit is clear. This is because only this gospel allows us to meet the Jesus who became the sacrificial offering as the sin of the world was transferred to His body, and thereby have assurance of salvation.

Paul C. Jong's Biblical Exposition & Sermons

Romans seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)



When Looking at Romans from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit,

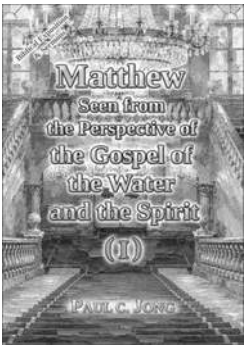
A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and resurrected, it finally begins to be seen why Paul introduced himself as a "debtor to the gospel" and so boldly declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel."

The Apostle Paul, after revealing the sins of the Gentiles and the hypocrisy of religious people in turn, proclaims the righteousness of God manifested apart from the law. That righteousness is not a righteousness built up by human moral effort, but the righteousness completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection. The righteousness Abraham received when he was uncircumcised is the evidence of it, and the "blessing of not imputing sin" that David sang of is the result of it.

A person who believes this gospel knows that he is one who has already been justified. Only upon that conviction does peace with God reside, and the path opens where even tribulation leads to perseverance, character, and hope. This mystery—that a life which was placed under the reign of death over sin through one man, Adam, has received the removal of sins through one person, Jesus Christ, and has been transferred under the reign of righteousness—takes its place within us.

Salvation has already been completed at once. Now, what remains is the matter of receiving that gospel with the heart and living as a righteous person.

Matthew seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)



Why does sin still remain in your heart, even after believing in Jesus, reading the Bible for years, and attending church faithfully? Through Matthew chapters 1–4, this book answers clearly from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Tracing Jesus' birth and the wise men's worship, the ministry of John the Baptist as the last high priest, the saving work Jesus began with His baptism in the Jordan, the temptation in the wilderness, and the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, this book testifies that through His baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus took the sins of mankind upon Himself, was judged and died on the cross, and rose from the dead, overcoming sin and death.

If you know the blood of the cross but not when and where your sins were passed on to Jesus, look to the unchanging word of salvation rather than your feelings. In the Bible-based gospel of the water and the Spirit, see what the 'all righteousness' God fulfilled truly is.

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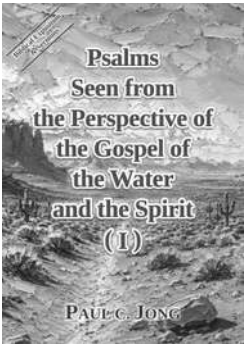
Psalm seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I)

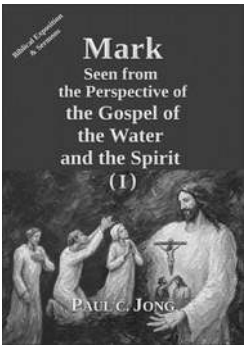


For long ages the Psalms have been the prayer book and the hymnal of the saints. Yet if we read them only as beautiful religious poetry or as an expression of emotion, we easily miss the meaning of these songs of praise. For David's laments and praises ultimately point to Jesus Christ, the Savior who is to come.

This book is a biblical exposition that unfolds the Psalms from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. David's songs are not an outpouring of emotion but the confession of a righteous man who has received the remission of sins, a prophetic praise that looked up to the Christ who is to come. The blessing, righteousness, and peace of the Psalms do not come from human goodness but from the salvation God accomplished in Christ.

Beneath it all flows a single gospel. It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus took our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins on the cross, and rose from the dead to make us righteous. When you open the Psalms with this gospel, the old songs come alive as your own confession, and this book leads you to the blessed place of those clothed in the righteousness of God.

Mark Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)



Who do you believe Jesus to be? Through Mark chapters 1–4, this book testifies to the beginning of the gospel, the Lord's authority to remit sins, and the ground of the heart that hears the Word.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed onto Him, bore the punishment for those sins in our place on the Cross, and rose from the dead and gave us eternal life. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins at once and the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Do not read this book merely to add to your knowledge. Examine what kind of ground your own heart is, and lay down your own righteousness and religious stubbornness. Receive the Word of life just as it is and enjoy true rest, and relying on the Lord even in the storms of life, bear the fruit of faith.

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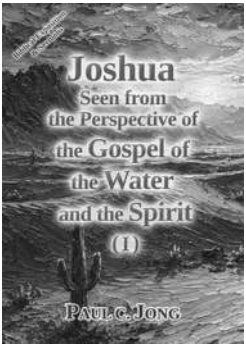
Joshua Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)



The Book of Joshua is often read as the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan and its victories in war. But the heart of Joshua chapters 1 through 12 is not human courage or strength; it is God's salvation. It shows how God leads sinners across the Jordan into the land of promise and makes them enjoy the remission of sins and true rest.

This book explains Joshua chapters 1 through 12 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. From the death of Moses and the crossing of the Jordan to the fall of Jericho and the defeat of the kings of Canaan, Joshua points to Jesus Christ the Savior. Jesus took all our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose from death to complete salvation.

Discover the true victory that is obtained not by human strength but by believing the Word of God. Lay down your own righteousness, rise again from failure, be united with the Church of God, and walk boldly in the rest and the spiritual inheritance God has already given.

Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)

"Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)" expounds the Word from Luke chapters 1 through 6 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Each chapter is composed of three parts: Biblical Exposition, Questions and Answers, and Sermons. The central message conveyed by this book is clear. Salvation is not accomplished by human goodness or merit. Rather, Jesus, who is God, received the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died on the Cross to pay the price for those sins, and rose from the dead, thereby giving complete salvation from all sins to those who believe in this truth.

Pastor Paul C. Jong of The New Life Mission is a servant of God who has devoted his life to preaching the true gospel. Through the Word he preaches, this book will lead souls held captive by sin to the joy of the remission of sins and to eternal life in Jesus.

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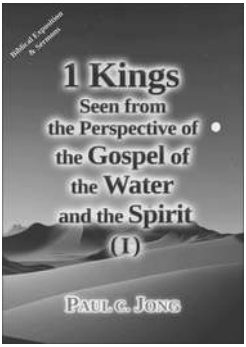
1 Kings seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

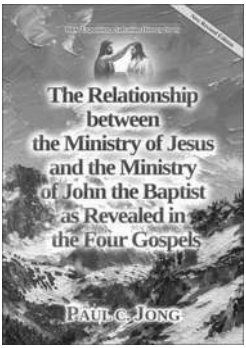


Why did Solomon, who received great wisdom from God, spend more time building his own palace than the Temple? Through David's old age and Adonijah's fall, and Solomon's accession and the building of the Temple, 1 Kings chapters 1–7 show that the glory of man fades, but the faith that fears God endures forever.

This book reveals the gospel of the water and the Spirit contained in the Temple and its furnishings. Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete salvation.

Do not rely on your own wisdom and your own kingdom. Use the wisdom, wealth, and time you have received for the gospel and for souls, and serve Jesus Christ as the King of your heart, building the house of God.

The Relationship between the Ministry of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptist as Revealed in the Four Gospels



The Ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist — Preparation and Fulfillment: The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit, Believed in the Order the Bible Records It

Why do the four Gospels introduce John the Baptist before speaking of Jesus' public ministry? Matthew records the baptism by which He fulfilled all righteousness; Mark, the messenger who prepared the way; Luke, the birth into a priestly family; and John, the testimony of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. These four books of the Bible—the four Gospels—together shed light on the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist.

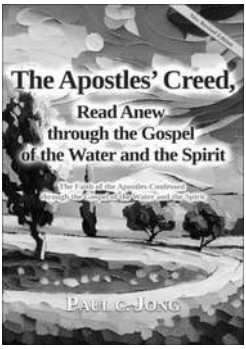
This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete our salvation.

We must believe in the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist exactly as the Bible records them, receive the remission of sins, abide in the assurance of this completed salvation, and live as witnesses to it.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Paul C. Jong's Special Features

The Apostles' Creed, Read Anew through the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit [New Revised Edition]

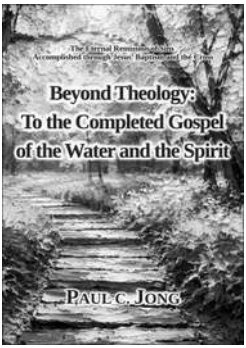


As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission of sins and been born again.

This book examines this confession of faith, shaped and refined by people, article by article in the light of the "gospel of the water and the Spirit" to which Scripture testifies. In the light of this gospel—the gospel in which Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world by being baptized by John, bore the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead on the third day—this book points out what the Apostles' Creed leaves out.

The aim of this book is not to help the reader recite the Creed more skillfully. "Have I truly been born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit?" When we come to answer this question through the Word, we will at last offer a living confession as those who have received the remission of sins and been born again.

Beyond Theology: To the Completed Gospel of the Water and the Spirit



Even as we confess that we have been saved, why does the weight of sin still remain in one corner of our hearts?

Countless saints live carrying this question. Each denomination has a different answer, but the Bible testifies to one story from beginning to end.

This book does not belong to any denomination. It sets out what each tradition—Calvinism, Lutheranism, Methodism, Catholicism, and others—teaches, acknowledges their contributions, and then brings them all before the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the gospel by which Jesus bore the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John, was judged on the Cross, and completed our eternal salvation through His resurrection from death.

This book does not condemn any church. It only invites you to lay down your familiar theology for a moment and to discover anew, before the gospel of the water and the Spirit, where unshakable assurance begins.

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Sincerely,
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Pastor PAUL C. JONG

Currently, Pastor Paul C. Jong leads 'The New Life Mission', where he and his fellow workers are spreading the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Although he believed in the crucified Jesus, he suffered for a long time because his problem of sin remained unresolved. In the midst of this agony, he came to believe that Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world through His baptism by John the Baptist, and subsequently bore the judgment in our place on the cross.

For the past 40 years since then, he has been preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to those who only believe in the cross, documenting his actual sermons in writing. The compilation of these manuscripts has given rise to today's 'Biblical Exposition Series from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit.'

His works, comprising an ongoing 100-volume series, have been translated into more than 110 languages and are read in over 160 countries. E-books and audiobooks are available for free at www.bjnewlife.org, while physical books can be purchased on Amazon.

You can download Rev. Paul C. Jong's Christian Books to Computer, Tablet or Smartphone.

The Gospel of Luke, seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

The narrow gate that Jesus spoke of is not a gate one enters through human effort or religious zeal. It is a gate that can be entered only by believing in the heart in the salvation of Jesus Christ, who took upon Himself the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged on the Cross, and then rose again from the dead.

At the feast of the Kingdom of Heaven, everything needed for salvation has already been prepared. It is not that a person completes his salvation by adding his own goodness or righteous deeds; rather, those who lay down their own righteousness and stubbornness and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has fulfilled—that is, the gospel of the remission of sins—and have thus been made sinless are the ones who take part in the feast of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Those who are saved put the Lord's will before the desires of this world and their own thoughts, use their time, talents, and material possessions for the gospel, and wait for the Lord who will come again. They also live to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven, together with the church, to the souls who do not yet know the grace of salvation. This is the way of the true disciple that the Gospel of Luke teaches us.

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