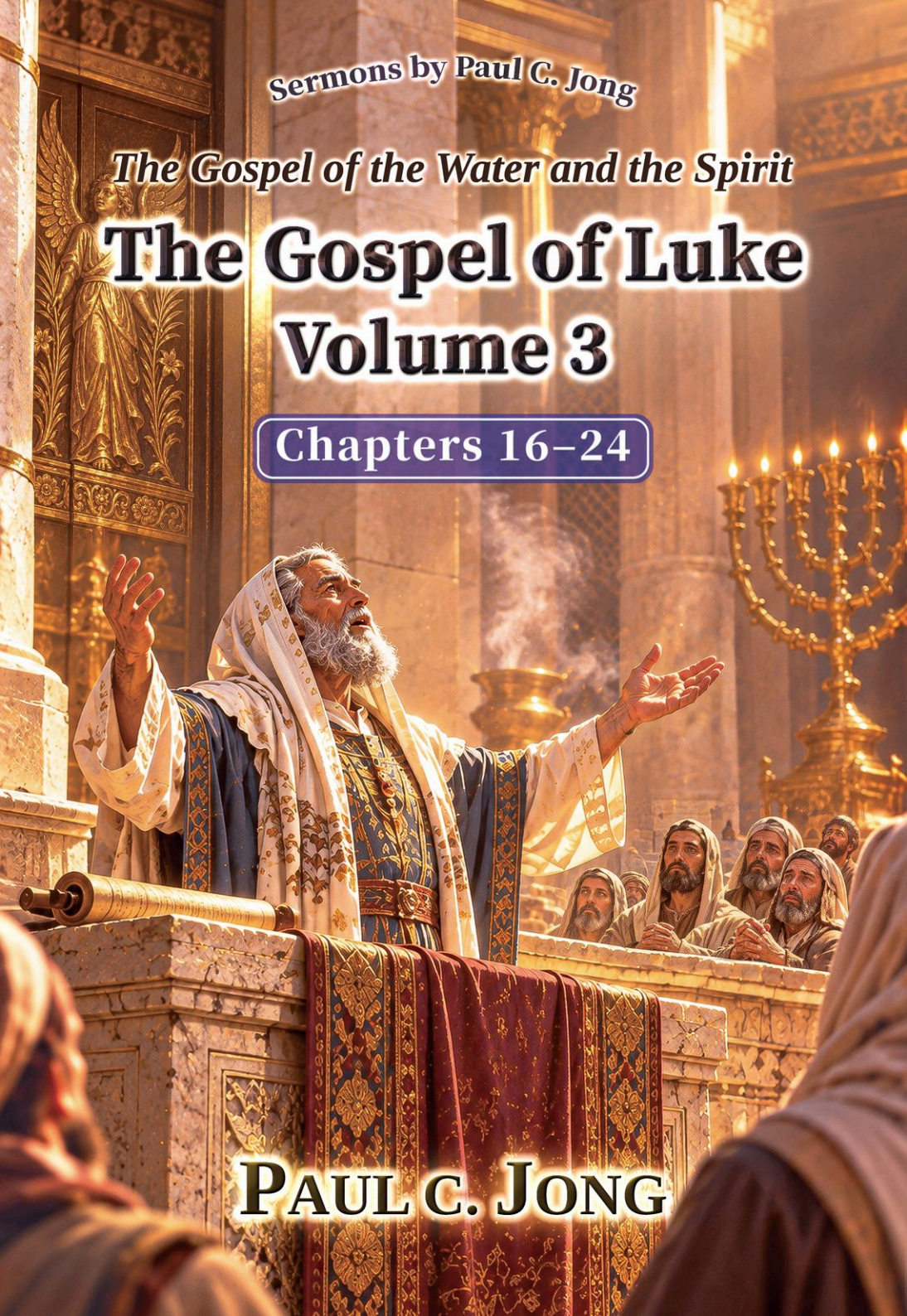
Sermons by Paul C. Jong

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

The Gospel of Luke Volume 3

Chapters 16–24



PAUL C. JONG

“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43)

How can a sinner facing death be with Jesus in Paradise? Jesus did not demand good deeds as the price of salvation from the man who asked Him to remember him. It is because Jesus received baptism from John and bore once and for all the sin of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, received the judgment for that sin on the Cross in our place, shed His blood and died, and rose again from death and accomplished salvation. Believe this salvation that the Lord has accomplished. Paradise is not a place one enters by accumulating one’s own righteousness, but a place where those who are without sin through faith dwell together with Jesus.

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and read now,

before the Antichrist appears,

as this world is heading toward destruction.

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

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Sermons by Paul C. Jong

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

The Gospel of Luke

Volume 3

Chapters 16–24

PAUL C. JONG

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

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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.

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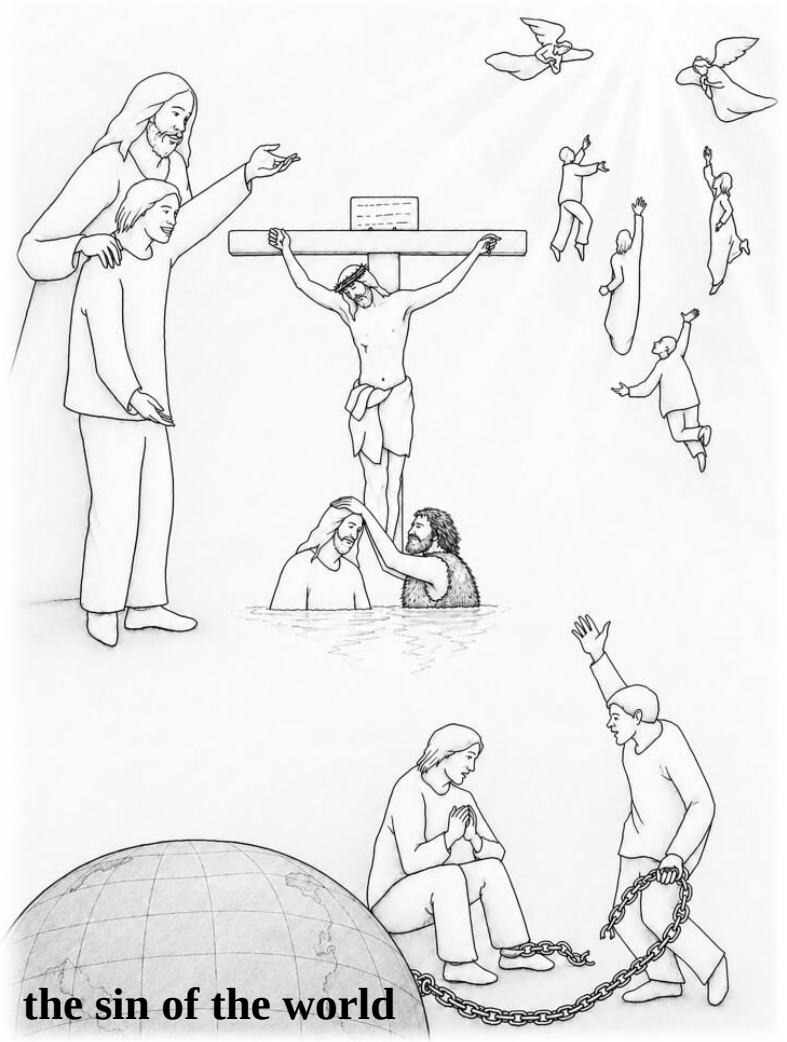

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Preface

Where will we dwell after we leave this earth?

People secure a house to live in and prepare what they will use tomorrow, but they easily put off the question of where they will dwell after the life on this earth is over. If what they have is plentiful, they regard the days ahead as safe, too; yet riches cannot stay with us forever, and no one can prepare a dwelling beyond death with what he has piled up. That Jesus spoke of the everlasting home in Luke chapter 16 makes us reflect on what we are holding on to now and whether we are living while looking toward the kingdom we will enter in the future. Following the word of Luke chapters 16–24, this book conveys Jesus Christ, who gives us that kingdom, and the salvation He has accomplished.

The rich man and Lazarus lived in different circumstances on this earth, but both of them met death. After death, the rich man's riches could not deliver him, nor could he cross between the two places as he wished. What we must examine here is not how much we have, but whether we hear and believe the word of God now, while we are alive. When the rich man asked for Lazarus to be sent to his brothers, the answer given was also the word that they should hear Moses and the prophets. Rather than waiting for someone who has gone through death to come back and tell us, we must know the way of the remission of sins and eternal life from the word God has already given.

For the person who believes in the eternal kingdom, the purpose of using today's riches also becomes different. Jesus said, *"You cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13).*

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When a person who tried to secure his own future by relying on riches believes in God as his Master, he can use the possessions entrusted to him for the spread of the gospel and the work of saving souls. This is not a matter of buying with riches the qualification to enter heaven; rather, it is about a person who has received the grace of salvation living today for the kingdom where he will live in the future. The person who knows the grace he has received does not make that labor a merit to put forward before God.

Receive in your heart the King who gives salvation

Then who enters that kingdom? Jesus answered by taking up two men who went up to the temple to pray. The Pharisee laid out before God that he had fasted and given tithes, but the tax collector, standing afar off, beat his breast and prayed, *"God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13)*. Jesus said that this tax collector went down to his house justified. The kingdom of God is not a place entered by the person who puts forward his own righteousness. Because man commits sin from birth until death, the remission of sins is given to the person who abandons the thought of covering his sins with his own conduct and acknowledges before God that he is a sinner. Even the ruler who considered that he had kept the commandments could not reach eternal life by his own strength. Because God has accomplished the salvation that man cannot, we only receive that grace as a little child receives it.

Zacchaeus shows from whom that grace comes. A chief tax collector and a rich man, he was a person whom people murmured about as a sinner, but Jesus called him first and said that He would stay at his house. Zacchaeus received the Lord

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joyfully, and said that he would give half of his possessions to the poor and restore fourfold what he had extorted. This heart did not come from bargaining to pay the price of salvation. Because he had met the Lord, who came to seek and to save the lost, a new heart arose in him that wanted to give up what he had been holding on to for himself alone. To receive Jesus does not stop at knowing His name; it is to believe in Him as the God who knows me and delivers me from sin, and to serve Him as King. The person who has received this Savior as King wants to live according to the Lord's will with what the Lord has given.

The leaders of the temple, however, did not accept that King, and demanded to know by what authority He taught. To the Sadducees, who said there is no resurrection, Jesus made it clear: *"He is not the God of the dead but of the living" (Luke 20:38)*. God is the One who does not leave His people in death but gives them life. And when people boasted of the beautiful stones of the temple, Jesus spoke of the day when not one stone would be left upon another, and said, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Luke 21:33)*. Visible buildings and the stability of the world collapse, but the word of this King, who gives life, is fulfilled just as it is. Therefore, even when the world is shaken and persecution comes, we must not let our hearts be taken by the cares of this life, but must believe that word, watch and pray, and carry out to the end the spread of the gospel that the Lord has entrusted to us.

He gave His body and blood and opened the way to approach God

At the Passover table, Jesus gave the bread and the cup to His disciples and did not demand that they offer anything for Him. Rather, He said, *"This is My body which is given for you" (Luke 22:19)*, and He called the cup the new covenant established in His blood. The Lord's serving us was not a comfort bestowed in words alone. Jesus, who is in His essence God, came in the body of a man and had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John, the representative of mankind. Because He bore on His body even the sins we have already committed and the sins we will commit throughout our whole lives, He was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died in order to receive the judgment for those sins in our place. And He rose again from death and became our eternal Savior. We receive the remission of all sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus has accomplished.

That night, on the Mount of Olives, Jesus prayed to the Father until His sweat fell to the ground like drops of blood, and He told His disciples, too, to pray that they might not enter into temptation. But the disciples fell asleep, and Peter, who had declared that he would die with the Lord, said three times before that night was over that he did not know Him. Even though the Lord knew this beforehand, He said, *"I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail" (Luke 22:32)*. Our salvation did not depend on the firm resolve of a disciple; it depended on the Lord, who prayed beforehand for the disciple who would fall and walked the way of the Cross alone.

Words of mockery poured out at Jesus hanging on the Cross, telling Him to save Himself, but the Lord received that

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punishment to the end in order to save sinners. One of the criminals hanged with Him acknowledged that he was receiving the due reward for his sins, and asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom. To this man, who had no time even to pile up good deeds, Jesus promised that he would be with the Lord in Paradise. The reason He can give the promise of Paradise even to a sinner who has no righteousness to put forward in the face of death is that Jesus is the Savior who Himself bore sin and paid its price.

When Jesus was hung on the Cross, the veil of the temple was torn. The Lord opened the way for us, who could not approach God because of sin. There is no need to add our own asceticism or tears in order to receive the remission of sins; we must believe in our hearts the fact that all those sins were passed on to the Lord and that their judgment is also finished. Once I know this salvation, I move from the place where I only grieved over Jesus' suffering to giving thanks for the love that gave His body and blood in my place. The reason we can love and follow the Lord is also that He first took our problem of sin upon Himself and solved it.

Look to living forever with the risen Lord

The tomb in which Jesus was buried was not the final place of salvation. The women who went there with spices remembered before the empty tomb the word the Lord had spoken, and the two who were going to Emmaus came to understand the Christ who had suffered when Jesus expounded the Scriptures to them. That Jesus rose again does not mean that the grieving people found comfort in their hearts. The Lord stood in the midst of the disciples, showed them His hands and feet,

told them to handle Him, and ate fish in their presence. The very Jesus who bore our sins through His baptism and died on the Cross rose again in the body. Therefore, we who believe in the Lord's resurrection can look to the life of rising again even with death before us.

The Lord opened the hearts of the disciples so that they might understand the Scriptures, and He said that the remission of sins accomplished through His suffering and resurrection would be preached to all nations. And He appointed them as witnesses and told them to wait until they were endued with power from on high. Because the Holy Spirit is also with us who have received the remission of sins, the work of preaching the gospel is not something we carry out relying only on our own strength and wisdom. We ask the Lord for help, care for one another, and preach what Jesus has done to those who do not yet know this salvation. Even today, when the body grows weak and labor follows, we can live by that hope, because there is the eternal life that the risen Lord will give.

The answer to the question of where we will dwell after we leave this earth lies in Jesus Christ, who has saved us. The Lord not only remitted our sins but also rose again from death, so that we who believe may also live again and live with the Lord forever. If we believe in that life we will enjoy in the future, riches that will disappear cannot be the final purpose of life, nor can the suffering we go through now be the end of our hope. Just as the disciples at the end of the Gospel of Luke returned with great joy and praised God, we, too, can praise God believing in the living Savior. I hope that everyone who reads this word will receive the remission of sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit and live looking toward the kingdom where we will dwell forever with the risen Jesus. ✉

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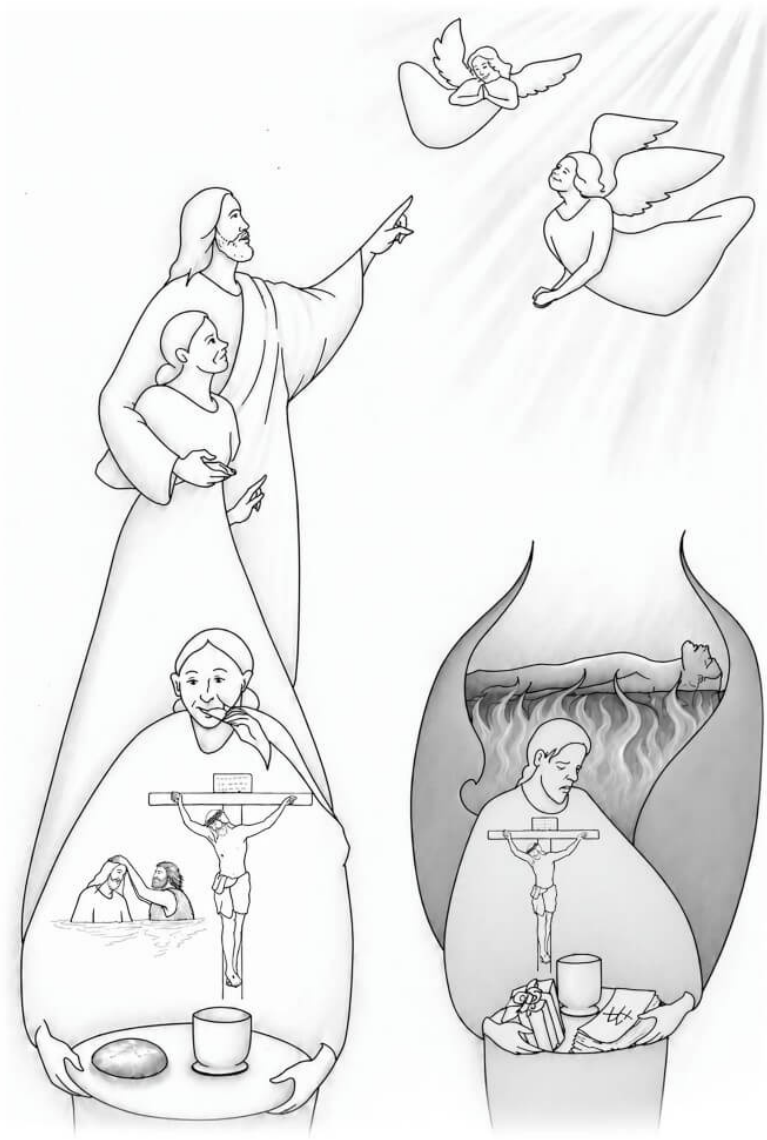

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

One cannot serve God and mammon

< Luke 16:1–13 >

“He also said to His disciples: ‘There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, “What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.” Then the steward said within himself, “What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.” So he called every one of his master’s debtors to him, and said to the first, “How much do you owe my master?” And he said, “A hundred measures of oil.” So he said to him, “Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.” Then he said to another, “And how much do you owe?” So he said, “A hundred measures of wheat.” And he said to him, “Take your bill, and write eighty.” So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous

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mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.'"

If we think that what is in our hands is our own, it is easy to look only at how much more we can gather. But if it is something we have been entrusted with and use for a while, we come to consider both the purpose for which we use it and the will of the One who entrusted it to us. Jesus taught His disciples this difference through the affair of a steward. If the wealth and time given to us are not eternal, for what should we use them while we are holding on to them? The Lord makes us look beyond immediate benefit to the everlasting home into which we will enter.

The steward who thought about the time after his position ended

The master, who had heard it said that the steward was wasting his goods, demanded that the steward give an account of the work he had been doing. Since the steward knew the fact that he could not continue to be in charge of that work, he tried to secure people who would receive him after he lost his position. This is the reason he called those who owed his master and had them rewrite the bill for a hundred measures of oil as fifty and the bill for a hundred measures of wheat as eighty. He prepared for his life afterward before the authority he now had came to an

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end.

"So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light" (Luke 16:8). When we read this word, we must see clearly what was commended. The text still calls him the unjust steward, and speaks separately of the point that he dealt shrewdly. It does not mean that the acts of wasting his master's goods and altering the bills of debt became honest deeds. The sons of this world are people who have not yet been born again, and because this world is the place where they will live, they are faithful to the world. But the sons of light, who have received the remission of sins, even though this world is not their home and there is a separate kingdom into which they will enter and live in the future, often do not devote to that kingdom even as much of their heart as the people of the world devote to the world. The Lord, citing the attitude of the people of the world, who act with their own future in mind, asks how much the sons of light actually think about the kingdom into which they will enter and live in the future.

Therefore, we cannot use this parable as an excuse to say that it is all right to earn money unjustly as long as it is for the gospel. This is because the word that follows teaches us to abandon unrighteousness and be faithful even in small things. What we must learn is not a method of deceiving, but the wisdom of thinking about the time when what we now have will disappear and deciding how we live today. If, while preparing for our life in the world, we forget the day we will stand before the Lord, it amounts to missing the most important future.

Using wealth that will disappear for the work of saving souls

"I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home" (Luke 16:9). Wealth is necessary on this earth, but it cannot give us eternal life. If we exalt it above God and use it only to satisfy our own cravings, it drags people into unrighteousness; but if we offer it to the Lord and use it to preach the gospel, it is used for precious labor for souls. The Lord turns our hearts away from clutching wealth that will disappear, and makes us, with that wealth, preach the word of salvation to people and look to the kingdom of God together with them.

That said, it is not that we enter the everlasting home in return for the money we have offered. The Lord bought us, who were slaves of sin and the curse, at a price, and that price was not money. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had the sin of the whole world passed on to His own body once and for all, and the sins we commit throughout our whole lives, spanning the past, the present, and the future, are also included in that sin of the world. Because there was the sin that had been passed on to Him in this way, the Lord received in our place the judgment we were to receive by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and He rose again from death and became our eternal Savior. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that we believe in is the news that the Lord bought us by paying the price with His own body in this way.

A person who has believed in this salvation and received the remission of sins does not try to supplement salvation with his own offerings. Rather, he thinks about what work the Lord, who bought us at a price, asked of us after that; and the Lord, after buying us, entrusted us with preaching the gospel. Because the

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eternal life he has already received is precious, he tries to preach it also to those who do not yet know that grace. Using wealth to provide books that explain the gospel and to help those who preach the word is a practical service that values the salvation of one soul more than money. This service is, in the end, also for ourselves. This is because being faithful for the kingdom of God is precisely being faithful for oneself.

Faithfulness revealed in small things

"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10). The attitude of waiting only for a big opportunity while treating lightly what one has now been entrusted with does not accord with the word of the Lord. This is because even when we use a small amount of wealth, whose will we follow is revealed. Faithfulness begins with not using the wealth entrusted to us as we please just because it is little, but using it according to the master's will. Even if the amount is not large, the heart that manages it honestly is precious in the work of serving the gospel.

The Lord asked, *"If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (Luke 16:11)*. Since being entrusted with the gospel, which saves people's lives, is precious, we must not handle carelessly the wealth that helps that work, either. God is pleased to entrust greater work to the person who puts his whole heart into small things and to accomplish His will through that person. A person who has the heart to use well what has been entrusted to him examines whether the work is actually beneficial to the gospel, rather than putting forward his own zeal.

This faithfulness is not the same as endlessly increasing one's work without caring for one's body. Because whatever work a person who has received the remission of sins does while serving the Lord is all the Lord's work, even labor that is not very noticeable, such as caring for others or preparing meals, is not a trivial thing. We must not regard anyone's labor lightly for the reason that the roles each of us has been given are different, but must together use beneficially what we have received from the Lord. Faithfulness is not boasting that one has more than others, but the attitude of valuing the purpose for which something was entrusted.

The Lord also asked who would give a person what is his own if he is not faithful in what is another man's. Even wealth we have earned with our own hands was not obtained apart from the life and strength we received from God; therefore, we must not regard what we now manage as a possession that we can do with as we please forever. A person who looks to the inheritance of the kingdom of God acts responsibly, according to the master's will, also in what he has been entrusted with today.

Ruling over wealth and serving God alone

"'No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon'" (Luke 16:13). The question of how to use wealth depends, in the end, on whom we serve as master. If we say we follow God but think only about whether money will be left over each time we make a decision, wealth easily takes the place of master. Deciding on one's master is something done with the heart; a person who has made up his mind that he has no Master but the one Lord lives

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for the Lord in hard times and in good times alike, but a person who has not made up his mind comes to follow another master when his circumstances change. A person who has made up his mind to serve the Lord, even when profit arises, examines whether it is an honest path, and if it is labor beneficial to the gospel, he values its purpose even if the reward to himself is small for now.

Feeding our families, receiving necessary medical treatment, and preparing for our future livelihood are also responsibilities we have been given. There is no need to think that we must abandon these responsibilities in order to serve God. However, we must not justify the craving to have endlessly more on the grounds that we are taking care of our necessary livelihood, nor close our hearts, saying that we can share nothing for the gospel and our neighbors. If we have God as our Master, even while seeking what we need for living, we also come to consider where to share what we have received.

To the question of what we should use what is in our hands for, the Lord answered that we should serve souls with wealth that will disappear, be faithful starting from small things, and serve God alone. Let us honestly examine what we have been entrusted with today and look for ways to use it for those who need the gospel. When we look to the Lord, who bought us at a price and called us to the eternal kingdom, even the wealth entrusted to us for a while is used for the work of preaching the gospel so that people may obtain eternal life. Here is the way to prepare for the everlasting home with wealth that will disappear. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Our hope is the eternal kingdom

< Luke 16:1–13 >

“He also said to His disciples: ‘There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, “What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.” Then the steward said within himself, “What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.” So he called every one of his master’s debtors to him, and said to the first, “How much do you owe my master?” And he said, “A hundred measures of oil.” So he said to him, “Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.” Then he said to another, “And how much do you owe?” So he said, “A hundred measures of wheat.” And he said to him, “Take your bill, and write eighty.” So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous

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mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.'"

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"

The Lord said, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. The life of faith of you and me is to seek the authority and righteousness of the kingdom of God. What is the kingdom of God? The Church, where those who have received the remission of sins become children of God and gather before God to worship Him, is the kingdom of God. We must establish the kingdom of God through this Church, and we must seek His righteousness. What is the righteousness of God? It means that we are to seek and boast of, not our own excellence, but the truth and love of the salvation by which God saved us.

For a born-again person, living a life of faith is doing two things. One is seeking the kingdom of God, and the other is a life of seeking His righteousness. Not talking about our own excellence, but boasting of the righteousness, the rightness, the love, and the truth of God, who saved people like us, is what it is for us to live a life of faith in this world. We are living because of this.

You and I must know what the main point of living a life of faith is. We live in order to build the kingdom of God and to exalt and boast of the righteousness of God. That is why we, who

have received the remission of sins, are living, while we live on this earth, a different kind of life that is quite far removed from the people of the world. While living in this country, we strive to build a certain kingdom that is not this country. Even though we already have a country, we are striving to build another kingdom. That is why, while living on this earth, we sometimes fall into a bewildering confusion. For what must we live like this? How should we live a life of faith, and for what should we live? There are times when we feel as if we were living in a strange world.

Be faithful to the kingdom where you will enter and live in the future

If we look at the word of the Gospel of Luke that we have read, there was a steward, and the master came to the steward and said, "Let us settle the accounts of all the work you have done. Did you do well, or did you do poorly? You are to quit this work." When the owner of the business spoke to the employee in this way, this employee was not faithful to the owner, but made friends with the clients. Whether this company suffered a loss or went bankrupt, he generously gave the clients goods at a low price and wrote up the books nicely for them, so that the people at the client firms gained a great deal of benefit.

Our Lord, speaking of those among the people of this world who have lived a life like this employee's, said, *"The sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light" (Luke 16:8)*. He said that it was very shrewd of him to have known that he would be driven out of his workplace and to have been faithful to another place where he would later have to belong. And then He speaks to the children of light. He says that

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it is right for you, while living in this world, to be faithful not to this world, but to the kingdom of God where you will enter and live in the future.

Then the Lord speaks about material things. *"If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (Luke 16:11)*. This means that He is asking whether God would really give the material things of the world to a person who does not use material things faithfully for the kingdom in which he will go and live, and does not invest material things in the work of building the walls for the building of that kingdom. It meant that God cannot give material things to such a person.

That is why, while living in this world, we are living a dual life that is different from the people of the world. We are not just living. The people of this world live according to the natural course of things, but we do not live that way; rather, we labor and strive for the building of a certain kingdom. We are living as soldiers and workers of the kingdom of God. That is why there are times when you and I, while living in this world, cannot tell whether we are living rightly or living wrongly. There are times when we live in a daze, not knowing ourselves well, not knowing with what spirit we are living. Even though we could know, if we thought about it, whether we are now alive or dead and for what we must live, there are times when we do not think about it at all and live a dazed life. For this reason, we Christians must know the fact that we are workers of the kingdom of God. We must know that we live in this world as workers who lay bricks in the kingdom of God, build that kingdom, and lead the souls who will come into that kingdom and live there; if we do not know this, there is no end to the weariness, hardship, and pain of living in this world.

The only thing to boast of is the righteousness of God

A person has nothing of his own righteousness to boast of. The one thing we can surely boast of is that God saved us and removed our sins. We do not know well what we have to do with God, but in any case, we were made by God, and Jesus, because He loved us, without even asking us, received baptism from John and had all our sins transferred to Him and washed them away, and He received the judgment on the Cross for us, rose again, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, and thereby saved us. We truly praise that right righteousness of God. God truly loved us. We have nothing to boast of but this, and nothing to know but that we are workers who build the kingdom of God.

You and I are workers of the kingdom of God. There is nothing else. Because we are workers of the kingdom of God, we have been committed to building the kingdom of God, and this whole life that you and I live—doing the laundry, washing the dishes, cooking meals, working at our jobs, earning money, doing business, studying, praying, and living a life of faith—is all for the building of the kingdom of God. You and I are living as workers of the kingdom of God.

The Lord said, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33)*. This word, as we know well, is precisely the word telling us to establish the Church of God. It is to establish the Church, bring souls in, preach the gospel to them so that they receive the remission of sins, and keep them in the Church so that they submit to Jesus Christ, who is God, and praise Jesus Christ, commend Him, and serve Him. For this work we are building the kingdom of God, and we are living with that purpose.

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Finding lost souls is the building of the kingdom of God

In Luke chapter 15, the Lord speaks of the work of finding the lost sheep. *"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?" (Luke 15:4)*. He is asking whether one would not find it, come back, and rejoice. Another is the drachma. *"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?" (Luke 15:8)*. He is asking whether, when she has found it, she would not rejoice and hold a feast with the people of the village. Third, the younger son received his share of the property from his father, went out, and squandered it all in prodigal living, but he returned from the world. The father held a feast, saying, *"This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:24)*.

All three of these were the work of gaining lost souls. With this, He was speaking of the work of building the kingdom of God. In Luke chapter 15, finding the one lost sheep, finding the one lost drachma, and the return of the younger son who had left home speak of preaching the gospel. It is the work of preaching the gospel, calling people into the Church of God so that they receive the remission of sins, and having them, within that Church, commend Jesus Christ, the King who saved them.

The younger son's living in prodigality and later coming back in again speaks of seeking righteousness while being in the Church. While living in the world, he came to have no righteousness of his own and no excellence of his own, and everything of his own was completely broken, and so he returned to his father. Since he was ashamed even to call himself a son,

he intended to say, *"Make me like one of your hired servants" (Luke 15:19)*. He is speaking of a worker whose own righteousness has been completely broken and who boasts of the righteousness of God. You and I are workers of the kingdom of God. It means that we are workers who have come into the Church of God and, rather than boasting of our own righteousness, with our own righteousness completely broken, know that God has made us workers in God's vineyard, and who, having been raised up before God, labor our whole lives for the building of the kingdom of God.

The reward given to the workers of the kingdom of God

God has raised us up as workers who are faithful to the kingdom of God. For this reason, we must live a life of being faithful in building the kingdom of God and a life of exalting the righteousness of God in this world. Then what is the blessing given to such a person who seeks His kingdom and His righteousness? It is that He gives the Millennial Kingdom that appears in the Book of Revelation. The Millennial Kingdom is the kingdom of God that is established on this earth. It is the sum total of everything we have labored and striven for on this earth. All these things we have labored and striven for appear at the end, and they appear materially as well, and that is precisely the Millennial Kingdom. God establishes a kingdom on this earth. By establishing a kingdom on this earth, He gives rewards to His workers who have labored for the kingdom of God, gives them recompense, and lets them enjoy glory. It is a rehearsal on this earth so that we can adapt well when we enter the kingdom of

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heaven—so that we can enter the new heaven and the new earth and live there, adapting well.

What God gives to those who have labored as workers in the building of the kingdom of God is the Millennial Kingdom. And then the new heaven and the new earth, that is, the kingdom of heaven. We who are born again, while living on this earth, do not live for the building of this country. A person who has been saved, while keeping the laws that are to be kept in this country, does the work of building the kingdom of God. For this, you and I, who have been saved, have come into the Church and live receiving grace.

The Lord, saying that the unjust steward of this world had lived a more shrewd life than the sons of light, said, *"If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (Luke 16:11)*. This means that, since the original Master is God, how could He entrust these material things to a person who does not use the material things he has for this work of building the kingdom of God? The Lord, speaking of the unjust steward, told the righteous that these material things fundamentally belong to God, that He has given these material things to the righteous, and that the righteous are managing them as stewards. It was a word asking whether, if the righteous who have been saved do not use the perishable material things of the world for the building of the kingdom of God, He would entrust God's material things to them. It means that if a worker who builds the kingdom of God does not use what he has for the building of the kingdom of God, would He give him the materials? That is why God told the righteous that they must live for the building of the kingdom of God, and that they must exalt His righteousness and boast of His righteousness.

This is precisely the word that God has spoken to us. He said that everything we do—receiving the remission of sins on this

earth, coming into the Church, living a life of faith, working at our jobs, eating, drinking, and spending—is a life lived for the building of the kingdom of God. He said that this is the purpose of the life of faith. That is why we are, in reality, living for the building of the kingdom of God, and are living even now in order to exalt the righteousness of God. We live for this purpose.

Only the labor of building the kingdom of God is something worth boasting of

Dear fellow believers, do you have anything of your own to boast of? No, you do not. When a few years have passed after we have truly received the remission of sins, we keep running out of things to boast of. Even so, we used to think that we, at least, were all right, but there comes to be nothing to boast of. Every time there is nothing left to boast of, our hearts ache. We have been saved and live seeking the righteousness of God. After we have been saved, received the remission of sins, and become righteous by believing in the baptism Jesus received from John and in the precious blood of Jesus, we ought to have something to boast of; but God follows us every hour, minute, and second, trampling and crushing, so that not even a speck of what is human is left to boast of. And as if that were not enough, He pounds it to a pulp and does away with it completely.

If there is anything to boast of after coming into the Church of God, it is having laid bricks and plastered walls for the building of the kingdom of God. Having offered material things for the gospel is worth boasting of. Such things are worth boasting of because, even if we boast of them, they do not fade, and they exalt the righteousness of God. Apart from this, there is nothing to boast of. In the Church of God, the standard of a

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handsome man and a beautiful woman is different from that of the world. Whoever labors for the building of the kingdom of God is a handsome man or a beautiful woman. That is the standard of the kingdom of God. Only this work is a work that will receive commendation, and only the labor of building the kingdom of God is something worth boasting of.

You and I are those who have been called and chosen for the building of the kingdom of God. This is the purpose for which God called us. You and I live in this world with the purpose of building the kingdom of God. We do not live for anything else. Let us know this. Let us believe this. Let us press forward toward the goal of God. Every brother and sister, adults and children, and the servants of God, all have been called and live for the building of the kingdom of God. That is the purpose of your life and mine. That is why we offer material things. That is why we pray. That is why we preach the gospel. That is why we gather together. What is the purpose for which you and I live? We live for the building of the kingdom of God. If someone asks us, “For what do you live?” we must say, “I am a worker chosen for the building of the kingdom of God. So I am a worker who lives for the kingdom of God,” and believe this, and live with this purpose.

Go out in search of the lost sheep

Moreover, this age is an age in which a confusion of values has come. Politics is in turmoil and the economy is unstable. Not only the people of the world but also born-again people are confused. This age is an age in which people do not know for what on earth they should live, and do not listen. People live hiding their sins even though they have sin. One sister testified that, having been disappointed in her life of faith because no

matter how hard she tried it did not work, she had put her sins away deep in some storehouse; then one day a saved person came and kept digging up the sins she had put away so deep, and she said she could not tell you how her face trembled and how irritated she became. But she said that later she gave herself up, admitting that she had sin, and accepted the gospel of the water and the blood and received the remission of sins.

We are those who have been called in this age as God's workers for the building of the kingdom of God. What we must do in this age is to live the life of workers who build the kingdom of God and gather the people of the kingdom of God by finding those whom God has lost and preaching the gospel to them so that they are saved. What we must do in these last days is to go out in search of the lost, preach the gospel to them, and bring them in. It says that one sheep out of a hundred was lost. There are countless people in this world, and one in ten thousand is a lost sheep. We must sweep and scour every corner to find that lost sheep. We must diligently search for lost souls wherever they may be. Because you and I are workers, we must do the work of finding those lost souls. We must live for that work. There are many people in the world, but because the lost are rare, finding them is extremely difficult. The man left the ninety-nine and went out in search of the one lost sheep. The woman searched the house thoroughly and found the one lost drachma. We must go all over this country and that country with gospel tracts in hand. This is the life of a worker who is used in the building of the kingdom of God. This is what you and I must do. Dear fellow believers, we must find the lost.

We must go out in search of the lost sheep. Even if that soul does not come back, we must go out in search of the lost. When the field is wide and pleasant, the sheep do not want to come back. Among them there is a lost sheep that is in difficulty. We

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must go out for its sake. It is what you and I, who have become workers, must do.

The law of God by which those who serve become rich

Let us build the kingdom of God. Let us live a life of seeking the righteousness of God. We have been called for the work of God, and we live for this work. Nothing can satisfy us. Dear fellow believers, there is no satisfaction in the things of the world. There are people who live for the pleasure of making money, but even if they make a lot of money, there is no satisfaction. There are also people who live for the pleasure of doing well in their studies. No matter how absorbed they become in it, there is no satisfaction. The only thing in which there is satisfaction is bringing in the lost. This work alone is what we, who have become God's workers, must do.

I believe. I believe that until this earth comes to an end and the Millennial Kingdom is built, until the Lord comes, until we go before the Lord, we must go out in search of the lost. I believe that this is precisely what the Church of God must do, and what we who have become workers in the building of the kingdom of God, you and I who have been saved, must do. We live only for this. I truly have a heart that hopes we will not do things that are beside the point. I have a heart that hopes that you, our saints, will not live for anything else. I believe that if we live the life of workers for the building of the kingdom of God, serve the Lord, and live to save the lost, God will entrust more wealth and blessings to us while we live on this earth.

Looking at this word, I believe that becoming rich is simple. I believe that it does not come from making a great deal of effort,

but that God entrusts more to the one who works more faithfully. What you and I, who have been saved, must do must be for the building of the kingdom of God. It means that I want us to live for the building of the kingdom of God and to live a life of seeking and boasting of the righteousness of God. I believe that seeking the righteousness of God and living for the kingdom of God is the life of you and me. I believe that you believe so, too. The reason you are lacking is so that you may live a life of seeking the righteousness of God. The reason He caused you and me to be saved and placed us in this Church is so that we may live as the workforce for the building of the kingdom of God. The work that you and I, who have received the remission of sins, must do as we live is to build the kingdom of God and to seek the righteousness of God. This is the goal and purpose of the whole life of you and me. There is nothing else.

The secret to becoming rich is to serve with united hearts for the building of the kingdom of God. Then, even if we do not want to become rich, we become rich. This does not fit the logic of the world, but it fits the logic of God. That one becomes poor by serving is the logic of the world, and that one becomes rich by serving is the logic of God. After I met the Lord and served Him, I was able to know this for certain. God had me preach the gospel rather than make money, and when I chose that work, He rather caused me to lack nothing. Love is serving. It is giving. It is the law of God that when we share, we become rich, and when we clutch, we become poor. This is marvelous. The kingdom of God is such that if we do not invest, we lose that much, and we gain more than we have invested. It means that, while we build the kingdom of God together, we want to live well together on this earth as well. God has called you and me as the workforce to build the kingdom of God. *"Seek first the kingdom of God and*

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His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). He has caused us to live for these two things.

I believe. Though we have nothing to boast of, I am truly thankful that He has made us live for the kingdom of God and live seeking the righteousness of God like this. If He had not given us this, we would have lived doing useless things. Do you have anything to boast of in the flesh? If you do, bring it out and show it. If you have sought His righteousness for the kingdom of God, there is a testimony in that life and something to show. Let us build the kingdom of God and live a life of seeking the righteousness of God. Let us live such a life. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The salvation that never changes

< Luke 16:14–17 >

"Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. And He said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.'"

What is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God

Through this word, I would like to think about just a few things. The Lord said, *"You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15)*. The Lord, while speaking the word about the wise steward, said, *"'No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon'" (Luke 16:13)*. When the Pharisees heard this parable sermon of Jesus Christ, they were furious inside. So they, of their

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own accord, slandered and derided Jesus. Then Jesus told the Pharisees that what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

The Pharisees were people who were religiously upright. They were people who believed in the afterlife, believed in this present life, believed in God, believed in the law, and strove to keep the law. Therefore, these people were recognized in the nation of Israel. Everyone looked up to and respected anyone who was said to be a Pharisee. The outward appearance of these people was extremely holy. So they were people who were highly esteemed before men. But Jesus told them that what is highly esteemed before men is an abomination in the sight of God. If the Pharisees had accepted the word of God's truth and accepted the word of Jesus Christ and His teaching, and if they had been exalted and respected by people on that account, Jesus, too, would have respected them. But the Pharisees did not receive respect from Jesus Christ. In fact, those who hated Jesus the most were the Pharisees. The Pharisees and Jesus were adversaries and enemies. The Pharisees, while living on this earth, were orthodox and highly respected people who claimed to believe in God most surely and best. For this reason, even though Jesus had come, they did not accept the word that Jesus Christ spoke.

When Jesus said that, just as a servant cannot serve two masters, a person cannot serve God and wealth together, these Pharisees, who were religiously upright but loved money a great deal, derided Him. Jesus said that what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. This means that if one believes in the word of God's truth, one is hated by people. It means that one is hated by falsehood. It means that if one believes in the truth of God, one is hated by falsehood and hated before religious people, and if one does not believe in the

truth of God but is loyal to religion, one is esteemed and recognized by people. But Jesus said that what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. Those who have heard the gospel and received the remission of sins, if they have believed in their hearts, must keep this word in mind.

What is being born again?

I know that there are people you respect, and also that many people love and respect you. Even though you may say, "I am nothing special," still, among many people there are those who love and respect you. Now, you had heard the word of the truth of the gospel several times and knew it, but now you have truly realized it in your hearts and accepted it in your hearts. So you have truly been born again. This being born again happens, as the Bible says, *"With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10),* when a person clearly knows the word of the truth in his heart and believes it in his heart. To believe in one's heart is to acknowledge, on the basis of the word of the truth, that one was in fact a sinner and that if one has even the slightest sin, one goes to hell. It is to actually experience in one's heart the fact: "I am a person who can only go to hell, but the Lord came to this earth to save me, who could only go to hell, and when He received baptism from John the Baptist, He had all my sins transferred to Him, and with His death on the Cross and His resurrection He completely removed my sins. So He has become my perfect Savior." It means that a person who could only go to hell came to know that Jesus Christ had saved him by the water and the

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blood, and actually believed in that Jesus Christ as his Savior. This is faith, this is salvation, and this is being born again.

The Bible says, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32)*. The truth is fact. If one really knows the fact—that is, if one knows the sinful state of man and the fact that one can only go to hell, and comes to know as fact that Jesus Christ saved him by the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross—one is saved the moment one believes. If one has been saved, one is now making a first start, and one has just been born. A person has been born again. He has been born anew.

Now one's life is a new creation and makes a new start. But I know that there are many areas in which you have been recognized before people until now. If you cling to such things and cannot give up the areas in which you are highly esteemed before people, you are hated by Jesus. But if you are hated by people because you believe in the word of Jesus Christ, the word of truth that God has spoken, you are esteemed by Jesus. In fact, because of this problem of coming to be hated by people after having been esteemed by them, the people who fail to accept this gospel of truth and go to hell are countless. That is why Jesus Christ said, *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13–14)*. Many people do not take the narrow way; few take it, and it is difficult and full of dangers. But He says that a person who wants to enter the way of life must strive to enter by the narrow way, and must enter it. He says that if one enters it, the Lord will be with him and guide him, and though he will be hated by people, God will love him. It is actually so. It is actually so for those who have met the Lord.

Only when the inside changes does the outside change

Around the world, too, in reality, many theologians and many people now say that Christianity must be reformed. They say that Christianity must rise up as it did at the time of Martin Luther's Reformation. But they do not know how it should rise up—whether conduct must be changed or doctrine must be changed. If people return into the word of God's truth, know this word of truth, and accept that fact in their hearts just as it is, it becomes not a reformation of religion but a reformation of faith; they are born again, and they can lead the world into the light. And they become the light of the world. But if people do not accept this truth by which our Lord has caused us to be born again of water and the Spirit, and do not accept Jesus Christ, then no matter how much they change their outward form, change the form of worship, memorize the Bible, speak well, are courteous, and speak in a holy manner, and no matter how eloquent they are, how bright their greetings, how much outward love they have, and how much they love people, there can be no reformation.

Only when the inside is reformed is the outside reformed, and when the inside is reformed, the outside is reformed of itself. When the heart changes, when the heart becomes righteous, the outer man changes of itself. A smile comes to the outer man of itself. It is not a hollow laugh; rather, more than some overflowing energy swirling about, it spreads very gently, like a dove, as a lingering ripple spreads across the lake of the heart. The peace and joy that come through the Holy Spirit are absolutely different from the fullness of emotion that comes from an evil spirit. Therefore, we must decide whether we will be loved before God or be esteemed before people. That you

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have received the remission of sins is something greatly to be congratulated and something to be thankful for. It is really you who have received the remission of sins, and yet I do not know why we are so glad. I think it is because the Holy Spirit is in our hearts. A little child grows up of itself if it follows completely, by faith, the words of the parents who gave birth to it, taught it rightly, and guided it.

"The law and the prophets were until John"

Second, He said, *"The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it" (Luke 16:16)*. That the law and the prophets were until John means this. After mankind was created in this world, when, through Satan the devil, they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and came to death and destruction, God promised the word of the gospel of salvation. He said, *"He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15)*. From that time on, God said that, for mankind, who had sinned and fallen into iniquity and fallen into destruction, the Savior would come as the Seed of the woman and save them. And as that promise continued to be handed down just as it was, God gave the law to the people of Israel. After giving the law, He next gave the law of sacrifice. And after that, He sent prophets to all those people of Israel. Those prophets, without exception, rebuked the sins of the people of Israel and pointed out that the Messiah would come in the future, and that the Messiah would come and save them. They kept pointing this out. And He said that this was until John.

From Genesis to the very end of the Old Testament, Jesus Christ is the substance, and the Old Testament is the shadow and

the promise. Until Jesus Christ came, it was the promise that God would send the Savior, and the prophets conveyed those promises to the people. They said that the Messiah would come in the future and save us, that He would save all mankind from sin, and that He would save us, saying, *"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14)*. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea—the prophets handed down the promise one after another. Whom did they promise? It was the promise that Jesus Christ would come and save us.

But then Jesus Christ came. When Jesus Christ came, John, because he was a descendant of Aaron, was a descendant of the high priest and the greatest among those born of women, and, as the representative of mankind, by giving baptism to Jesus Christ in the Jordan River, he transferred all the sin of mankind to Him and thereby fulfilled all the righteousness of that salvation of God, who loves us—the rightness and love of God. By giving baptism to Jesus Christ, John passed all the sin of mankind on to Jesus, and Jesus had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him through John the Baptist. Then, bearing the sin of the world, He went and was nailed to the Cross, rose again from death, ascended again to the right hand of God the Father, and, by being alive even now, completed the salvation of all the sinners of mankind. After doing so, He said, *"Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it" (Luke 16:16)*. This means that anyone, if only he hears this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his ears and believes it in his heart, can enter the kingdom of God.

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The kingdom of God that one enters only by faith

That is why it says, *"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12)*. John the Baptist came and gave baptism to Jesus Christ and passed the sin of the world on to Him, and John's role went only that far. And Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred to Him through John the Baptist, went to the Cross and died, and rose again from death; He bore all the sins that you and I commit throughout our whole lives and received all the judgment on the Cross, and so He saved us. That is how Jesus Christ became the true Savior of us sinners. Therefore, this means that whoever believes in this truth has come to be able to enter the kingdom of God only by true faith, not by any deed, however tiny.

Dear fellow believers, do you believe this fact? You who have received the remission of sins, did you receive the remission of sins by faith? Or did you receive the remission of sins by doing many good deeds, praying on mountains, and offering many prayers of repentance? Were you saved by hearing in your hearts and believing in your hearts that gospel, that truth of salvation—that Jesus Christ had all the sins of you and me transferred to Him through John the Baptist, bore the sin of the world and was nailed to the Cross, and rose again on the third day after He died, and so saved us? God had already saved us, and we have now heard that news and believed it in our hearts, and so we have been saved. This is precisely the salvation obtained by grace. Salvation is a gift, eternal life is also a gift, and blessing is also a gift. This is what happens to those who believe in the word of God's truth.

The truth of salvation in which not even one tittle of the law fails

Another thing is that He said, *"And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail" (Luke 16:17)*. This is a word that the commands of God and the word of God, this word of truth, will never pass away for all eternity. In particular, this word means that this truth by which the Lord came to this earth and saved us never changes for all eternity. Can it ever change for all eternity? Did the Lord save us by water alone, or by blood alone? Or did He save us by the water, the blood, and the Spirit? He saved us by the water, the blood, and the Spirit. Even if this world, this galaxy or this world of stars, were all to be smashed to pieces, what God has spoken to us—this salvation He Himself has accomplished for us, the kingdom of heaven He has promised us, and His having made us children of God—does not change. It remains for all eternity.

Some people say things like this, and there are also people who have this kind of faith. Must the remission of sins be received only by that? Must one know the word of God exactly like that in order to receive the remission of sins? There are also people who raise the question of whether one is saved if one just truly believes and realizes in one's heart only that Jesus died on the Cross, or whether one must really know and believe, without any discount, in order to be saved, that when Jesus came to this earth and received baptism from John, all the sin of mankind was passed on to Him; that He said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*; that He had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the laying on of hands of John the Baptist; that He then bore the sin of the world and, dying on the Cross, said that it was finished; and that He rose again from death and saved us. But that the Lord saved us by the water and

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the Spirit never changes for all eternity. That the Lord removed the sins of you and me, and all these words that the Lord has spoken so abundantly in this word of the Scriptures, never change for all eternity. This world may pass away, but this word that God has spoken to us—the way of salvation, the things He has promised us, the blessings He has given us, and everything else that God has spoken—never changes for all eternity.

Dear fellow believers, does this Bible change? This Bible is called the canon. It means a measuring rod. It tells everything: how sin was removed, how one is born again of water and the Spirit, who the Lord is, and what kind of stock we are. It tells us all of it: what the kingdom of heaven is, what there is in the kingdom of heaven, and whom the Lord lets enter into the first resurrection. It says, *"It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail" (Luke 16:17)*. This means that no matter who in this world it may be—however excellent a person within Christianity, or one who has believed for a long time, or one who has been a church member from the womb—to put it simply, no matter what some famous theologian may have said, or what many people may have said, things turn out exactly according to this word, according to what the Bible says. If it says in this word that He has caused us to be born again of water and the Spirit, then everything that is not that truth of being born again of water and the Spirit is all fake. However fine a character you may have had in the past, however much morality and manners you had, however well-kept your outer man, and however much you governed your tongue, governed your heart, and governed your thoughts, you have now been made new. It cannot change. Can that salvation by which the Lord saved us change?

The Cross without the baptism is not the truth

There are people who say that one has no sin even if one believes only in the blood of the Cross. Their position is that even if people speak only of the blood of the Cross, even if they merely say, "I am thankful that the Lord died on the Cross for me. I believe," we should acknowledge that they have received the remission of sins. But the First Epistle of John says *"not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood –ASV" (1 John 5:6)* and *"there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one –ASV" (1 John 5:8)*. Our Lord was conceived by the Holy Spirit, was born on this earth clothed in human flesh, and at the age of thirty received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, and had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him; He went to the Cross with the sin of the world and died, and rose again from death, and became our eternal Christ. So the point is, how can anyone say that Jesus Christ saved us on the Cross without receiving baptism and without having our sins transferred to Him? That is not the truth. What the Bible says is that where there is a process, there is a result. Because Jesus Christ was born on this earth as a man from the body of a woman in order to save us, and remained quiet until He was thirty, and when He turned thirty received baptism from John the Baptist and had all our sins transferred to Him, Jesus was able to bear the sin of the world and be nailed to the Cross and die, and was able to rise again from death and become the eternal Savior of those who believe. Therefore, because the Lord is the truth and the righteous God, and because He saved us by the water and the blood in this way, that Lord has become the eternal Savior to those who believe.

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The Lord, who willingly received baptism and died on the Cross

When the Lord came to this earth, remained until He was thirty, and then appeared before John the Baptist, John tried to stop Him, saying, *"I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" (Matthew 3:14)*. Then Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. He meant that it was fitting for John to give baptism to Him and pass all the sin of mankind on to Him, and for Him to have all the sin of mankind transferred to Him through John, bear the sin of the world, die on the Cross, rise again from death, and become the Savior of mankind. But if Jesus had received baptism from John merely to show humility, if He had not had all our sins transferred to Him when He received baptism from John, could Jesus Christ have died on the Cross? He had never committed sin, and He is God. Many people hated Jesus. So they seized Jesus and dragged Him to a cliff to throw Him down. If ten strong men forcibly grab a person by his arms and legs and throw him down, that person dies. But the Gospels clearly record that while the people were trying to throw Jesus down the cliff, Jesus calmly passed through the midst of them and went His way. Jesus came to this earth clothed in flesh, but He was God, the Creator, and the Savior. When Pilate said, *"Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" (John 19:10)*, Jesus said, *"You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:11)*. He is not One who is killed because man kills Him, nor One who is trampled because man tramples Him; rather, He Himself came to this earth, received baptism from John, and died on the Cross, and so saved us. It was His own will, and it was the will of the Father. He Himself

volunteered to save us. Do you think that He was nailed to the Cross because He had no power?

Because Jesus—*"as a sheep before its shearers is silent" (Isaiah 53:7)*—had already received baptism from John and had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him, and because, unless He died on the Cross, unless He received the judgment for that sin of which it says, *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*, you and I could not escape the eternal judgment of sin, He received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again from death, and became the eternal, living Savior. He became the eternal Savior to those who believe in Jesus Christ. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

A faith that believes one is saved by the blood of the Cross alone does not work even if one believes it for five hundred years. Even if one recites the Bible by rote without really reading it, pretends to be humble, and overflows with etiquette, it is only a coating of the oil of religion. The oil of religion must be stripped right off. But it is not wiped away by rubbing. By what is it wiped away? It must be washed right off by hearing the word of truth. It must be washed off so that the inner man comes out. The heart must really become as white as snow; and now, with flesh put on the heart, we must become people of faith—people of faith according to the word that says, *"The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17)*. The Lord has given us a salvation that does not change. It never changes. We truly give thanks before God. Are we children of God, or not? Are we Christ's, or not? We are Christ's. A born-again person is Christ's, and a person who has not been born again is not Christ's but the devil's, so the devil controls him at will. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Can one be justified before God by people's approval?

< Luke 16:14–18 >

"Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. And He said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail. Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.'"

Even a person who has received good evaluations from people can become uncomfortable when he hears a word that exposes his heart. Recalling the praise he usually receives, he may also think that the word does not apply to him. But can one be said to be right before God, too, merely because many people say that he is all right? When Jesus said that one cannot serve wealth and God together, the Pharisees heard that word and

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derided Him. Through their reaction, the Lord makes clear by what standard we must judge ourselves.

The heart that cannot be hidden by derision

The text conveys the reason the Pharisees derided Him together with the fact that they were lovers of money. The Lord's word revealed where their hearts were held captive, but rather than accepting the word, they derided the Lord, who had spoken it. If one belittles the One who speaks instead of examining one's own life, one may be able to avoid discomfort for a moment, but the problem of the heart that has been exposed does not disappear with it.

"He said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God'" (Luke 16:15). A person can choose the actions he shows to others and explain his own position. But since God knows even the heart behind that explanation, people's agreement cannot take the place of God's judgment. The Pharisees justified themselves before men, but the Lord already knew the love of money that they wanted to hide.

This word does not declare that everything that is respected by others is evil. It rebukes the attitude of trying to establish one's own rightness by being approved by people while rejecting the word of God. Here also lies the reason that it happens that a person who believes in the truth is, on the contrary, hated by people. Therefore, we too must not avoid examining ourselves before the word by putting forward the fact that we have been praised. Even if we have the form of service, if in our hearts we

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are holding on to wealth and our own honor, we must acknowledge it as it is before God, who knows that heart.

The word that cannot be erased by people's circumstances

When an uncomfortable word comes up, we want to lower its standard a little. We think that if we explain that people generally live that way or that our circumstances left us no choice, the word that applies to us will also change. But the Lord, even while speaking of the gospel of the kingdom of God, did not say that God's law had become lighter. The Lord, who preaches the gospel, and God, who gave the law, are not ones who judge sin with wills that differ from each other.

"And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail" (Luke 16:17). The word that it is harder for one tittle of the law to fail than for heaven and earth to pass away means that God's will is not nullified according to people's convenience. Even if we deride or turn away from the word, the sin that the word exposes is still sin, and it is not that God, too, acknowledges that sin as right just because we have obtained an explanation that is accepted among people. This word also contains the meaning that not only the standard that exposes sin but also the truth of the salvation God has accomplished never changes.

Right here, the limit of a faith that holds on to one's own righteousness is revealed. We try to gather the things we have done well and cover the things we have fallen short in, but the word of God does not calculate in that way and declare us righteous. Rather, it shines on our hearts and deeds and makes us know that we are sinners who cannot save ourselves. Only

when we acknowledge the fact that the standard of the word is strict can we also rightly know why the Savior, who removes that sin, is necessary. This is because the actual problem of sin cannot be solved with the peace of mind obtained by lowering the standard.

One's own righteousness revealed even before the spouse one has put away

Next, the Lord spoke a word concerning marriage. *"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery" (Luke 16:18).* Even if one can dress up putting away one's wife and marrying another as proper before men, the Lord declares that act to be adultery. By speaking also of marrying one who has been put away, He reveals that the problem before God does not disappear merely because the outward form of the relationship has changed.

This word is not a story detached from the preceding teaching. The Lord, who said that not even one tittle of the law would fail, showed that fact immediately afterward with the word on marriage. God does not look only at people's approval, but knows even one's responsibility toward one's spouse and what one has done in that relationship. Therefore, if we justify putting away our spouse by finding an explanation that is favorable to us, we are putting our own judgment ahead of the word of God.

We who stand before the word must not try to prove that we are more righteous by finding the faults of others. Rather, before the unchanging word, we must acknowledge that we, too, are sinners who have lowered God's standard to fit our own

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circumstances. Acknowledging sin does not end merely with humbling ourselves with words. It must lead to abandoning the attitude of hiding our wrongs, looking back on the responsibility we owe to the other person, and rightly turning our lives around under the word of God.

The gospel of the kingdom of God preached after the time of John

If the word of God exposes sin in this way, how can we enter the kingdom of God? Instead of lowering the law and accepting sinners, the Lord accomplished the salvation He had promised. *"The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it" (Luke 16:16)*. The promise of salvation that the law and the prophets testified of was fulfilled by the coming of Jesus Christ, and now the gospel of the kingdom of God is being preached.

Here, we cannot lightly pass over the words "the time of John." John, as the representative of mankind, gave baptism to Jesus in the Jordan River, and Jesus, receiving that baptism, said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. Through this baptism, the sin of the whole world was passed on to Jesus once and for all, and the sins that each of us commits throughout our whole lives, spanning the past, the present, and the future, are also included in it. Because He had the sin of the world passed on to Him, the Lord bore that sin and was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died, thereby receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive; and He rose again from death and became the eternal Savior who saved us. The word that the law and the prophets

were until John means that the age of promise passed over into the age of fulfillment at this baptism of John.

Therefore, the gospel is not news that God pretends not to see sin. It is the news that, because Jesus bore sin through His baptism and paid the price of that sin on the Cross, He gives the remission of sins and eternal life to those who believe in this salvation. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that we are to believe in is precisely this salvation of the Lord. The word that everyone enters the kingdom of God does not mean that one takes possession of that kingdom by one's own merit or wealth, but that the way to receive by faith the salvation the Lord has accomplished has been opened.

A person who has received this grace rejoices that his sins have been removed, yet does not change the word to suit his own convenience. The remission of sins does not become an excuse to justify wrongs again, and faith that relies on the Savior becomes the strength to acknowledge the wrongs that have been exposed and turn from them. To the question of whether one can be justified before God by people's praise, the Lord's answer is clear. The Lord knows our innermost hearts, exposes sin with the unchanging word, and calls us to believe in the righteousness that Jesus has accomplished. Let us lay down the heart that held on to people's approval, and live relying on the Lord, who bore our sins and saved us. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Do not wait for a sign, but believe the word that has been given

< Luke 16:19–31 >

“‘There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” But Abraham said, “Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.” Then he said, “I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.”

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Abraham said to him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." And he said, "No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent." But he said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead."""

There are times when we put off hearing the word, thinking that we will believe if we see more certain evidence. We may also think that, since there is no great problem in our present life, we can look into matters of salvation later. But the story of the rich man and Lazarus, which the Lord told, shows that "later" before our eyes. When we hear together what was revealed after the two men died and the word given to the brothers who were still alive, we can know what we need now. What answer does the Lord give to the heart that puts off faith?

Two men who lived beside the same gate

The rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen and enjoyed himself luxuriously every day. At his gate lay Lazarus, suffering from sores, trying to fill his stomach with what fell from the rich man's table, and the dogs came and licked his sores. The two men were on either side of the same gate, but the way they lived was greatly different. If we look only at their immediate circumstances, the rich man seems to have much to be envied, and Lazarus seems to have only what is pitiable.

But the Lord did not end their story with their circumstances while they were alive. "*So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also*

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died and was buried" (Luke 16:22). After he died, Lazarus was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, and the rich man, after he died and was buried, suffered torment in Hades. The abundance he had enjoyed while alive could not protect the rich man from that torment. Neither could the destitution Lazarus had gone through push him out of God's comfort.

Abraham is the father of faith, who believed in God. The fact that Lazarus entered his bosom shows that he entered that kingdom by faith in God, not because a life of poverty itself paid the price of salvation. Both the rich and the poor must receive the remission of sins, and neither can stand before God by how much or how little property they have. Therefore, we must not judge that someone has been saved by looking at his circumstances, nor conclude that there is no grace of God for a person who is suffering.

The abode that cannot be changed after death

The rich man, who saw Lazarus while in torment, pleaded with Abraham to have mercy on him. It was a request to send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue. What he needed was not a luxurious feast but one drop of water to relieve his torment. Through this plea, the Lord reveals that the good things one enjoyed on earth cannot take the place of salvation after death.

"Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented'" (Luke 16:25). After the life the rich man had regarded as good while alive and the suffering Lazarus had gone through, there were entirely different outcomes. Seeing this, we must not calculate that one

is punished to the extent one was happy on this earth and saved to the extent one suffered. Abraham's bosom and the exhortation of the word that follows show how vain it is to live clutching only the good things before one's eyes, without faith in God.

"And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us" (Luke 16:26). In the face of this great gulf, even the rich man's plea could not change his abode. This gulf that divides God and man is sin. A person who has not received the remission of sins cannot enter Abraham's bosom, and because after death there is no way to deal with that sin, the Lord does not permit the vague expectation that one will be able to get another chance after death. Here is the reason we must hear and believe now the salvation God gives. Since we cannot remove sin and escape judgment by our own strength, we must accept today, while we are alive, what the Savior has accomplished. There is no one who can decide the "later" as he pleases.

The word already given to the living brothers

The rich man next asked that Lazarus be sent to his father's house. It was a request that Lazarus testify to his five brothers, who were still alive, so that they would not come to the place of torment as he had. Rather than a request about the wealth they had or the circumstances of their lives, the plea to let them know this fact came first. By telling us this conversation, the Lord makes us see what has been given to us, who can still hear the word.

"Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them'" (Luke 16:29). Since God had already

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spoken through Moses and the prophets, there was no need for them to wait for a new and special visitor. The written word exposes sin and testifies of the salvation God would bestow. The attitude of saying that one will believe if something more amazing happens, while turning away from that word, is to make light of the evidence God has given.

Today, we too can hear the news of salvation from those who open the Bible and preach the gospel based on its word. We do not believe their words because the one who preaches is famous or has great ability. We hear and believe what God has said in the Bible and how Jesus fulfilled that word. Therefore, we who hear must examine the word, and we who preach must not put our own experiences or claims ahead of the word of God. The certainty of the gospel lies not in the name of the preacher, but in the Lord, who saved us.

Believing in the Savior rather than waiting for special evidence

The rich man said that if a dead man came back to life and went to his brothers, they would repent. But Abraham's answer was clear. *"He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead'" (Luke 16:31)*. A heart that does not accept the word is not changed merely by the fact that it has seen something amazing. This word is not a word that denies the Lord's resurrection, but a word that exposes the unbelief that rejects the word of God and seeks only strange experiences.

Then what is the salvation that Moses and the prophets testified of, the salvation we must believe in through the word? Jesus, who is God, came to this earth in the body of a man and

received baptism from John in the Jordan River. Just as the sacrificial offering of the Old Testament had sins passed on to it through the laying on of hands, Jesus had the sins of all the people of the world passed on to Him once and for all through this baptism, and the sins each of us commits throughout our whole lives are also included in them. Because He bore the sin of the world in that way, the Lord received the judgment for sin in our place by being hung on the Cross and shedding His blood and dying, and He rose again from death and became our eternal Savior. The great gulf that lay between the rich man and Lazarus, that is, sin, the Lord removed in this way with His own body.

The ticket for entering Abraham's bosom is not our merit or good deeds, but faith that believes in the Lord's baptism and blood. We do not receive the remission of sins merely by a heart that hopes there is a heaven or by the memory that we have lived good lives; rather, we obtain the remission of sins by believing the fact that Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through His baptism and received that judgment on the Cross. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that we hear and believe is precisely this news. Because it is a salvation that has already been accomplished, we can believe the word that testifies of that salvation and rely on the Lord, without needing to produce any more amazing experience.

Here also lies the reason the Lord told this story to the living. It is not to make them think of the torment after death as if watching a spectacle, but to make them hear the word of salvation now and come to God. We who have received this grace first must preach the gospel to our families and neighbors and pray that they will hear and believe the word. Let us not think that someone does not need the gospel because his circumstances are comfortable, nor consider that someone will

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be saved by his suffering alone because his circumstances are hard.

The answer the Lord gave to the heart that puts off faith while waiting for more certain evidence is to hear the word that has already been given. Even while we wait for a sign, the word is already spread open before us. Today, while we can still hear the word, let us believe in the Savior, who bore all our sins and was judged in our place. And let us preach this news of life to those who have not yet heard it, and live in the hope of the eternal life the Lord has given. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Am I the rich man, or Lazarus?

< Luke 16:19–31 >

“‘There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” But Abraham said, “Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.” Then he said, “I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.” Abraham said to him, “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” And he said, “No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” But he

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said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead."""

Everyone dies once, and what comes after death is the problem

Among people who are born, there are those who live well, and there are also those who live unhappily, being sick their whole lives. Some people have more money than they know what to do with their whole lives, live well, eating and dressing well, and then pass away, while those who are not like that have neither money nor health, groan terribly, and die after being sick their whole lives. But all people are born once and all die once, and what comes after death is the problem. It is that, when they died, one person had faith and another person did not have faith. Here Lazarus and the rich man appear, and Lazarus had faith, so he was saved and entered Abraham's bosom, the bosom of God. It is telling us that he went to the kingdom of God by faith. It is saying that the other person lived well physically on this earth, but died and went to hell.

Indeed, they say that art is long and life is short, and how many things a person has to do! I cannot tell you how many things there are that one wants to do in this world. But in the end, one dies. That is what life is. In the midst of birth, aging, sickness, and death, there are those who are born and live well and those who live poorly, but in the end, do they not die? After death, it is faith that tells. It is that one person entered the bosom of God, obtained eternal life, and lives well forever, while another person, because he did not believe, was tormented and suffered in the flame. That is what this word is telling us.

There is a great gulf fixed, so one cannot pass over

After the rich man died, Abraham taught him. *"Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented'" (Luke 16:25)*. It is saying: Did you not eat good things and receive comfort while you were alive? How much did Lazarus suffer while living in this world? But since he had faith like Abraham's, that faith which believes the word of God in the heart, is it not only natural that he now comes to a good place? Yet the rich man makes a request even in Hades. This rich man's habit remains the same even in Hades. He asked that Lazarus be made to dip the tip of his finger in water and touch it to the tip of his tongue.

Abraham also said, *"And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us" (Luke 16:26)*. It is saying that between the place where Lazarus is and the place where you are, there is a great valley, so it is not a place where one can go back and forth. It is a place where one cannot go even if one wants to go, and cannot come even if one wants to come. Are heaven and hell not like that? And with that, it is saying that it is only natural that you suffer such torment.

Then the rich man, knowing this, speaks. "Then, since I still have five brothers living in this world, please bring that Lazarus back to life and send him to my brothers to tell them to believe." Then Abraham said, *"They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them" (Luke 16:29)*. It is saying that there are Moses and the prophets in this world, and if they do not listen to them, they will not listen even if Lazarus is brought back to life and sent again. *"If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead" (Luke*

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16:31). Such was the word that was spoken.

To speak in conclusion, this word is telling us the fact that this faith we believe with is not something needed only on this earth, but something we need forever, even after death. Dear fellow believers, the ending of those who believe and of those who do not believe is truly different. The one who believes goes to a good place and lives well, enjoying eternal life forever; but the one who does not believe, as the saying goes that art is long and life is short, keeps having many things he wants to do, and there are so many things to do as he goes on living, yet when he dies, he cannot do all of those things. Not only that, but his life comes to an end. As there is a saying that it is better to live on this earth no matter how hard it is, on this earth one can see and feel the beautiful nature that God created; but if one dies without believing, one goes to hell. It is that once one dies, it cannot be turned back. This word is teaching us that we must believe while we are alive. Dear fellow believers, there is that much difference between those who believe and those who do not believe. The one who believes has nothing to worry about concerning the future, but for the one who does not believe, it is fatal.

Hear the people of God who are before your eyes now

Here, Abraham said that they have Moses and the prophets. Just as he said that when they teach the word on this earth, people must believe their words, and only then are they saved, so also in this world in which we are living right now, there are people of faith. There are born-again people, and we must listen to what they say. People try to taste many wonders and miracles, but there are many who are unwilling to give ear to the words of the

people of God who are before their very eyes right now. That is why they are not saved.

Truly, you and I are very fortunate. It is fortunate that the Lord met me, and you, too, are extremely fortunate. The fact that a living person, a person who has the same Bible as you, can tell you the story of faith, and that you can hear that story, is more precious than experiencing any wonders and miracles. If you do not receive the word preached by those who have gone ahead of you and are here right now, or accept their fellowship and guidance, then even if God guided you directly, you would not be able to receive it. So the fact that one who believes at present is standing before you is something to be truly thankful for, and I, too, am truly thankful that this Church exists. Because there is the Church, we can do the work of God. In any case, this word is telling us that we are born on this earth and do live, but some live unhappily and some live well and comfortably, and in the end we die; that the person who believes and dies goes to the eternal kingdom and lives well, while the person who dies without believing while living on this earth suffers eternal torment; and that therefore we must believe in the present tense and must believe while there is opportunity.

Do not just hear this as a mere story: are you the rich man, or are you Lazarus? Seen in the present tense right now, here the rich man and Lazarus appear, and which one are you? You yourselves know. If you are the rich man in the present tense right now, quickly believe in the present tense, like Lazarus, the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Church of God preaches, and believe in the present tense in that God whom this Church believes in, and be saved. I ask you to acknowledge and believe that you are lacking, that you are the seed of evildoers, and that you are those who will go to hell.

There is nothing to put forward. However great we may be,

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there is no one who can escape this cycle of birth, aging, sickness, and death. No one can escape from being born, getting sick, and dying. There is no one who is great, either. When many people are gathered, some seem a little different, but if we look objectively at how people live, apart from the difference of whether one has faith or not, everything else is all the same. It is nothing much. Everyone is similar. It is not that there is anyone special on this earth. A person with a job holds his head a little higher, a person whose future is somewhat secured walks around with his shoulders back, a person who is not like that is dispirited and hangs his head, and some people live their whole lives getting treated for illness. But whether one lives this way or that way, whether one lives rich or poor, whether one lives in health or in sickness, faith is what matters. If one believes, one becomes a happy person, and if one does not believe, it will not do; so if you want to believe, you must listen to the words of the people of God who are before your eyes at present and follow the example of their faith. Do not say such things as, “In my opinion it is like this, and I am like that.” Do you really know the Bible? If you opened the Bible and took a test on what it is saying here, would you know? You do not.

Do you know the meaning of the word ‘gospel’?

The word used most in Christianity is the word ‘gospel.’ People use the word a lot—gospel, gospel, gospel—but do you really know the meaning of the word ‘gospel’? How many people would be able to discuss accurately the meaning of the word ‘gospel’?

The meaning of the gospel in the original language is good news, and as for why this good news is good news, one could

say this much: just as rocks and buildings are all blown away when dynamite explodes, when we believe in our Lord, all our sins are removed. As far as the meaning of the original word goes, that is. But more concretely, how many people would be able to discuss all of it concretely—why it is the gospel, why it was called good news, why the good news is good, and, when this is applied to people, to whom it becomes good news? It is so tremendous that they cannot even talk about it. People have published so many books, but it is hard to find a book that has accurately written about the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Some people do say similar things, but did they really say them knowing?

The gospel is something whose meaning does not fade no matter how much it is used, used, and used again. It never fades. Other words become tiresome to hear if they are used over and over. But with this gospel of the water and the Spirit, the more one speaks of it, the more sweet water comes out of it, the water of eternal life comes out, blessings pour out, and grace pours out. The gospel is that which brings forth such things the more this word is used. It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Therefore, we must believe in God in the present tense and strive to be saved by acknowledging and believing the following exactly as they are: the God we believe in, the God the Church believes in, the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Church of God believes in, and what we ourselves are, as the Church of God believes us to be. This is extremely easy, but for a person who does not deny himself, it is impossible. To believe in the gospel, one must deny oneself. Also, even to receive guidance, one must deny oneself, and if one tries to go a way one has never gone before, one must deny oneself when the one who has gone ahead leads. We who are born again have power. So when some work is entrusted to us, it seems we would not be able to do it,

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but if we have truly been born again, we do it. It is that God has put power inside us. So when we set about it, we do it. This is all different. But a person who is not born again cannot do it.

In any event, Lazarus truly lived a hard and difficult life while living in this world after he was born, but he had faith like Abraham's, believed in God, believed also in this gospel the Lord gave, and believed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, so he was saved and came to live a very happy life. But the rich man was the exact opposite. While living on this earth he lived boldly and in grand style, but when his life was all over, the life that came next was the most unhappy. The word that he was tormented is what tells us that. Right now, we are extremely happy. When you hear this word of God, you must apply to yourselves "what this is talking about." Are you the rich man, or are you Lazarus?

Since you do not know when you will die, prepare your faith

One believes of one's own accord; it does not work by someone going and forcing it, saying, "You do not believe, so believe." If a person deceives himself, no one can do anything to touch that person. Does the word not say so as well? It says that even if Lazarus were brought back to life and sent to the brothers, five of them, to testify, they would not believe. It says to hear the word of God, the gospel of God, the secret of being saved, and faith from the Moses and the prophets who are living on this earth at present. It says to hear and believe. Then, it says, one is saved. There is no other way.

Why did God bring the Church of God into being and place it on this earth? Why did He place you and me on this earth as

those who serve the gospel of God? He placed us so that, through you and me, those who have not yet been saved might obtain the opportunity to be saved, the opportunity to be blessed. That is why, through us, the gospel is now being spread throughout the whole world. That rich man died, but we are now preaching the gospel to people like the rich man's five brothers. How much time is left? They say the world has changed so much that in the future people will work alongside robots, and cars, too, will be driven not by people but by machines. I understand that the world developing in this way means that the age in which man tries to become a god is approaching. Then this world will come to an end. Since it will end suddenly one day while people are eating well and living well, I hope that you will become Lazarus before then.

Even if you are living on right now without any hindrance, dear fellow believers, will you not die? If God takes you away even tonight, you die. Dying is simple. It is extremely easy. A person can die even in the space of a night. It is not so difficult. We must not think of a person's death as too difficult a thing. Because we do not know when we will die, we must have our faith prepared at all times. Whenever the Lord calls, we must become people who have faith like Abraham's, able to enter Abraham's bosom like Lazarus, and who can enter heaven by faith. I think we must become people who have such faith.

Only when we believe first is the next person saved

You do not always hear such sermons as this one. When you hear it, you should say, "Ah, so that is how it is," and we must quickly believe and preach the gospel to others. Only when we believe is the next person saved through you. People who are to

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be saved are waiting. It is good that God saves you and me, but only when He has saved you and me can He save the people connected to you and me. If you believe, you, too, can save the people you meet. God wants the gospel to be preached in this way; He does not work haphazardly. That is why you must believe first. Do not go on not believing yourselves, saying, "I am fine." Life does not always go well. Since we do not know when we will go, and we do not know how weak a person is, we must live prepared to meet the Lord at any time. If the Lord came this very evening, if your life were to end this very evening, have you prepared such faith as would take you to the eternal kingdom, to Abraham's bosom, to heaven, truly without a single sin? You must live having prepared true faith. This is a truly, extremely important matter. Only then are other souls saved through you.

The apostle Paul said, *"Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16)*. It is saying that it is God's will that, through you, the gospel be preached to other people so that those people too are saved; but if you keep your mouth shut and, having been saved yourself, just stay still, so that those people have not heard the gospel, then that curse is sought from the person who was saved first. This is what the apostle Paul is saying, and it is what is being said to you.

But if, claiming to preach the gospel, one says, "Believe in Jesus," is that the gospel? Is one saved by doing that? If preaching the gospel like that were enough, it would do to rent a broadcasting station, pay money, and keep advertising for an hour a day in every country, "If you believe in Jesus, you will be saved." Would people be saved then? Believing in Jesus means knowing and believing that Jesus is your Savior, that He had your sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and received the judgment for those sins on the Cross, and so removed all your sins; it does not mean that one is saved

just by believing in His name without knowing that work of salvation. So I ask you to deny yourselves. Without being saved yourself, how can you want the people you love to be saved? Without first denying yourselves before God, believing in the gospel, and following the word of God, how can you hope for another person to be saved? Only when you obey first can other souls also be saved and blessed.

Stand in the ranks of Lazarus

I am in the ranks of Lazarus. Are you in the ranks of Lazarus? Is there anyone in the ranks of the rich man? Change yourselves. Only when you want to change do you change. Try leading an ox to the water's edge. If the ox does not want to drink the water, it will not drink. No matter how much you lead it there, if it does not like to drink, it will not drink. It is the same. With spreading the gospel, too, no matter how much the preacher speaks, if you refuse to believe the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that is the end of it. So I ask you to believe, and to believe in the present tense. I hope that you will all stand in the ranks of Lazarus. ✉

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CHAPTER

17

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You can download Rev. Paul C. Jong's Christian Books to Computer, Tablet or Smartphone.

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Do not cause a little one to fall, but receive the brother who returns

< Luke 17:1–4 >

“Then He said to the disciples, ‘It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, “I repent,” you shall forgive him.’”

The person who falls from faith because of my words

When we come to know a brother’s wrong, there are times when our heart moves in two directions. Sometimes we pretend not to know, fearing that the relationship will be damaged if we speak, and sometimes, because of anger we have held back, we try to have nothing more to do with that person. But the Lord tells us to rebuke sin and yet receive the brother who repents. To follow these two words together, we must first examine where our words and actions toward our brother lead.

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"He said to the disciples, 'It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!'" (Luke 17:1). While the Lord spoke of the fact that offenses do come, He made clear the responsibility of the person who causes them. Our responsibility does not disappear with the excuse that we could not help it because others do the same. If we expose a brother's weakness and make him a laughingstock, or put forward our own boasting before a person who is coming forward believing in the gospel, we may cause him to drift away from faith rather than help him hear the word.

Stumbling does not refer merely to the other person's feelings being hurt for a moment. It is the problem of our leading him into sin and becoming a hindrance to his believing in the word of the Lord. Therefore, we can neither stop a necessary exhortation only because the other person feels uncomfortable, nor justify a harsh attitude only because we said what was right. We must look back on whether both the content of the exhortation and the heart with which we convey it are fitting to lead our brother before the Lord.

The Lord's heart set on one little one

"It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones" (Luke 17:2). The warning that spoke of a millstone reveals how heavy a sin it is to cause one little one to fall. It is not a command to do harm to a person, but a word that makes us know the seriousness of the sin of causing someone to stumble. We cannot treat a person whom the Lord regards as precious carelessly just because that person has little influence.

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In the church, there are people who repeat the same questions because there is still much they do not know, and there are people who need help because they are not yet familiar with the work entrusted to them. If we look at that lack and first calculate their usefulness, it is easy to forget how the Lord saved them. If we heard the word first, we have that much responsibility to explain and to wait. If we push someone away because he cannot keep up quickly, we are the ones blocking the way of preaching the grace we have received.

Jesus did not receive us after waiting for us to become perfect by ourselves; rather, He came to this earth to save us, who could not solve our sins. For us, who sin without ceasing all our lives, not just seven times in a day, the Lord had all those sins passed on to Him at one time when He received baptism from John. Because the sin of the whole world, including the sins we committed in the past, the sins we commit now, and even the sins we will commit in the future, was passed on to Jesus through that baptism, the Lord bore that sin and shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death and accomplished our salvation.

The ground on which we and our brothers are given life is not the fine character of each of us, but this salvation the Lord has accomplished. The gospel of the water and the Spirit conveys the salvation accomplished through the baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and we receive the remission of sins by believing in that Jesus. When we stand before this grace, the ground for looking down on a brother’s shortcomings disappears. This is because we, too, are not people who have solved our sins by ourselves and stood before the Lord.

Let us remember the fact that the Lord spoke separately of one little one. Even if many people think well of us, we cannot erase with that praise the pain of one person whom we have treated carelessly. Having been entrusted with many tasks and having labored does not give us the authority to oppress a brother, either. If there is a wrong in us that has simply not come to light because that person has been quietly enduring it, we must first acknowledge it and turn from it. Before the Lord, our attitude toward that soul matters more than our position.

Exhortation that corrects wrongs and the place of repentance

"Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him" (Luke 17:3). Before speaking of a brother's sin, the Lord told us to take heed to ourselves. This means that even while we point out another's wrong, we must be on guard against the pride and hatred within us. We must not confuse the fact that we are angry with the fact that our brother has actually sinned. Before we press someone as having sinned for the reason that he differs from our thinking, we must examine clearly what has gone against the word.

If there is a clear wrong, we must speak so that our brother realizes it. If we leave sin alone while claiming to love him, he will keep going down the wrong path. However, exhortation is not a means of subduing the other person and making him submit to our will. Since it is a work of helping him acknowledge his wrong and return to the word of the Lord, there is no need to exaggerate the facts or to spread them to others first and put him to shame. We must explain so that he can listen, and speak while also examining what he has misunderstood.

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Let us not forget that the one who exhorts is also under the same word. If we approach with the heart that we are perfect and only the other person needs to be corrected, even right content easily becomes a tool for displaying superiority. When we stand together as brothers who need the grace of the Lord and preach the word, the purpose of correcting wrongs also becomes clearer.

Repentance is not words meant to escape another's reproof for a moment, but acknowledging one's wrong and turning from it. When we ourselves receive exhortation, too, we must not look for excuses first but examine the wrong revealed by those words. The faith that the Lord has remitted our sins cannot become an excuse for hiding sin. Rather, because we rely on the grace of salvation, we can honestly acknowledge our wrongs and, if there is something by which we have caused harm, go forward to the place of setting it right.

The door not to be closed before the brother who returns

"If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him" (Luke 17:4). Before the word about seven times in a day, we soon feel our limit. This is because, though once or twice we might manage, when the same person returns again, we first recall his past wrong rather than accept his repentance. But the Lord did not tell us to count the number of times and earn the right to push our brother away. He told us to receive again the brother who repents and returns.

The brother who hears this exhortation, too, must not lightly repeat the same sin, using grace as an excuse. If the person who caused harm demands that the other person immediately treat

him as if nothing had happened, it goes against the meaning of repentance. He must correct the wrong, bear the necessary responsibility, and also make the effort to build trust again. In that process, we must not make past sins a weapon of retaliation, but help our brother stand rightly.

There are also times when wounds remain and the heart does not soften right away. At such times, rather than pretending to be fine while hiding our own pain, we can tell it to the Lord and seek help within the word. The remission of sins that the Lord has accomplished is not canceled because of the fact that our heart is having a hard time. Looking to the Lord, who long endured us and saved us, we learn the way of not following hatred.

We, who were troubled over how to deal with a brother's wrong, come to know that there is a way the Lord has opened besides pretending not to know the wrong or pushing him away forever. The Lord told us to regard the little one as precious, to rebuke sin clearly, and to give the brother who repents a place to walk together again. Let us examine today whom our lips are causing to fall, and if there is a door we have closed before a brother who has returned, let us open it, remembering the grace we have received. In this way, together we must continue to protect the brother whom the Lord has saved. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Do not turn the labor done in reliance on the Lord into your own merit

< Luke 17:5–10 >

“And the apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’ So the Lord said, ‘If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, “Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,” and it would obey you. And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, “Come at once and sit down to eat”? But will he not rather say to him, “Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink”? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, “We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.”’”

The apostles’ plea to have their faith increased

When we meet the limits of our own ability while serving the Lord, we think it would be good if we had greater faith. But after finishing a task well, I may begin to think that, since I have done

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this much, the Lord must also fulfill my wishes. We seek help when we are lacking, and then put forward our own merit when results appear. Today the Lord speaks of a mustard seed to the apostles who ask for faith, and then teaches the attitude of a servant who has finished his work. Before these two words, we must look back on whom we rely on as we work and whose merit we regard that work as.

"The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith'" (Luke 17:5). The apostles did not boast before the Lord that their faith was sufficient. Having just heard the word not to cause a little one to stumble but to receive again and again the brother who repents, they pleaded with the Lord to increase their faith. In that they went to the Lord instead of asserting that they could do it by their own strength, it is a plea that we, too, must learn.

We, too, need such a plea. When we meet the limits of our own thinking and character in receiving a brother or in preaching the gospel, we must not apply those limits to the power of the Lord as well. Because of the judgment that we cannot do it, it is easy to conclude that even the work the Lord has entrusted to us is impossible. But faith does not begin with seeing our own ability as great; it begins with seeking help from the Lord, who saved us, lacking as we are.

The object of faith, who is greater than a small seed

"The Lord said, 'If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, "Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea," and it would obey you'" (Luke 17:6). A mulberry tree rooted in the ground being pulled up and planted in the sea cannot be accomplished by human strength. While

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speaking of such a thing, the Lord did not demand a huge quantity of faith, but gave the example of a single mustard seed. Before we measure how strongly we are convinced, we must see toward whom that conviction is directed. Just as a living seed does not become a dead seed because of its small shape, faith that truly believes in the Lord is not useless just because it does not feel itself to be great.

What we must truly believe, even with faith the size of a mustard seed, is this. Jesus, who is God, came to this earth clothed in the body of a man and, by receiving baptism from John, had my sin passed on to Him, and included in what was passed on to Him are all the sins of the whole world, from the sins we committed in the past to the sins we commit now and even the sins we will commit in the future. The Lord, who thus bore the sin of the world, shed His blood and died on the Cross and received in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and accomplished our salvation. What saved us is not the power that made the conviction of our hearts great, but the fact that the Lord has accomplished it in this way.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit conveys that salvation has been accomplished through this baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. We are not saved because we have so much knowledge that we can explain everything in the Bible; rather, we receive the remission of sins by believing in our hearts in Jesus, who accomplished this work. Just as even a small seed sprouts if it has life, even a small faith, if it truly believes this fact, receives salvation and is also used as a worker of the Lord. If the ground of our faith lies in how great we ourselves are, we are shaken every time we see our weakness, but if it lies in the salvation the Lord has accomplished, we can rely on Him even when we are lacking.

The same faith is needed also when we serve following that Lord. If we do not know how to do the work entrusted to us, we can ask for wisdom, learn from brothers who learned before us, and join our strength together. The Lord did not tell us to handle all the work by our own ability alone. However, we must not turn the word about the mulberry tree into a promise that our business or all our wishes will surely succeed. To believe in the Lord is not to try to move the Lord's power according to our own will, but to seek His help following the word of the Lord.

The places of master and servant, which do not change even after the work is finished

"Which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'?" (Luke 17:7). The Lord spoke of a servant who has come back from plowing or tending sheep. Even after finishing his work outside, the servant prepares his master's meal and serves him. This means that the places of master and servant do not change just because one task has been finished. *"Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not" (Luke 17:9)*. A servant cannot become one who commands his master on the basis of his own labor.

When we serve the Lord, too, we must not only count how much work we have done, but remember who it is that entrusted us with that work. We were able to preach the gospel because the Lord first saved us and made us know that gospel. The strength to serve and the brothers to work with are also within the grace we have received from the Lord. Since the relationship between the Lord and us is not a debtor-creditor relationship in

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which the one who ordered the work and the one who did it exchange wages, if we think that we have put the Lord greatly in our debt after finishing the work by that grace, we have forgotten the beginning of our service. The work we undertook with thanksgiving has, before we know it, become the ground for pushing through our own demands.

This parable is not an excuse to keep a tired person from resting or to ignore the legitimate needs of one who has worked. The word that teaches the relationship between the Lord and us must not be brought over as authority for one person to make use of another. Providing food and rest for a brother who has labored and comforting one another are, of course, necessary. Seeking help because the body is exhausted is different from demanding that God repay a debt according to our will because we have labored.

We must not lose the heart that acknowledges a brother's labor, either. If we thrust at others the word by which we ourselves should confess that we are unprofitable servants, and express no gratitude at all, we are using in reverse the exhortation the Lord gave to us ourselves. We must cherish one another and add our strength, but before God we must not put forward our own merit as the ground of salvation or as a condition for our demands.

The confession that remains in grace even after having done everything

"So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'" (Luke 17:10). This confession is not something said by a person who has done

nothing in order to avoid responsibility. It is the confession of a servant who does not forget his position even after having done all that he was commanded. He has been faithful, regarding the work the Lord gave him as precious, but he does not think that he has thereby paid back the salvation he received from the Lord.

Nor is there any need to regard the work entrusted to us as worthless because of the word that we are unprofitable servants. Preaching the news of salvation to those who have not heard the gospel, and sharing in the labor needed for that work, are precious things. However, we must distinguish between the preciousness of that work and our own merit. We are thankful because the Lord has entrusted us with precious work; it is not precious because we have become people who deserve to earn the Lord's grace.

If our disappointment grows when we do not receive praise, let us examine toward whom our labor was directed. Let us honestly tell the Lord our desire to be recognized, but we must not let that desire become a reason to quarrel with a brother or abandon the work entrusted to us. Conversely, when the work goes well and we receive recognition from people, we must remember the grace of the Lord, who made that work possible. Whichever way our circumstances go, faith that relies on the Lord continues to be necessary.

Whether in the place where we felt we lacked the strength to serve the Lord, or in the place where our heart is about to be lifted up after finishing the work well, the place where we are to stand is the same. It is to stand before Jesus, who bore our sins and accomplished salvation. Let us ask for faith and wisdom for the work entrusted to us today, and after finishing that work, let us give thanks for the grace we have received. Then, without turning our labor into a bill we hold out to the Lord, we can walk again following the Lord's will as saved servants. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The gratitude of the one man who turned back on the path of healing

< Luke 17:11–19 >

“Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ So when He saw them, He said to them, ‘Go, show yourselves to the priests.’ And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?’ And He said to him, ‘Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.’”

The ten men who stood afar off and cried out together

When a problem we have earnestly longed to see solved is solved, our hearts grow busy with the joy that we no longer have

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to think about that matter. We want to do the things we had long put off, and also to meet the people we could not meet. But after the problem is resolved, what place are we giving the Lord, who bestowed that grace? In today's text it is recorded that ten men were healed together, but one of them returned to the Lord. Following the steps by which he turned back, we intend to examine our hearts as well.

When Jesus, on His way to Jerusalem, entered a certain village, ten men who were lepers met the Lord, standing afar off. *"They lifted up their voices and said, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!'" (Luke 17:13)*. They were not in a position to boast that they had cured their disease by their own strength. Because they could not produce by themselves what they needed, they called on Jesus and pleaded with Him to have pity on them.

They, who stood afar off, needed the mercy of the Lord. The text does not explain their past in detail or compare who was the better person. It shows the fact that all ten cried out together. In this scene we see that the place where we go before the Lord is not a place to prove our own qualifications, but a place to ask for grace.

We, too, are people who have no ability to cure ourselves when faced with the problem of sin. Even if we find something to put forward as being better than others, it cannot remove the sin in our hearts. That said, we must not conclude that every disease is the result of some special sin that the person concerned has committed. Through the need of the sick people that the text shows, we learn the fact that we must ask for the Lord's mercy in a situation we cannot resolve by our own strength. The Lord did not turn away from their plea that came from afar.

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The cleansing given on the way of following the word

"When He saw them, He said to them, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.' And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed" (Luke 17:14). Jesus saw their bodies and told them to show themselves to the priests. The time they were cleansed was on the way, as they went after hearing the word of the Lord. It is not recorded that they moved only after the change was first fully confirmed before their own eyes. They walked relying on the Lord, who had spoken, and the Lord cleansed them.

The power of cleansing did not come from the labor of their walking the road; it was in Jesus, who saw them and told them to go to the priests. If we count the distance walked as merit, or think that anyone who repeats the same action will obtain the same result, we miss the One who gave the grace. The faith that follows the word and the power of the Lord, who accomplishes salvation, are connected in that way. Faith is not trusting in the efficacy of one's own actions, but relying on the Lord, who has spoken.

The Lord, who cleansed the bodies of the lepers, also washed away our sins, not by human effort, but by the salvation He Himself accomplished. When Jesus received baptism from John in the Jordan River, it was not the disease of ten men but all the sins of the whole world that were passed on to Jesus once and for all. Because those sins include all the sins of our whole lives—our past, present, and future—Jesus bore those sins and shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death and accomplished our salvation.

Preaching Jesus, who thus bore sin through His baptism and saved us through the blood of the Cross and the resurrection, is

the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We receive the remission of sins by believing in that Jesus. We do not determine the fact of salvation by looking at whether strong feelings always arise in our hearts. Rather, we confirm through the word how the Lord bore our sins and was judged, and accept that fact in our hearts. Just as the person who saw that his body was healed had to think of the Lord who healed him, we, who have come to know the grace of the remission of sins, must receive into our hearts the One who accomplished salvation.

The one man who returned and the Lord's question

"One of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan" (Luke 17:15–16). Of the ten, only one returned to the Lord, and Luke noted separately that he was a Samaritan. *"Jesus answered and said, 'Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?'" (Luke 17:17–18)*. The Lord's question was not a question meant only to count the number of those who were healed. Grace was bestowed on all ten, yet He makes us ask why only one returned to give glory to God.

The text does not explain where the nine went or how they lived afterward. We cannot make up things that are not recorded and judge their lives. But the fact that there was one who returned to this place and gave thanks, and the fact that the Lord asked about it, are clear. Before this question, we must examine whether we, too, do not have a heart that looks only at the help received and forgets the Lord who gave the help.

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The man who returned did not separate the change that had happened to him from the Lord. The joy that his disease was healed led to thanksgiving, falling down before Jesus. He neither waited until the others returned together, nor hid his thanksgiving for the reason that he was a Samaritan. While calling him a foreigner, the Lord clearly revealed the fact that he had returned to give glory to God. He showed that the faith that comes to the Lord matters more than a person's origin.

Our thanksgiving, too, must not end with listing what we have received. When we remember the salvation we have received from the Lord, we come to think about what response our today is giving to Him. If we have a heart that seeks the Lord for a moment only when a problem is solved and then returns to its own cravings, we must turn from it. So that we do not forget even the salvation He bestowed before, just because our circumstances have become difficult, we must ruminate within the word on what the Lord has done.

The word given to the one who returned with thanksgiving

"He said to him, 'Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well'" (Luke 17:19). Jesus did not merely keep the man who had come to give thanks at His feet, but told him to arise and go. Now he could return to his own life, holding in his heart the word the Lord had spoken. The Lord's speaking of faith does not mean that He gives salvation as a reward because the man kept the etiquette of thanksgiving well. He revealed the faith by which the man had returned relying on Jesus, who bestowed grace.

We must look together at the cleansing of the ten and the word of salvation given to this one man. Believing in the Lord

in one's heart is not accomplished automatically by the mere fact that one has received help for the body. We, too, must not confirm our faith only by good things happening, but examine whether we believe in Jesus, who bore sin, as our own Savior. While asking for the help we need in life, above all we must not miss the Lord, who gave life to our souls.

Nor does the thanksgiving that returns to the Lord end only in one day's worship. Remembering the grace we have received, we can regard our brothers as precious and preach what Jesus has done to those who have not yet heard the news of salvation. It is not that we buy salvation with the labor of serving in that way; rather, the salvation we have already received leads to a life of thanksgiving. It is important not to forget the Master of that grace even in the steps by which we return to daily life.

To us, who were looking back on what place we give the Lord after a problem is solved, this one man shows the picture of thanksgiving that falls down at the feet of the One who bestowed grace. Let us, too, give thanks today, engraving in our hearts the remission of sins that the Lord has bestowed. Instead of busily leaving with only the solved problem in our arms, I hope that we will become those who live anew, holding in our hearts the word of Jesus, who saved us. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Where are we looking for the kingdom of God?

< Luke 17:20–21 >

“Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, “See here!” or “See there!” For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.’”

The answer He gave to the question of when

There are times when, though we feel that God is near when the things we can see are going well, we think that the Lord is far away when the change we expected does not come. When the church grows and people acknowledge it, the kingdom of God seems to have become firm, and when we meet small and weak circumstances, we also feel as if something has gone wrong. But is it all right to measure the kingdom of God only by the outward appearance that we want to confirm? The answer the Lord gave to the question of the Pharisees today makes us look back at where we are looking for that kingdom.

“*Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with observation’” (Luke 17:20).* The Pharisees asked when the kingdom of God would come. But Jesus first corrected how they were thinking about the coming

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of the kingdom. It means that one must not try to recognize the kingdom of God as if observing it with the eyes and confirming some shape. Rather than the lips that ask about the time, the matter of the heart that receives that kingdom is what comes to light first.

The Lord's answer does not mean that there is no kingdom of God; it means that the expectation of trying to recognize that kingdom by visible scale or power is wrong. The mere fact that people make a great noise and many people have gathered is not in itself the kingdom that God rules. We must examine whether there is faith there that receives the word the Lord spoke, and whether they truly rely on Jesus, who saved sinners.

In our hearts, too, there is an expectation that resembles the question of the Pharisees. It is the heart that will acknowledge that God is working only after our own circumstances first improve. But while we wait for the sign we want, we may pass by Jesus, who already came to save us. It can happen to us, too, that we fail to see the Lord in the place where He is and look for the evidence of the kingdom somewhere else.

The kingdom established in the heart that has received the remission of sins

"Nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). Jesus said not to look for the kingdom of God in the way of pointing to some place, saying that it is here or it is there. The kingdom the Lord rules is not separated from the faith that receives Him in the heart. That the kingdom of God has been established on this earth in the hearts of the righteous who have received the remission of

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sins means that, wherever they are, they believe in the Lord who saved them as their own Lord and have fellowship with Him.

Just because the people who heard this word were the Pharisees, we must not think that the remission of sins and the kingdom of God had already been established in all of them, who did not believe in Jesus. Even though the Lord was before them and spoke about that kingdom, they had to receive it in their hearts. The same question comes back to us, too, who sit in church and hear this word. What matters is not so much whether we belong to a group that speaks of the kingdom of God, but whether we believe in the Lord of that kingdom.

A heart that has not received the remission of sins cannot become the kingdom that God rules. That is why the Lord first removed that sin. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had all the sins of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all, and all the sins of our whole lives that belong to us—our past sins, our present sins, and even the sins we will commit in the future—are among them. Because He had the sin of the world passed on to Him, the Lord bore that sin and shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death and saved us.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit conveys that sin was passed on through the baptism of Jesus and that salvation was accomplished through the blood of the Cross and the resurrection. When we believe in this Jesus, we receive the remission of sins and become the people who call God Father. It is not that we made up for ourselves a thought that puts the heart at ease, but that we received the grace by which the Lord actually resolved sin. Because the sin that blocked the way between God and us has been remitted, the way of fellowship with the Lord has been opened.

Therefore, when we examine the peace of our hearts, too, we must not merely weigh the mood of that day, but remember what the basis is on which we have been reconciled to God. Even a saint who has received the remission of sins may be sick in body, meet with sorrowful things, and be unable to sleep because of worry. It is not that, because such feelings have arisen, the saint who has received the remission of sins is pushed out of the kingdom of God or becomes distant from it. Our peace is rooted not in the ability to always keep a joyful feeling, but in the fact that the Lord, who bore our sins, has become our unchanging Savior.

The clear fact that the Lord reigns

When we say that the kingdom of God is the kingdom established in the heart, we must not lower it to the level of an invisible personal thought. Earlier, Jesus spoke as follows concerning His casting out demons. *"But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20)*. The kingdom of God is not a comfort that people imagined and made up; it is related to the fact that the Lord, who overcomes the power of sin and Satan, has come to us.

We, who had no strength to escape from sin, have become the people of God through the Lord's salvation. Therefore, our hearts must not continue to be ruled by the cravings we followed before we were saved. We must place before the word of the Lord the judgment that weighed only whether something was to our own advantage, and live learning what His will is in which He delights. Because our own cravings arise even after we are

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saved, we need the fellowship of hearing the word and being set right.

The Lord's reign is different from accepting whatever a person says as a command of God. We learn from the brothers who have gone ahead of us and unite our hearts with the Church, but the basis on which we believe and follow together is the word of the Lord. If we confuse a person's position or eloquence with the authority of the kingdom of God, we are again caught by outward appearance. We must examine whether the gospel that delivered us from sin is clearly preached and whether we serve one another according to that word.

The kingdom established in the heart is also connected to the way we treat our brothers in daily life. We cannot speak of the Lord's reign while turning away from a brother's hardship, thinking that it is enough if we alone are at peace. We must go forward into a life in which we treasure the brothers who have been saved by the same grace, exhort them with the word when there is something wrong, and help the weak together. Such labor is not a price for obtaining the kingdom; it comes from thankfulness for having already become the people of that kingdom.

The Father's good pleasure given to the little flock

"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). The Lord did not say not to fear while being unaware of the smallness of the flock. Even while calling them a little flock, He said that it is the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. This is because the basis for receiving the kingdom lies not in our size but in the will and grace of the Father. If we know this promise,

there is no need to change the content of our faith in order to appear great to people.

Even if our circumstances today look small and lacking, there is no need to be discouraged, because the salvation Jesus accomplished does not shrink or disappear according to those circumstances. Even if the results of the work are not yet visible, we can hear and believe the word and serve the gospel together. Conversely, even when circumstances become abundant and people become many, those results cannot take the place of one's own faith. We must lay down the heart that tried to make visible results the evidence of the kingdom, set our hearts on Jesus, who gave us life, and remain in His word.

Where are you looking for the kingdom of God? Let us no longer regard the Lord as One who is far away until a noticeable change comes about. Let us receive into our hearts the Lord, who remitted our sins and accepted us as His own people, believe the word we have received together, and follow His will in the place entrusted to us today. When we confirm again the grace of salvation that we passed by while looking only at outward circumstances, we can live giving thanks for the kingdom the Father has already bestowed. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The faith that waits for the Lord, who will come again, is revealed today

< Luke 17:22–37 >

“Then He said to the disciples, ‘The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. And they will say to you, “Look here!” or “Look there!” Do not go after them or follow them. For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him

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not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left.' And they answered and said to Him, 'Where, Lord?' So He said to them, 'Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.'"

The discernment needed by the one who waits for the Lord

When the days ahead become uncertain, we feel as if we will be safe only if we learn special news before others do. Concerning the second coming, too, our hearts can be drawn to talk that someone has seen the Lord somewhere or that some event is about to happen. But preparing to meet the Lord is not a matter of gathering more rumors than others. Today, Jesus Himself told the disciples what they must believe and how they must live while they wait.

The Lord, who told the disciples that a time would come when they would want to see one of the days of the Son of Man and yet not see it, told them not to follow the talk that says it is here or it is there. The more earnest the waiting heart is, the easier it is to lean on unconfirmed words; therefore, the Lord's warning is needed. *"As the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day" (Luke 17:24)*. The word that the Son of Man will appear in His day as the lightning lights up the sky is different from the rumor that one can meet the Lord only by going first to a particular place.

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What we are to trust is not special information that someone kept hidden and then made known, but the word the Lord spoke beforehand. The Lord does not want His people to be swayed by rumors and run here and there. We must not decide what to believe merely for the reason that a conspicuous phenomenon has appeared, but must examine whether it agrees with what Jesus said. Knowing the word becomes the ground on which we can stop and stand firm in the face of words that shake the heart.

The One who will come again is the Savior who first suffered

"But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation" (Luke 17:25). While speaking of the day when He would appear in glory, the Lord first made known that He would suffer and be rejected. The Lord of the second coming, for whom the disciples would wait, is not One who merely displays power regardless of our sins. He is the very Jesus who would suffer in order to save sinners. Therefore, the faith that prepares for the second coming must also begin from knowing how the Lord saved us.

That suffering the Lord received began at the Jordan River. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had all the sins of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all, and all the sins of our whole lives—the sins we committed in the past, the sins we commit now, and even the sins we will commit in the future—are contained in them. Because He became the One who bore the sin of the world, the Lord was rejected by this generation and shed His blood and died on the Cross; having thus received in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, He rose again from death and accomplished our

salvation. The Lord who will come again is the Savior who has delivered us from sin and judgment in this way.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit conveys the fact that sin was passed on through the baptism of Jesus and that salvation was accomplished through the blood of the Cross and the resurrection. Believing in that Jesus with the heart and receiving the remission of sins is the basis of the faith with which to meet the Lord. Even if one can explain at length when and what will happen, if one does not believe in the Lord, who bore our sins, one cannot be said to be prepared. Saying that we are waiting for the second coming must not become a reason for putting off the gospel of the remission of sins.

When we discover our weakness, too, we must look to the same Lord. There is no need to think that the salvation the Lord accomplished has collapsed every time one deficient act is exposed. However, neither must we put forward the claim that we know that grace and refuse the word of the Lord to the very end. Acknowledging our wrongs and turning our hearts to Jesus, who bore our sins, is the life of waiting by faith.

The warning that the end comes even on a day like any other

Jesus spoke of the days of Noah and the days of Lot together. People ate, drank, and married; they bought, sold, planted, and built houses. But on the day Noah entered the ark the flood came, and on the day Lot went out of Sodom fire and brimstone came down and destruction fell. *"Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:30)*. This means that just because the life we were living until yesterday continues today, we cannot guarantee that tomorrow will surely be the same.

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The Lord did not say that meals, marriage, farming, and building houses are in themselves sin. He makes us look back at the heart that, while doing the things necessary for living, regards God's warning as words that have nothing to do with oneself. The fact that one's immediate plans are going well cannot hold back the judgment. Therefore, even on peaceful days we must hear and believe the word of the Lord, and we cannot put it off, saying that we will think about salvation only when a special disaster strikes.

Hearing this warning, we are prone to try to calculate the date of the second coming. But what the text gives us is not a timetable but the preparation of faith that must not be put off. If we fit particular political events or economic conditions to this word and fix the day the Lord will come, we end up missing the very word of salvation that we must believe today. The Lord, who spoke of the days of Noah and Lot, wants us, who are listening now, to receive that warning as the word given to us ourselves.

The things of the world that we cannot go back and take hold of

The Lord said that on that day the one on the housetop must not come down to take his goods, and the one in the field must not turn back. Then He said to remember Lot's wife. It is a warning to remember what end comes to the one who turns back, clinging to what must be abandoned. *"Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it" (Luke 17:33)*. Even if one tries to secure one's own life by keeping the things of the world, those things cannot take the place of God, who is the Lord of life.

What we need is not the act of abandoning our families and our work, but the faith that discerns what we ultimately rely on. While faithfully doing the work entrusted to us and caring for our families, we must not go down the path of valuing all of that above the Lord and refusing the word of the Lord. Providing what is needed today is different from the heart that regards itself as safe forever as long as it has those things. This is because one cannot escape the judgment for sin by wealth or position.

The word that whoever loses his life will preserve it also does not mean that we should seek death or treat life carelessly. It means that even when it is demanded of us that we abandon the Lord for the sake of keeping our lives, we must believe in the One who governs life. We must not think that the saints will have no hardship or tribulation at all; even in the midst of hardship, we must rely on Jesus, who saved us. Since our lives are in His hands, we must not let fear change the object of our faith.

The word that each person must believe even in the place where we are together

"Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left" (Luke 17:35). Before speaking of the two women grinding together, the Lord also spoke of the two men lying in one bed. Even though they lived together in the same place, one is taken and the other is left. He makes us reflect on the fact that the faith of the person near us cannot take the place of our own faith. It is not that the need to confirm each person's remission of sins and faith disappears merely because we are gathered together in church.

The church that gathers together is the place where each person hears and believes the word and receives help from one

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another. Even while receiving that precious help, I myself must accept the fact that the Lord bore my sin. We must not stop at hearing another person speak with conviction, but must believe in our own hearts the salvation of Jesus that he preaches. Faith in the Lord is a more fundamental matter than the closeness of having lived together in ordinary times.

At the end, when the disciples asked where these things would happen, the Lord said that where the body is, the eagles gather. In the face of this grave picture, we must not first try to find a place from which to watch the end. The end of the path of remaining in the place of sin and death and following the deception of the devil is not life but judgment. We must not hear the warning of the second coming as a story far away, but must believe the word of the remission of sins now and stand as those who belong to the Lord.

To us, who, fearing the days ahead, looked first for special news, the Lord has already given the word we need. This word tells us not to follow rumors but to believe in Jesus, who bore our sins, and not to make today's daily life our eternal guarantee. Let us live confirming this word of salvation with one another and preaching it to those who have not yet heard it. The today in which we believe in the Lord in this way must be our preparation for waiting for the Lord, who will come again. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Let us live with our hearts set in the word

< Luke 17:26–37 >

“And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot’s wife. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. And they answered and said to Him, ‘Where, Lord?’ So He said to them, ‘Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.’”

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The Lord, who comes as in the days of Noah and the days of Lot

The Apostle Luke recorded in this Gospel what it will be like when destruction comes upon this world. He said that until the day Noah entered the ark, people ate, drank, married wives, and were given in marriage, and then the flood came and destroyed them all. He also said that it would be as in the days of Lot. He said that at that time, likewise, people ate, drank, bought, sold, and built houses, and then on the very day Lot went out of the land of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them. And the Lord said, *"Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:30)*.

The Lord was saying that it will be like this also when He comes again to this earth. It means that when the Lord comes to this earth, He will come as in the days of Noah and as in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. And it means that when people meet Jesus, too, they will meet Him just as in the days of Noah and the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. It means that, having lived eating and drinking and enjoying themselves until just yesterday, on the day Jesus comes they will suddenly have the judgment come down on them and suffer calamity.

There is probably no one who does not know this word. It is a word that even little children know. But this word is the truth. I believe that, just as this word says, Jesus will come as in the days of Noah and as in the days of Lot, and that many people, as in the days of Noah and as in the days of Lot, will meet the judgment without having prepared.

Do not cling to the world, but prepare your faith

Jesus said, *"In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back" (Luke 17:31)*. I know this to be a word telling us not to cling to the things that are in the world, since such things will happen in this world. Our hearts must gradually be cut off from the things that are in the world. There must be no case of our clinging to the things that are in this world and living a wrong life of faith until the time Jesus comes. I believe that when the Lord comes, we must meet the Lord while doing the work of God with a truly light heart, with our hearts not attached to the world and with our faith prepared at all times. Until the day the Lord comes, we must do the work of God well and then meet the Lord.

I know that people, being like the beasts that perish, live soaked in the world even until five minutes before the Lord comes. But we, the righteous, must not live that way. The nearer the Lord's coming draws, the more we must do the work of God, remove the hearts that cling to the world, live by faith, and, like a bride waiting for the bridegroom, live with such a heart and such faith and then meet the Lord. I hope you will have such faith. Let us have the right faith, live rightly, and meet the Lord.

The word we read today is the word most fitting for this age in which you and I are living. Because it is the word we hear the most, it is also the word we can neglect the most. Since, just as the Lord said, the Lord will come as in the days of Noah and as in the days of Lot, who was living in Sodom and Gomorrah, the point is that at all times we should not cling to the world, but do the work of God and prepare our faith well, and so meet the Lord.

I hope that you will not fail to do so because your hearts are attached to the world. Even though the word of God says this

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and the age is going the way the word of God says, there are people whose hearts are soaked in the world. They must turn back. I am a person who believes that until the day our Lord comes, each of us must live working in the place entrusted to us, and then die. We must at least do the things that must be done. But I hope there will be no such thing as setting our hearts on this world and pouring our wealth into investments, investing heavily in our children, or investing heavily in this earth.

"Remember Lot's wife"

If we truly believe this word, if we believe that this world is going on according to this word, we must not cling foolishly to things as Lot's wife did. Did not Lot's wife receive the curse because she clung foolishly, as if she would live for thousands of years, as if she could live as long as she had the material things of the world? Such a person cannot escape the judgment. Therefore, that is not right.

I know that until the day the Lord comes, even while making our living, we must set our hearts on heaven and go on, until we depart, serving only the gospel and uniting our hearts in the work of spreading the gospel to the whole world. We must not cling to this world, but devote our whole hearts to the spread of the gospel. The person who sets his heart on the world will not be able to keep his faith and will be destroyed together with the world. It says that when the time of the Lord's coming is at hand, where the body is, the eagles gather; at that time, Satan the devil will gain power, seize people and make them receive the mark of the beast, and kill those who do not receive it. At that time, the person whose heart clings to this world will take the mark.

The Bible says that the person who receives the mark of the beast is cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. The person who is not preparing faith in his heart now will take the mark when that day comes. If people betray the Church, betray the Lord, and make light of their brothers and sisters even over small matters, then at that time, when it is a matter on which their own lives depend, they will do it all the more.

I know that at that time, even if our born-again brothers and sisters are taken away by Satan the devil and interrogated, they will keep their faith in God, and because of that faith, things will come to pass according to the written word of the Lord. There will also be those who meet the Lord without seeing death. Because I believe the word of God, I believe that at that time God will keep us specially and protect us by His special providence. But if God permits it and I must be martyred, I believe that I will do so.

I believe that a person who does not believe the word of God and clings to the world will take part in seizing and killing the born-again servants of God, oppose God, take the mark, and suffer such tribulation as entering the lake that burns with fire and brimstone together with the devil. That is why we must believe this word now; the one on the housetop must not set his heart on the goods in the house, and the one in the field must not look back. I believe that we must not set our hearts on the world, but set our hearts toward God and run toward God.

Let us have the right faith. It is all right for an individual to be lacking, but not believing the word of God is precisely living as a servant of Satan, and therefore God never tolerates it. Therefore, even if we are lacking, we must become those who believe the word of God in their hearts; that is how, when the Lord comes, we meet God with our faith prepared. Let us have

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the faith that believes the word of God, the faith with which we can stand before the Lord whenever He comes.

What happens when the Lord comes to this earth? He said to remember Lot's wife at that time. *"Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it" (Luke 17:33)*. Those who do not believe the word will look back in the last days and take the mark. That is destruction. They become servants of the devil. But it is said that the Lord will bring to life the one who loses his life while keeping the faith that believes the word of God. God will bring to life the person who believes the word of God and either lives or dies by faith, clothe him with grace, and give him better things. But the end of the person who betrays the Lord and does not believe the word of God, whose faith is only theory and who therefore stands on the side of the devil, is the fire of hell that burns with fire and brimstone. I have been telling you what a good thing it is that we obtain when we obtain salvation.

One will be taken and the other will be left

When the Lord comes, this is what happens. *"I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left" (Luke 17:34)*. When people die, they all go, whether to the crematorium or to the grave. Let us suppose that a husband and wife have died, and one of them was born again and the other was not born again. At that time He brings the born-again one to life, and the one who was not born again He does not bring to life. The Lord does this in order to bring the born-again person to life at that time and let him live in the Millennial Kingdom for a thousand years, in order to reward him.

We do not serve the Lord because we hope for a reward. We do it out of thankfulness. But if there were no reward, it would be hard to live like this. There are also people who say, "Even if the one who departed after working like this and the one who departed without working were treated the same, I would choose this work." I believe that all of you are like that.

Two people are sleeping, and one is taken and the other is left. This is a word spoken concerning those who have died. A person lives on this earth for a hundred years at most and then falls asleep. Those who are sleeping in this way, He brings back to life when the Lord comes at the end. He brings to life those who died born again, makes all things in this universe new, and lets them reign for a thousand years. This happens when the Lord comes. But the other one is left. He leaves him as he is. He does not bring him back to life. The word says that he will be resurrected after the thousand years have passed.

The first resurrection is that you and I, who have received the remission of sins through Jesus' receiving baptism from John, shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rising again, die and then rise again when the Lord comes again. The second resurrection is the resurrection of judgment. It is said, *"As it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27)*.

If He did not judge the people living in this world, if there were no judgment of God on all who do evil, that would be evidence that there is no God. Why does God bring people back to life after the Millennial Kingdom has passed? It is said that He brings them to life in order to judge them. It is said, *"Come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:29)*. If one is resurrected in the resurrection of judgment, it is truly agonizing beyond bearing. God gives rewards to those

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who were persecuted for righteousness' sake and who received the remission of sins by believing the word of God in their hearts, and He brings down wrath on those who, instead, oppose God, and thereby He shows that God is alive. On the day the Lord comes, this is what happens. One is left and the other is taken.

What else happens at the time the Lord comes? *"Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left" (Luke 17:35)*. This is a word spoken concerning those who are alive. Turning the mill means that they are making a living. Rich or poor, people eat three meals a day. Grinding at the mill means chewing and swallowing food. Among those who are alive at the time the Lord comes, the one who is born again God calls and takes, and the one who is not born again is left. He suffers the tribulation, and even after dying, he rises again after a thousand years and is judged.

"Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together"

What else happens when the Lord comes? *"Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together" (Luke 17:37)*. When an animal dies, the hyenas come first. But it is the eagles that come a step ahead of the hyenas. They tear at and devour the dead carcass. At the time of the final judgment of this world, what is at work? The devil is at work. The devil works on those who have sin, and works on those who are tormented because of sin and who will be judged. He does the work of taking them to hell, making them listen to him, subjugating them, and killing them. This is what happens when the Lord comes.

We hear this word often, but are we living believing the word of God in our hearts? Truly, the time of the Lord's coming is at

hand. I am not telling you personally to do this or do that. He said that the one on the housetop must not look back at his goods and the one in the field must not look back; are you and I setting our hearts on the world? Are we placing our hope in our children? Are we placing our hope in a company or a business? Are we perhaps placing our hope in ourselves? I hope you will not cling to such things. The word is that whether we eat or drink, we should do it for the glory of God and live for the gospel. This is the word of the Bible. I, too, am under this word, and you, too, are under this word. Whether a person has received the remission of sins or has not received the remission of sins, all alike are under the word of the Bible.

Let us live with our hearts set on the spread of the gospel

Truly, we must not set our hearts on this world. Those who are to earn money should earn it, those who are to live wholly for the Lord should so live, and whatever we do, we must live laboring for that work of spreading the gospel to the whole world. And we must live a life of preaching the gospel to those around us who have not been born again. The work that we, the righteous, must do on this earth is this spread of the gospel. There is nothing else. It is the same yesterday and today. *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8)*. The purpose of the born-again is the same, what God says to the born-again is the same, and being born again is the same, whether a thousand years ago or now. It will be the same in the future, too. This is because the word of God does not change.

Dear fellow believers, if the Lord were to come, what would you be doing when you meet the Lord? Are you prepared? What

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do you and I have in mind to be doing in life when we go before the Lord? Let us keep the word of God in our hearts and live by faith, and let us depart while doing the work in which the Lord delights. Let us not entertain misguided thoughts. Do not let your hearts cling to the world. Attaching your heart to the world is foolish. The things of the world are vanity of vanities. They will all rot away. The things of the world are disposable. They are like disposable items that must be thrown away after one use. No one uses such disposable items for a long time. Everything in this world is like that. They are only temporarily needed for us to live today; they are not eternal. Live without setting your hearts on the world. Live with faith. Though I am lacking, I live with that faith.

The work of preaching the gospel to the whole world must be done without letting down our guard, with the heart of one fighting a battle, with the heart of one waging a war. We must serve the Lord with such a heart. Even though the road is long, we must live with our hearts, at least, set on the gospel. I believe that God does this work through all things in the whole universe. I believe that because it is the work of God, we must do it all the more faithfully, and that we must meet the Lord while doing the work of God without setting our hearts on the world. I know that we must live without setting our hearts on the world and, when the Lord comes, meet the Lord with the joyful heart of having lived by faith. Let us set our hearts in this word, live by faith, and so depart. ✉

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CHAPTER

18

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You can download Rev. Paul C. Jong's Christian Books to Computer, Tablet or Smartphone.

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Pray even while waiting, believing that God hears

< Luke 18:1–8 >

“Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: ‘There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, “Get justice for me from my adversary.” And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, “Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.”’ Then the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?’”

When we have prayed about the same matter for a long time and yet see nothing changed, we come to think about what use there is in praying any more. Even a heart that was earnest at first grows weary while waiting, and we may call on God with our lips while in our hearts we have already given up. To us who are like this, Jesus tells the story of a widow. The Lord leads us to see that the reason we must not abandon prayer while waiting lies in whom we pray to.

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The prayer that is brought to God even when it seems not to be heard

"He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1). Before beginning the parable, Jesus made its meaning clear. The reason He gave together the word to pray always and the word not to lose heart is that when difficulties continue, a person who used to bring things before God easily stops praying. Prayer does not remain only as thanksgiving offered when circumstances improve; it is also the act of bringing to God a problem that has not yet been solved.

"There was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary'" (Luke 18:3). The widow in the parable had a grievance that had not been resolved, and though the judge did not listen to her plea for a while, the widow went to him often and repeated the same plea. In this scene we see a person who has no power to resolve her wrong by herself asking for help. The Lord did not say how well the widow spoke or what special method of prayer she used. What is needed is not polished words but a heart that actually wants help, and the faith that brings that need to God even while no answer is seen.

We, too, have prayers that we have long held for the salvation of our families or for the spread of the gospel. A prayer does not become useless for the reason that we bring the same topic before God again. Because there are souls who have not yet heard the gospel and our wisdom and strength are lacking, there still remains something today for which to ask God for help. We must not close our hearts, remembering only the fact that we prayed last time, but must entrust that matter to the Lord and bring it before Him even now.

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God's care, far more certain than the unjust judge's

"Because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me" (Luke 18:5). The judge said he would grant the plea not because he loved the widow but because he regarded her continual coming as troublesome. Therefore, we must not think of his heart as exactly the same as God's heart. The Lord did not teach us to endure God's indifference for a long time and finally turn His heart around. It means that if such a thing happens even with an unjust judge, how much more will God, who cares for His own people, hear their cry.

When we know God's love, the thoughts we hold when we pray also change. We are not people who pile up the number of our prayers in order to win God's attention, and it is not because we prayed much that we became God's elect. God sent His Son to save us, who were under sin, and Jesus, by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. Because not only the sins we have committed while living and today's faults but even the sins we will commit for the rest of our lives are included in that sin of the world, the Lord bore that sin and shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death and made us His own people.

Because we believe in the Lord, who accomplished salvation for us in this way, we come before God. Faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit gives us the assurance of the remission of sins, and in that assurance it makes us bring our circumstances before God. If the basis on which God accepts us were the merit of having prayed for a long time, on weary days we could not

help but become afraid again. But since the salvation the Savior accomplished is that basis, we can ask God for help even on days when our strength has weakened.

He hears the desire of His people who cry out day and night

"Shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?" (Luke 18:7). The Lord speaks of God's people crying out day and night. It is not that they do not go through hard things because they are people who belong to God. They suffer wrongs and are also placed in situations they cannot resolve by their own strength, but those situations do not become evidence that they have been forsaken by God. God knows them, and He does not turn away from their cry.

Therefore, we must keep asking for the things that please God. We can ask that the gospel be preached and that souls believe the truth of the remission of sins, and pray that He give wisdom, health, and what is needed to those entrusted with that work. We must also bring before Him the difficulties of our families and our own weakness without hiding them. Since we cannot judge all the circumstances, rather than forcing on God the method we want, we trust in the Lord's will and help and entrust it to Him.

There is also something we must do while we pray and wait. If we have asked that the door for preaching the gospel be opened, we must look for people who will hear the gospel; and if we have asked for wisdom, we must hear and learn the word and discern the work entrusted to us. Our actions do not take the place of God's answer, but we cannot abandon the work

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entrusted before our eyes for the reason that we are praying. The heart that prays relying on God and the heart that faithfully acts on the opportunities He has given go together. Even if the result is not yet seen, we can carry out the work permitted today and ask for help again.

The faith that will not let go until the Lord comes

"I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). The Lord, while promising that He would avenge them, gave at the end a question concerning faith. Before this question, we come to look back on a heart that was thinking only about when the answer would be seen. We must examine whether we have lost the heart that trusts God while waiting, and whether we are holding on to that promise until the Lord comes.

We must not change the word that He will avenge them speedily into the meaning that all problems will end within the date we have set. The fact that the Lord fulfills His promise and our knowing all about that time are different matters. Even if we cannot fully explain the reason for the waiting, we can hold on to the promise that God judges righteously and cares for His own people. Jesus is not One who leaves unrighteousness to win forever, and His word is more certain than our discouragement.

Also, when another saint is weary, let us not easily judge that he has suffered such a thing because his prayer was lacking. Listening to his circumstances together and bringing them before God is the way to help a brother in the faith. Since there may be beside us a person whose strength even to pray alone has weakened, the church must ask together and tell him the Lord's

promise again. If we remember that we, too, are people who need such care, we will not regard another's waiting lightly.

Are you perhaps living with a long-prayed topic erased from your heart? Bring before God again the matter that is not yet finished. In the face of a problem that is not solved at one time, what we need is not the hasty conclusion that God does not hear, but the faith that remembers the love that saved us and comes forward again. So that the place of prayer is not left empty because of waiting, let us bring our circumstances today as well before the Father, who cares for us, and ask for the Lord's help. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Is one righteous before God if one is better than others?

< Luke 18:9–14 >

“Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.” And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.’”

Even in the place where we pray to God, there are times when another person’s fault comes to mind first. If we see another’s faults and think that we are better than that person, our hearts may feel at ease for a moment, but that comparison cannot give us the righteousness with which we can stand before God. The two men Jesus spoke of also went up to the same temple to pray, but they did not obtain the same conclusion. Before asking whether we are better than anyone, the Lord makes us examine what we believe in as we stand before God.

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One's own righteousness built up by lowering others

"Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others" (Luke 18:9). The problem of the people hearing this parable was not only the fact that they had done good things. They believed that they were righteous, and on the basis of that belief they despised others. The heart that evaluated their own lives favorably led to an attitude of looking down on their neighbors. Therefore, as we read the parable, we must not merely condemn the name Pharisee, but must see whether the same belief has taken its place within us as well.

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector" (Luke 18:10). The two men went up to the same temple, but one compared himself with other people, and the other laid only himself before God. If a person standing before God keeps making other people the object of comparison, it is hard for him to examine his own sins through the word. This is because while he points out the great sins others have committed, the pride and greed within himself look small. The fact that another's fault is actually a fault and the judgment that, because of that fault, one becomes a righteous person are different from each other. If we, who must receive God's judgment, use our neighbor's faults as evidence of our own righteousness, we are, even while praying to God, believing only our own words.

Such a heart can enter even a person who has lived a life of faith for a long time. If the thought that one has served more than others does not lead to thanksgiving but hardens into a sense of superiority, one comes to despise the brother with whom one should seek grace together. The reason the Lord gave this

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parable is not to make us feel at ease that we belong to a certain class. It is to make us ourselves realize how wrong the heart that believes in its own righteousness before God is.

Self-boasting contained in words of thanks

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector'" (Luke 18:11). From the Pharisee's mouth came thanks toward God. But when we look at what he gave thanks for, he was drawing a line between himself and other people. He said that he was different from those who extort, do injustice, or commit adultery, and different also from the tax collector beside him. Standing in the place where one seeks God's mercy, he was dividing people into himself, whom he praised, and those whom he despised.

Next, the Pharisee spoke of fasting and tithes. It is not that the Lord rebuked him for the reason that he fasted or did things offered to God. The problem was that with those deeds he set himself up as righteous before God. If serving God becomes the basis for covering one's own sins and lowering others, that person can lose, even in the midst of his service, the heart that seeks grace.

We, too, must not look back on our devotion and think that God must regard us as righteous because of that labor. We must help people and live honestly, but with such good deeds we cannot remove even the sins in our hearts. Cravings and hatred that others do not know are not hidden before God, and with the good we have done until now we cannot settle the sins we will commit in the future. As long as we make our own deeds the

basis of salvation, we spend our strength defending ourselves rather than asking God for the mercy we need.

The tax collector who had nothing to rely on but mercy

"The tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'" (Luke 18:13). The tax collector did not drag in other people to defend himself. Unable even to raise his eyes to heaven, he beat his breast and asked God to have mercy on him. His confessing that he was a sinner was not a word meant to lower himself a little in order to win a good evaluation. Admitting that because of his sins he could not stand as righteous before God, he hoped for God's mercy.

Since one's heart does not become honest by imitating his posture as it is, we must not take this confession merely as a matter of the act of beating the breast or of where one stands. What the tax collector relied on was not even his own humble appearance; it was God, who has mercy on sinners. What we are to learn from this scene is the heart that lays sin before God without hiding or reducing it, and the faith that knows that one cannot remove that sin by one's own strength.

We have not only the sins of the past but faults that keep being revealed while we live. Because a person commits sin from birth until death, one cannot obtain justification from God by promising to become perfect from now on, and one needs the Savior. The mercy of God that the tax collector asked for appeared as follows. Jesus had mercy on us who are like this, and when He received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and in that sin are

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contained all our sins of the past, the present, and the future, that is, from birth until death. Because the One who had sin passed on to Him had to pay the price of sin, Jesus bore that sin and shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the punishment we were to receive, and He rose again on the third day.

God's mercy is not pretending not to see sin and leaving it as it is. It is the love by which the sinless Son bore our sins and even received the judgment, and so accomplished the remission of sins. Therefore, we must believe in Jesus, who saved us through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, rather than in our own earnestness in confessing sin. The gospel of the water and the Spirit turns the heart that counts what more a sinner must do to be saved into the faith that accepts the salvation God has accomplished for us.

The justification that God bestows

"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14). The One who judged the two men going down from the temple is Jesus. The Pharisee believed himself to be righteous, but the Lord said that the tax collector, who asked for mercy, went down justified. This conclusion reveals the fact that however firm one's self-evaluation may be, it cannot take the place of God's judgment. The assurance of salvation does not depend on whether we see ourselves favorably, but on what God has accomplished and how He has spoken.

Humbling oneself, too, cannot become a merit to put forward in order to obtain justification. The remission of sins is received

by the person who knows that he is a sinner and believes in the salvation Jesus accomplished. The person who admits that he has in himself no power of salvation accepts the remission of sins that God has given. Even after being justified by believing in the salvation Jesus accomplished, we must not turn that grace into a qualification for despising others. Since we know that what gave us life was the Lord's mercy, we must preach the same word of salvation to other sinners as well and help them come to the Lord.

If a neighbor's fault comes to mind first while we are praying, let us lay our hearts before God before exalting ourselves by comparison with that person. Since there is the Savior, who knew our faults and yet bore those sins, we have no need to dress ourselves up. What we must hold on to when we go down from the temple is not the relief that we are better than others, but the word of the Lord, who has remitted all our sins. Believe that word, give thanks to God, and look toward the neighbors who must receive mercy together with you. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, who made sinners righteous

< Luke 18:9–14 >

“Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.” And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.’”

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector”

As this world becomes hard, there will be many cases in the future where people accept Jesus, who came by the water and the Spirit, as their Savior. But rather than people accepting Jesus, who came by water and blood, as their Savior because the world and their circumstances have become hard, I have the desire that they would look at their own hearts before God, know what kind

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of people they are, and, seeing that, return before God and receive the remission of sins.

If we look at the word we read today, certain people went up to the temple and prayed to God. Among them, one person believed that he himself was righteous and despised others. Jesus spoke of such a person by giving a parable. *"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector" (Luke 18:10)*. He explained it by citing two kinds of people.

The Pharisee is a person who believes in God very well. He believes well only outwardly; seen by the law of religion, he is a person who believes very correctly and well, a person who claims to believe well according to the word. The tax collector is a person who is a sinner in a worldly sense. Seen from the world's point of view, he is a person who is nothing. Whether seen by ethics and morality or seen by faith before God, he is a complete sinner. Jesus spoke in a parable by citing these two people.

The Pharisee of that time, who was said to believe in God well and live well according to the word—this man stood in the temple and prayed, *"God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke 18:11–12)*. A person who believed that he was righteous, a person who thought that he was better than the tax collector and thought that he was not like other people, prayed to God. He prayed that he was different from vulgar human beings, and not only different, but that he fasted twice a week and gave tithes of his income well, too. But the tax collector, *"standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'" (Luke 18:13)*. The Lord said that there are these two kinds of people.

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If we look at the Pharisee praying in a holy manner, he is a person perfect in a worldly sense. Religiously speaking, he said that he gave tithes of his income. Of course, giving tithes before God is a natural thing. But this man boasted of it before God. And he said he fasted and prayed twice a week. Religiously speaking, this man is a great person. Moreover, he said that he did not commit sin. He was a great person who did not have lustful thoughts even when he saw a woman, did not envy, did not fight, did not drink, did not steal, and neither harbored nor acted on evil thoughts.

Jesus cited these two people and spoke the conclusion. *"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14)*. Here we can know that the Lord said that there are two classes of people in this world. One is the person who is confident that he lives well according to God's will before God, and the other is the person who says before God that he is nothing.

If this world becomes several times harder than now, so that food, sleep, and clothing are not provided, the sound of people seeking God and praying, saying, "Lord, Lord," will be heard in this house and that house, in this alley and that alley, in this chapel and that chapel, and there will be many people wandering the streets looking for God. But I know it is right that one should not return before God because circumstances have become hard like this, but should look at one's own heart before God and return. There are two kinds of people, and we must see how wrong the Pharisee was and what kind of people you and I fundamentally are.

Man commits sin from the cradle to the grave

The tax collector could not even raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast and said, *"God, be merciful to me" (Luke 18:13)*. What kind of people are all these human beings before God? They are people like the tax collector, who commit sin until they stop breathing. Not when they seek God because circumstances are hard, but when they lay their hearts before the word of God and look into them, what kind of people are they? They are people who commit sin until they die. They are people who have committed sin even though they have believed in Jesus until now, who are not human beings who will not sin in the future, and who commit sin until their last breath. Until our last breath, we are lacking. We must not sin before God, but because we have flesh, because we are lacking, we commit sin—such people are precisely you and I ourselves.

You and I are truly lacking, so when we look at ourselves before God, we cannot but beat our breasts and say, *"God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13)*. When we lay ourselves before God and look into our hearts, we are people who cannot but be sinners. That is what man is. He commits sin until he dies. Even if you believe in Jesus, do you not sin until you die? Do you think that your past sins have been remitted and that from now on you will walk with the Lord Jesus and not sin, serve the Lord, give tithes, fast twice a week, and not commit the sins of injustice, extortion, adultery, and murder?

Of course, we do not commit sin blatantly for people to see. But when we look at ourselves in the light of our own hearts, we cannot deny that we are lacking people who always commit sin before God. This, which we cannot but admit, is the true state of you and me. We cannot but admit that we have lived committing sin all along until now, and that when we think about how we

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will live in the future, we cannot live without sinning. So we are people who cannot but say, "Have mercy on me," people who are entirely unable to avoid committing sin.

Is there anyone who can say he does not commit sin, whether great sins or small? Everyone commits sin until he dies. Committing sin from the cradle to the grave is the natural state of man. No one on this earth can deny that he is a person who commits sin.

People make resolutions. They resolve that from now on they will not do such bad things, that now they will correct themselves and become good people who do not steal. But anyone who is human commits sin until he dies. All of us have the sinful nature that covets what belongs to others when we have no money or food. The word says, *"From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21–22)*, and people who are born with such hearts all commit such sins when the circumstances are formed. Where is there a person who would not steal food and eat it when he is hungry and sees food? Who among us can say that he is free from the sinful nature that covets another's money? Who is there that does not commit adultery? While committing fornication in their imagination, if the opportunity is given to them, they all commit fornication and adultery.

So the Bible spoke of man as *"a seed of evil-doers –ASV" (Isaiah 1:4)*. Man is a lump of sin. Can the flesh not sin? Absolutely not. It commits sin until it dies. A person can turn his heart, but his flesh is one that will die because of sin. For that reason, before God we must come to say, "Have mercy on me. I am a person who commits sin until I die. I am a weak person. I am a sinner."

A person born with a lustful heart, a murderous heart, a thieving heart, a false-witnessing heart—all kinds of filthy hearts—as inherited sin must not, merely because he does not do such acts, or because good conditions for a life of faith have been provided, go to church carrying his Bible and claim to be righteous, saying, "I am different from those people of the world. I am different from those who drink, different from those who commit fornication, different from swindlers, different from those people in prison. I fast twice a week for others, and I give tithes of my income." We must admit that the sins of those who commit fornication in the world, of swindlers, thieves, and robbers, of those who commit all those sins in the world, are precisely the sins that you and I commit. We must admit that we are such people before God. From birth until death, from the cradle until we enter the grave, until we stand before God, our flesh commits sin. For that reason, until we are born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, we are without fail sinners. It is not that, without being born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, one is righteous and another is a sinner. All alike are sinners before God and people who will go to hell.

We are exactly the same as the tax collector. We are exactly the same as the tax collector, who completely fleeced and swindled people, brought that money and squandered it, and committed sin as routinely as eating meals. The tax collector extorted the taxes of his own country and put them in his own pocket. We are the same as such a tax collector, who sold the blood of his own people to fill his own belly. We must know that you and I are people who commit sin from birth until death. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? Do you admit it?

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What kind of person receives the remission of sins before God

Today there are many people who, while believing in Jesus, are like the Pharisee. Without even believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they walk with a solemn gait and worship in a holy manner. They believe that if they confess the sins they committed during the week, He washes them clean with the blood of Jesus Christ; and they end the worship service saying that now that they have received the remission of sins, let us live good lives as the light and salt of the world, let us go to nursing homes and help, keep the laws well, not swindle, and not steal, and that this is the ethical life of a Christian. After the praise rings out, how refreshed they feel! But that is religion. People who come before God like the Pharisee and think themselves more righteous than the people of the world, saying, "I fast twice a week, live a good life, do not commit sin, and give tithes of my income"—it said that such people go back without being justified before God.

What kind of person receives the remission of sins before God? A sinner receives it. The Lord said, *"If you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless" (Matthew 12:7)*. Our Lord's mercy is that He accepts and embraces us, who cannot but commit sin, that He Himself cleanly removes all our sins with the water and the Spirit and makes us righteous, makes us His children, and makes us a people blessed before God. If we explain the word mercy, it is being pitied before God.

God's mercy is like a mother's womb. When a seed falls into a mother's womb, the womb protects it from everything outside. Keeping the inside warm even when it is cold outside, raising it well for ten months, and bringing it to be born into this world—

that is God's mercy. A fertilized egg has no strength of its own. It cannot survive infection by even a tiny germ. Protecting such a thing well and bringing it out into the world as a new life—this is God's mercy. We are nothing before God. We are a seed born as descendants of Adam that cannot but commit sin. Because the seed itself is the seed of a sinner, it is a seed that lives committing sin all its life.

The law and the law of sacrifice, the two laws God gave

Yet our Lord has made us, who are truly sinners, righteous. He made us so with the water and the Spirit. In the Old Testament, when a common person sinned, he had to bring a sacrificial offering to the Tabernacle without fail. He would take an animal clean in God's sight—one with a split hoof that chews the cud, such as a sheep, a goat, or an ox without blemish—and lay his own hands on its head. Saying, "I have committed murder. I have committed adultery. I have stolen," he put his hands on it and took them off. Then the sin passed on to it. Since the laying on of hands has the meaning that sin passes on, he would cut the throat of the animal that had his sin passed on to it with a knife and collect its blood. Since it says, *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*, he himself had to die because he himself had sin; but God gave people two laws. One was the law, the law by which one realizes sin, and the other was the law of life.

When Moses was called before God on Mount Sinai, God gave him two laws at the same time. He received the law and the commandments, counted as 613. If one says that Moses received only the law and came down from Mount Sinai, that is a great mistake. What Moses received there together with it was the

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Tabernacle. God spoke of all the furnishings of the Tabernacle and of the sacrifice offered by bringing the sacrificial offering. He told them to offer the grain offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offering, and He said that a person who, seen by the law, had sinned had to bring without fail a clean animal without blemish, lay his hands on it to pass on his sin, cut its throat, collect the blood, and give it to the priest.

God had the offering skinned and cut into pieces, its entrails and legs washed with water, and all of it burned on the altar by the priest to offer it as a burnt offering. In God's sacrifice, an animal without blemish must without fail receive the laying on of hands and be killed. It must be offered before God together with its fat, and the priest must without fail offer that sacrifice on one's behalf. God ordained it so that one passes on one's own sin by laying one's own hands on it, but the priest must without fail offer the sacrifice before God on one's behalf for one to receive the remission of sins. So God gave Moses the law, the commandments, and the law of sacrifice of the Tabernacle together. Moses received them and gave them to the people of Israel, and today they have been given to you and me as well.

Before we believe in Jesus, we realize sin through the law. "Do not murder" means that we are human beings who murder. You are a human being who commits adultery, a human being who steals, a human being who serves other gods before Me, a human being who takes My name in vain, a human being who cannot keep the Sabbath, a human being who cannot honor his parents—in this way the law teaches us our sins. And what He gave together with it is Jesus Christ. He gave Jesus Christ together with it so that we may receive the remission of sins.

God gave the law and Jesus Christ, and the law was not given so that we may keep it and obtain salvation, but so that we may realize and know sin. The Bible says, "*By the law is the*

knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). Ordinary people try to obtain salvation by keeping the law, but the law was not given so that we may obtain salvation in that way. It was given so that we may know ourselves. If there is a mirror, we look at our face in it and see what is smeared on our face. A dog does not know that something dirty on its mouth is dirty because it likes it, but a person, when he sees it with his eyes, knows that it is dirty. In the same way, the law makes us realize and know our sins. Then what does Jesus Christ do for us? He has shown us mercy. Mercy is having pity. Because He had pity, He Himself removed our sins.

The reason Jesus received baptism from John

In the Old Testament there was the high priest, who passed on the sins of the people of Israel once, on the tenth day of the seventh month. How is it done in the New Testament? Jesus, the Son of God, was born on this earth. What was the very first thing Jesus did in His public ministry after coming to this earth? It was receiving baptism from John. Then why did He receive baptism? Let us look at the word. *"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:13–17).*

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Jesus received baptism from John. Why did He receive baptism? Was it because He was humble? Was it to become the same as men? Here is clearly the reason Jesus received baptism. The Bible recorded this about John the Baptist. *"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:11–14)*.

If one knows this word, one comes to know the whole Old Testament. Jesus said, *"Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11)*, and this means that God sent John the Baptist as the representative of mankind. He said, *"He who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11)*. It means that however great a human being may be, he is smaller than a child of God. And He said, *"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12)*. It means that if one believes that John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus and our sins passed on to Jesus, one enters the kingdom of heaven. He said, *"All the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:13)*. It means that all the prophecies of the prophets, the books of prophecy, and the books of the law before Jesus Christ came were until John. It means that John is the last prophet, the last representative of mankind, the greatest of the prophets of the Old Testament, and the foremost even among the high priests. He is a prophet and high priest greater than the prophet Isaiah, the prophet Ezekiel, or the prophet Daniel. Why is that? It is because in the Old Testament the family of Aaron

was the family of the high priest, and John the Baptist came as a descendant of Zacharias, of the family of the high priest. That is why He said, *"All the prophets and the law prophesied until John."*

All the prophecies of the Old Testament point to Jesus. The prophesied Jesus came in the New Testament. He was born in a manger in Bethlehem. God became a man and came to this earth. The Savior came. When the Savior turned thirty, John the Baptist, who had been sent six months ahead of Him, also turned thirty. John was one born in the family of Aaron the high priest, and Jesus was born as a descendant of David through the tribe of Judah. Seen in the flesh, they were of the family of the high priest and of the royal family. These two met at the Jordan River when they turned thirty.

Why did Jesus have to come to the Jordan River and receive baptism? Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River, the river of death, in order to save from sin all the sinners of this world, you and me, who are born, commit sin, and cannot but go to hell. Just as sinners in the Old Testament laid their hands on the offering and passed on their sins, John, the representative of mankind, gave baptism to Jesus. Jesus received baptism at the Jordan River in order to remove your sins and mine. Placing the hands on the head, putting the person into the water, and lifting him up out of it is baptisma (βάπτισμα), that is, baptism. Since the sins that were in us passed on to Jesus through the baptism John gave, what happened? Our sins were gone. The One who had sin transferred to Him had to die. Jesus, who had the sins of sinners transferred to Him in their place, had to die and rise again in order to give us life. He had to ascend to the right hand of the throne of God. That is why Jesus received baptism.

Jesus received baptism from John in order to have all our sins, the sins of these sinners, transferred to Him without leaving even

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one, to receive the judgment Himself in our place, and to have pity on you and me and save us. When Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, it was because He wanted to show this: "You give Me baptism and pass on all the sins of mankind; I will receive baptism from you and have all the sins of mankind transferred to Me, receive the punishment for sin, be nailed to the Cross and die in their place, and rise again, and so wash it all away and make them people without sin; this is the love with which I love you." That is why Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist.

When Jesus received baptism and came up from the water, the heavens were opened, the Spirit of God descended like a dove and alighted upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, saying, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)*. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16)*. *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)*. The words He spoke in this way all come out of here. In *"thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, "Thus" is houtos (οὕτως) in Greek, which means most appropriately, most fittingly, in this way without which it cannot be done. In this way of Jesus receiving baptism from John the Baptist—just as in the Old Testament, on one day of the year, the tenth day of the seventh month, two sacrificial offerings were brought before God, and one had all the sins of the whole people of Israel passed on to it, and on the other Aaron laid his hands before the people and the sins of the whole nation passed on to it—Jesus came to this earth as the sacrificial offering of atonement that removes all the sins of mankind. The word our Lord spoke is this: "I have come to bear the sin of

mankind; I must bear all sins through you; having all sins transferred to Me in this way of receiving baptism is most fitting; in order to say that people have no sin, in order to make them children of God by believing in Me, I must receive baptism; only when I receive baptism can you say that you have no sin and call God the Father 'Father'; it cannot be done except in this way; unless it is in this way of having the sin of mankind transferred to Me through you, even those who will believe in Me in the future cannot all become righteous, so I must receive baptism from you." That is why Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist.

"Righteousness" is dikaiosyne (δικαιοσύνη) in Greek, and it refers to the righteousness of God. He said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and here righteousness is the right work of God, who saved us. It said that God the Father's setting up John the Baptist and Jesus and having all the sins of mankind pass on through the arm of John the Baptist by the laying on of hands was the most right thing, by which He loved us. This is the love of God. That is why Jesus received baptism. It is fair. It means that Jesus, by having sin transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John and dying on the Cross, saved us very fairly, fittingly, and appropriately. Our God saved you and me from sin in this way. This is precisely the way of God.

The Bible recorded that Jesus bore all your sins and mine by receiving baptism from John. When He said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, John allowed it. John the Baptist, as the high priest, passed on all the sins of mankind by laying his hands on Him. We do not know when this earth will end, but the sins of all these people, who cannot but be sinners in this world and who commit sin in the flesh from birth until death, passed on through

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his arm. All sins passed on. When God speaks of the world, He does not mean all the things of the world, but you and me, who live among all things and resemble the image of God. All the sins of all people passed on to Jesus. Jesus received baptism in order to save you and me, in order to make us without sin, in order to receive the judgment in place of you and me, in order to have sin transferred to Him.

And when Jesus came up from the water, the gate of heaven opened and God the Father said, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)*. It means: "My Son has borne all the sin of mankind; because My Son has had the sin of mankind transferred to Him, He goes to the Cross to receive the judgment; My Son has obeyed My will." God the Father wanted to send His only begotten Son into this world and save all the people of the world from all their sins. God the Father sent Jesus to this earth with such a will; what would have happened if Jesus had said no? You and I would have gone to hell. But Jesus accepted the Father's will and received baptism from John the Baptist.

Dear fellow believers, have your sins and mine passed on? All sins have passed on. All sins are the sins we commit from the time we are born on this earth until we die. It said that Jesus had all our sins transferred to Him. Then are the sins you and I committed from the time we were born from our mother's womb until the age of twenty included in all sins? They are included. It means that Jesus did not remove only our sins but bore all the sins of the people of the whole world. This is all righteousness, that is, His bearing all the sins of all people. God so loved the world.

Only the person who believes that Jesus bore his sins when He received baptism, and that Jesus is his Savior and his God, obtains salvation and goes to heaven. But on God's side, He bore

the sins of every single person in this world without leaving out even one. Therefore, heaven is a place one goes to by faith. For the one who believes it is heaven, and for the one who does not believe it is hell. One goes to heaven not by works but through faith. The way of God is realized by the honest. The person who truly admits what he is, who honestly admits himself and admits God's salvation, saying, "God, I am a sinner. I am a person who cannot but go to hell. I am a person who commits sin until I die. But I believe that our Lord received baptism from John for me and bore my sins"—this person goes to heaven.

Your sins and mine passed on to Jesus Christ. The very first thing Jesus did in His public ministry was to receive baptism. Jesus' receiving baptism was absolutely not because Jesus was humble. He said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. His receiving baptism is a tremendously important matter. Until the age of twenty-nine, Jesus helped with the work of His father in the flesh. His father in the flesh, Joseph, was a carpenter. When Jesus turned thirty, He went to the bank of the Jordan River. John the Baptist was giving people the baptism of repentance. The servant of God speaks clearly. When Jesus told him to give Him baptism, John tried to prevent Him, saying, *"I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" (Matthew 3:14)*.

The word baptism has two meanings. One meaning is turning around. Baptism is used in the sense of turning back to God after serving foreign gods. The other is the baptism that washes away sin. Jesus' receiving baptism from John was a baptism to have all your sins and mine transferred to Him and wash them away, whereas ordinary people coming to John the Baptist and receiving baptism was something received as a sign that they were turning back to God after not believing in God and believing in other gods. So among those who have received

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baptism in this world there are two kinds of people. There are people who receive baptism as a sign that they believe in God as their Savior and turn back to God, and there are people who receive baptism because they believe in their hearts that all their sins passed on to Jesus when Jesus received baptism. This is spiritual circumcision.

"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Jesus bore all your sins and mine by receiving baptism from John. Let us read the word to see whether Jesus bore all our sins. *"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29)*. The day after Jesus publicly received baptism at the Jordan River and had all your sins and mine, all the sins of this world, transferred to Him through John's baptism, John the Baptist, who had given Jesus baptism, cried out to the people: Behold, that Jesus is the very Lamb of God, and He is the very One who has borne the sin of the world.

If Jesus had not had the sin of the world transferred to Him when He received baptism, He could not have borne the sin of the world. This word, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, could not have been recorded. Without having all the sin of the world transferred to Him through John the Baptist, how could Jesus say that He Himself bore the sin of the world? God is One who cannot lie. Because He Himself received baptism from John, He bore all your sins and mine. Because He bore them, He became the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Bearing the sin of the world, where does He go? He goes to the Cross. The life of Jesus is divided into His private

life and His public ministry; His private life is regarded as up to the age of twenty-nine, and His public ministry from the age of thirty to thirty-three. Since Jesus, having had the sins of all people transferred to Him very righteously and very fittingly, saved those who believe in Him by dying in their place, this was a righteous thing.

"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). There is only this one verse that records this so concretely. This word is what John the Baptist testified. He testified of it because John the Baptist himself had given the baptism. The scene of Jesus receiving baptism is also recorded precisely in the Gospel of Matthew. Why is that? It is because Matthew recorded this Scripture in order to testify that Jesus is the King and the Savior of mankind. That is why it says, *"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1)*. Matthew wrote this Gospel in order to record that whoever believes that Jesus Christ received baptism from John, had all sin transferred to Him, and died on the Cross in his place and saved him becomes a descendant of Abraham. So Matthew, the disciple of Jesus, records concretely that Jesus received baptism. He records precisely why He received baptism and for what reason He received it. It says that Jesus received baptism in order to fulfill all righteousness, in order to make all people without sin. That He received baptism means that He had all sins transferred to Him. How did He receive it? He received it most fittingly, most appropriately, in the right way. It records that He received baptism from John because, except in this way of Jesus receiving baptism, He could not have borne all the sin of mankind.

Jesus received baptism and had all the sins of mankind transferred to Him, and then, going about for three years, He told an adulterous woman, blind people, and lame people that their

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sins were remitted. To the woman caught in the act of adultery, Jesus said, *"Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more" (John 8:11)*. Why is that? It is because our Lord had all the sins of this world transferred to Himself through the baptism of John the Baptist. So He Himself, who had received baptism, had to receive the judgment, and if there was sin, the sin was in His own body, and these people had no sin. Even the woman caught in the act of adultery had no sin. It was only that, because this woman had not met Jesus and did not believe, she thought she was a sinner and was trembling with fear because of those who were about to pick up stones and strike her according to the law. To that woman Jesus said that He did not condemn her either, and said, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12)*.

"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). It says to behold. We, too, must see the sin of the world. From where to where is the sin of the world? The Lord said, *"I am the Alpha and the Omega" (Revelation 1:8)*. Our Lord is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. There are our Lord's coming to this earth, the prophecy of the Old Testament, His receiving baptism, and His death on the Cross. Jesus' receiving baptism is His bearing all the sin of mankind. It means that about two thousand years ago, Jesus bore as the sin of the world all the sins of you and me, who would be born after that, the sins of the people born in between, and the sins of all the people from Adam in the Old Testament until the last day of the earth.

It said the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Dear fellow believers, do you commit sin in the world, or not? You do. How can a human being who will commit sin tomorrow and the day after tomorrow in the world say that he is different from those people? Do not make only the outside glossy while

the inside is truly swarming with evil. Before God, all are the same. “I am truly a sinner. I cannot but go to hell. But the Lord has made such a person justified and sent him home.” Our God has justified sinners. Do you and I, born with sin from our mother’s womb, commit sin until the age of twelve? Have those sins passed on to Jesus? They have. The sins we commit one by one after being born into this world are the sin of the world; do you think something else is the sin of the world? All the sins we commit in thought, in heart, and in deed are the sin of the world. You and I are born from our mother’s womb into this earth, pass through infancy, pass through childhood, and come to adolescence, youth, middle age, and old age. Just as it was said that life is having four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs at night, being born like this, living, and then departing is precisely the world, and the sins one commits while living a whole lifetime here are the sin of the world.

Our Lord bore this sin of the world. If you cannot admit that Jesus bore the sin of the world when He received baptism from John the Baptist, you still have sin even though you believe in Jesus. If you sin tomorrow, you have sin. Do not say that you have never heard such a thing. The Bible is the truth. In the Old and New Testaments, everything has its counterpart. The Bible is a chain of links. When one is untied, all are untied. If you do not know this one thing, that the sin of the world passed on when Jesus received baptism, then when you sin again tomorrow, you are a sinner again. If you sin again, you are a sinner, and you are a sinner every day. If you do not believe that Jesus bore the sin of the world with His baptism, even if you say you believe in Jesus, you are still a sinner.

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Being born again of water and the Spirit

The apostles believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But after that, the church became the religion of the state, and there was a dark age in which people were kept from reading the Bible for a long time. Of such things the Lord said, *"Who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15)*. After the Reformation, things came back as far as the point that one becomes righteous by believing, but the doctrine of sanctification, that after believing one must wash away sins daily and gradually become holy, took its place, and on top of that, what is called theology was built. So people preach and believe in Jesus without knowing that the sin of the world passed on when Jesus received baptism. Even while believing in Jesus, they remain with sin.

So some people publish books with such titles as whether one is a sinner even if one believes, whether one is still a debtor after paying off what one owed, and whether one is still a sinner after believing in Jesus in order to receive the remission of sins. Jesus said that only by being born of water and the Spirit can one enter the kingdom of God. Then what is being born of water and the Spirit? Jesus' receiving baptism from John is the water. What role does water play? It plays the role of washing away sin. If rain does not fall on this world, it smells and the air is dirty, so that one cannot live. Without water, people cannot live. God sends rain in due season, cleans the air of the whole earth, and beautifully protects this world. Water has the function of washing, and fire has the function of judgment. In fire something remains, but in water nothing remains. After Jesus received baptism, no sin remained in this world. That is why He received baptism. Jesus became the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

In this age there are many people who believe in Jesus, but they must know the truth of the blessing of being born again of water and the Spirit. It is said that while believing in Jesus one is born again in a dream, in the wind, or while praying, but where is there such a thing? The truth is certain. It is real. Because Jesus received baptism from John and bore sin, because our sins passed on to Jesus, because He went to the Cross bearing the sin of the world and received the judgment, we do not receive the judgment for sin. We have come to call God Father, have become righteous, and have become children of God. It says, *"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)*. It is done by faith. It says, *"With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10)*.

When Jesus received baptism, all my sins passed on. Jesus bore all my sins and received the judgment on the Cross and saved me. I believe. Believing in the heart brings salvation. It said that God gave salvation not by our works but through faith. It says, *"As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse" (Galatians 3:10)*. Those who are in works are under the curse. Saying that one receives blessing, becomes righteous, and goes to the kingdom of God by doing good deeds and doing something well is all being under the curse. God gave the law so that we may realize and know sin and, being placed under judgment, know that we are sinners; and together with the law, He gave *"the law of the Spirit of life" (Romans 8:2)*, by which we are born again of water and the Spirit. We must know and believe that Jesus received baptism from John and received the judgment and saved us, that God gave us the law and the law of sacrifice alike so that we may realize sin through the law and receive the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the

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water and the Spirit of Jesus and become children of God, and that this was God's will.

It said the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Dear fellow believers, is there the sin of the world? Has that sin passed on to Jesus Christ? Have the sins you committed ten years ago passed on to Jesus Christ? Have the sins you have committed until now passed on? They have. The sins one commits until death are the sin of the world. If you marry and have children, have your children's sins also passed on through the baptism Jesus received? They have.

The Passover, too, is a passing over. The judgment passes over. How does it pass over? Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John, and shed His blood and died on the Cross; when the blood of the Lamb of God was put on the lintel of the door, the angel of death came and could not judge the house with the blood on it but passed over it. Passover means passing over. He bore sin and shed His blood. It also speaks of circumcision. It is sin falling away. When we believe that our sins passed on when Jesus Christ received baptism from John, they fall right off. This is precisely the circumcision of the heart. The person who believes in his heart in Jesus Christ as his Savior, in the baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross, receives salvation. This is the faith of one who has received salvation. God demanded this faith and still demands it now. Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, finished it all while dying on the Cross. And three days after His death, He rose again and ascended to the right hand of the throne of God.

We are people who commit sin until we die. But your sins and mine have passed on to Jesus. Jesus has saved you and me. The question is whether we believe in our hearts. The question is whether we realize the truth. As He said, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32)*, we must

know. Only when we know do we believe. Believing unconditionally is superstition and blind faith. Saying only that if you believe in Jesus you will be blessed, healed of disease, and become rich is exactly the same as praying to idols to receive blessings. Saying only that if you believe in Jesus you receive blessings and that if you serve the church you are blessed many times over, without even knowing the truth, is a faith that seeks only blessings, and superstition.

When we believe in Jesus and enter the kingdom of God, we ask Him to call us; but if we ask Him to call us as sinners, what happens? Where does a sinner with sin go? He goes to hell. If one has sin, is one a child of God or a child of the devil? One is a child of the devil. He will say, "Go as you have said." Our God came to this earth in order to remove our sins, received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again. And He became the God of salvation to those who believe. Now He gives the Holy Spirit to those who believe in the water and the blood of Jesus. Do you believe that when Jesus received baptism, the sins of you and me and of all the people of this world passed on? Do you believe that the judgment Jesus received on the Cross was the judgment He received in place of the death that you and I were to die because of sin? The Holy Spirit stamps His seal of approval on the heart of the one who has this faith. He says, "You are My child; I will be with you until the end of the world; do not fear; I have overcome the world; this is the faith that overcomes the world, and believing in Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood, is faith."

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Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood

Let us look at the word. *"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (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. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one –ASV)" (1 John 5:4–8)*. It said that our Lord came into this world by water and blood. The Holy Spirit seals the one who believes that He came by water and blood. Therefore, the water and the blood—these are one. They came through Jesus.

It said that there are three that bear witness to our salvation. *"For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one" (1 John 5:8)*. Do you believe in the baptism Jesus Christ received from John? Do you believe in the blood of Jesus Christ? Even though Jesus bore our sins through His baptism, if He had not gone to the Cross and died, we would have to go before God and receive the judgment. That is why Jesus came by water and blood. The Spirit is the truth. That the Spirit is the truth means that He seals the hearts of those who believe in the water and the blood. Dear fellow believers, if one does not acknowledge the baptism Jesus received and believes only in the blood of the Cross, do one's sins disappear? Believing that way is not faith. Because such a person does not believe that his sins passed on when Jesus received baptism, he has sin in his heart. So the person who says he believes in Jesus but does not believe that He bore sin with His baptism goes to hell. *"(Many will say to me in that day, Lord,*

Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? –ASV). And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:22–23). In that way one is cast away.

So when we come to know Jesus, we must without fail know the truth. We must accept in our hearts and believe the blessing by which He caused us to be born again by water and blood, by water and the Spirit. But there are many people who believe only in the blood of the Cross. They are sinners. Is the Holy Spirit in their hearts? He is not.

Dear fellow believers, do you have sin, or not? You do not. Then, since you have no sin, will you sin recklessly? That is not so. Since you have no sin, will you not sin? That is not so either. Because we have lacking flesh, we always commit sin while we live in the world. It means that the Lord has borne all those sins. Lest we go to hell because of those sins, He received all the judgment. Then are we sinners, or righteous? We are righteous. Is there anything for which we must be judged? There is not. Jesus is our Savior and the Son of the living God.

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1). In the genealogy of Jesus Christ there is Tamar, who, as a daughter-in-law, bore a child by her father-in-law. Rahab, who was a harlot, also belongs to the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Several women appear in this genealogy, and a harlot appears and Gentiles appear. All of them became descendants of Abraham by faith and ancestors of Jesus Christ, the Son of David. They became people of God by faith, not by occupation or origin. They became so by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and believing that Jesus is their Savior. Then is there no water and blood in the Old Testament? That is not so. Crossing the Jordan River is precisely the water

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and the blood. The very word Hebrew means one who has crossed over the water. Because people do not know this, they are sinners every day even though they believe in Jesus every day.

Dear fellow believers, only those who have truly believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins are children of God. Jesus Christ is the Savior of you and me. Before the world becomes harder, we must look not at our circumstances but at our own hearts. If one says, "God, I am a sinner who cannot but die, cannot but go to hell, and cannot but commit sin. Please save me. I am a sinner," Jesus says that He has saved him with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. I believe. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

The one who believes honestly receives salvation

Not every chapel is the temple of God. The temple is the heart of a person who has received the remission of sins. What is built of bricks is just a building and a warehouse. Even if one studies theology for a hundred years, even if one comes having done all the theology of the whole world, it is useless if one does not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Do famous theologians speak of this gospel? They do not. They only say that one is simply born again.

Dear fellow believers, have you received the remission of sins in your hearts? Do you believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit? We must be honest before God. "I cannot but commit sin. But Jesus received baptism from John and died on the Cross and saved me. I believe." The one who believes honestly like that receives salvation. The one who believes like that has received salvation. After receiving salvation, one must

grow. A little child must grow. If you hear the word and grow for just one year, you will become a tremendous person. You will become a worker and an evangelist. One who truly believes is used within the Church of God. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Receive the kingdom of God like a little child

< Luke 18:15–17 >

“Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to Him and said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’”

It is easy to think that in order to receive something precious, one must have the qualifications to match it. So even when we speak of the kingdom of God, we may first reckon how much a person has learned and how long he has served. But Jesus called near the little children whom people had brought, and spoke of the kingdom of God. Before children who can put forward no merit at all, we come to learn with what heart we must receive what God gives.

The infants brought in the hope of receiving help

“Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them” (Luke 18:15). People brought their infants and came to Jesus. What

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they hoped for was that Jesus would touch the children. The infants could not explain any labor of their own or promise to give something to the Lord, but people brought those children to the Lord. At the start of this scene, rather than any qualification the children had proved, there lies the heart that hoped for help from Jesus.

But the disciples saw this and rebuked them. Since the text does not explain in detail what reason the disciples had in mind, we cannot say that we know their hearts fully. What is clear is the fact that the disciples' rebuke was heard at the place where people were coming to Jesus. Even the disciples, who were near the Lord, could block by their own judgment the people whom the Lord would receive.

We, too, when someone comes to hear the word, may first look at that person's circumstances. We must examine whether we have an attitude of not regarding someone as a person who can come to the Lord because he knows little or cannot yet speak properly. What we must look at before how mature that person seems is the heart of the Lord. The reason we must open the way to hear the word of salvation even to a person who looks lacking in our eyes is that the One who bestows grace is Jesus.

Those whom Jesus called near

"Jesus called them to Him and said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God'" (Luke 18:16). The Lord called the children and had them come near. After the scene where the disciples rebuked them, Jesus' call followed, and the Lord commanded that the children be allowed to come and not be hindered. The word that the kingdom of God belongs to such as these corrects the

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judgment the disciples had made. The Lord is not One who keeps near only people with power or position and shares the blessing of the kingdom with them.

Here we must not pass over the very existence of the children. Jesus did not speak of the children merely as a tool for giving a lesson to adults, but actually called them near. Therefore, we, too, must not regard as a small thing the work of caring for children and letting them hear the word of God. We must not disregard them for the reason that they are still in the process of learning, but must pay attention to them, explaining the Lord's love and salvation so that the children can understand.

At the same time, the Lord speaks through this scene to us adults as well. As our experience accumulates, there are times when we hold firmly to our own judgment and try to accept even the word God has spoken only if it fits that judgment. But it is not that we can believe the work by which God saves us only after we have first accomplished it ourselves or evaluated all of it. When we acknowledge that we are people who need the grace God gives, we come down from the place where we put forward our own qualifications and hear the Lord's call.

The heart that accepts the kingdom of God

"Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it" (Luke 18:17). Jesus said that whoever it may be, one must receive the kingdom of God as a little child. This word does not mean that a young age itself is the merit of salvation. Nor is it a teaching to cast off the responsibilities of an adult and live without thinking. It means to accept the kingdom God gives by believing His word, without trying to make it oneself or buy it at a price.

The same heart is needed concerning salvation as well. Even if, after we have committed sin, we resolve to be perfect from now on, we cannot remove the sins we have already committed, nor can we guarantee that we will be without fault for our whole lives. God Himself accomplished the salvation that we, who are like this, cannot make, and set it before us, telling us to receive it. The salvation we must accept just as the word conveys it is this. When Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth and received baptism from John at the Jordan River, He had all the sins of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all, and not only our past sins and present sins but even all the sins we will commit as we live from now on were passed on to the Lord at that time.

Because He bore sin in this way, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment that we sinners were to receive, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. That we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit means that we accept as our own the salvation the Lord has accomplished in this way. Because we know that He bore sin with His baptism and paid the price of that sin on the Cross, we can rely on Jesus without adding our own merit in order to obtain the remission of sins.

To accept does not mean to believe just anything. The object of faith is not every claim people make, but God, who saved us, and His word. Asking about a verse one does not understand and learning the word further is not contrary to faith, either. Rather than condemning someone as not having a heart like a little child because he asked a question, we must help him confirm together in the word what God has accomplished. The more we know the word of the Lord, the clearer the One we are to rely on becomes.

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The kingdom of God that He gives to those who want it

The word that the kingdom of God belongs to such as these also means that God gives that kingdom to those who want it. The Lord also said, *"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12)*. It means that whoever wants the salvation God has accomplished and takes hold of it possesses that kingdom. If, while saying that we know how precious the kingdom of God is, we cannot actually believe the fact that God gives it, we keep looking only at our own lack. When we know that God is One who gives to those who want it, we can receive it with thanks, not because we have many qualifications, but because He gives it by grace.

A person who receives by faith does not think that he need not learn anything. Because the life he received as a gift is precious, he grows within the word and learns the things that please the Savior. The labor of serving the gospel and helping neighbors also becomes not a price paid to obtain the kingdom, but work done in thanks for the grace already received. Therefore, we must not make how much we have worked the standard for measuring another person's qualification for salvation.

Also, when a weak person seeks the Lord's grace, let us not set up human conditions before him. The work of explaining the gospel in detail and making clearly known that the object of faith is Jesus is necessary, but we must not act as if one could go to the Lord only after first receiving our approval. Jesus, who called the little children near, has already shown whose word we must follow. The church must become the place where we hear that call together and preach it to those who need it.

To us, who used to think that in order to receive something precious one must have the qualifications to match it, the Lord showed the little children. What we need before the kingdom of God is not to pile up more of a record to put forward, but a heart that receives the word of the Lord, who accomplished salvation and tells us to receive it. Remembering the heart with which Jesus called the little children, let us, too, receive grace with thanks. And please let the person who hesitates, thinking his own qualifications are lacking, hear the call of the Lord, who drew the children near. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Who can be saved?

< Luke 18:18–27 >

“Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ So Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not bear false witness,” “Honor your father and your mother.”’ And he said, ‘All these things I have kept from my youth.’ So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, ‘You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’ And those who heard it said, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But He said, ‘The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.’”

The word that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God

The Lord said, *“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:25)*. It means that it is that hard for those who have

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riches to enter the kingdom of God. Then, is there really not a single rich person in heaven? Must the rich of this world not believe in Jesus? Must they not be saved from sin? The Bible recorded that it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Nevertheless, in this world there are actually many people who, though rich, received the remission of sins and went to heaven.

The rich man our Lord spoke of refers to people who are rich in heart. This word was actually spoken to the rich young man, and this man, who asked, *"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18),* was a person who had the faith of a sinner under the law, whose faith was bound to his own deeds.

It is hard for a person rich in heart to be saved

Jesus said, *"Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God" (Luke 18:19)*. As for why Jesus said such a word here, it was because, as this ruler saw it, Jesus was merely a good teacher. This rich ruler saw Jesus that way, as one of the teachers respected by people in this world. That is why Jesus said that no one is good but God alone, that there is absolutely no good part in man. Do you, too, see Jesus only as a man? Jesus is God. He is also the Son of God the Father.

Our Lord said to this rich young man, *"You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother'" (Luke 18:20)*. Then this rich young man says that he has kept all the commandments. So this man is saying that in deeds he kept them all. He is saying that he actually did not commit adultery, did not murder, did not steal, did not bear false witness in deed, and honored his parents well.

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Yet our Lord rather said, *"You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Luke 18:22)*. *"When he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich" (Luke 18:23)*. That is why Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. What Jesus said to this young man was, in short, that one must be poor in heart. It means that for a person whose heart is full of the things of the world, the salvation of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that our Lord gives could not enter his heart. Nor was there any room inside him for our Lord's word of the remission of sins, which gives life. This man was rich physically and rich in deeds as well. He was a person who had much of his own righteousness. So there was no way this person would accept that Jesus is the Savior, nor did he have the eyes to recognize Him. When his heart was already full of everything, could Jesus have entered that heart? Could this word of the gospel—that Jesus, with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, unilaterally saved you, a wicked sinner, from all the sins of the world—have entered inside him?

This young man was placing the matter of his remission of sins and eternal life within his own deeds. But Jesus, in saving this man, placed the basis of His love not in the man's deeds but in the salvation He accomplished with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, and He loved that soul of a sinner and saved him from all sins. Their focuses were different from each other. This young man understood that if he did many good things and kept God's commandments well, he would someday obtain eternal life, and so he was a person striving to live that way, whereas Jesus was the exact opposite.

All people, living in this world, have lost their own righteousness and have not a single good thing. Jesus wanted to

say that no one is good but God alone, and that human beings are all evil, all sinners, and all lacking. But this young man's focus was different from Jesus'. He was rich in riches, and in heart, too, he was a rich man full of hypocrisy from his own rightness. That is why a person rich in heart, a person with much of his own righteousness, could not enter heaven, just as that big camel cannot go through the eye of a needle. But the Lord said, *"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27)*. By one's own righteousness, by one's goodness, by keeping the commandments well, there is no one who can enter heaven. Nevertheless, He said that God can do it.

The Lord truly came to this earth for this rich young man, for this wicked person, and by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, at the Jordan River, He had all sins transferred to Him and thereby made him sinless, and He died on the Cross, receiving in his place the judgment this young man was to receive before God because of his sins. Our God saved all people in this way, whether rich or poor, wicked or ignorant of themselves.

There is no true goodness in man

Do all the people in this world commit sin until they die, or not? They commit sin until they die. Do you believe that you yourself, and I myself, commit sin until we die? Or do you believe that you will not commit sin from now on? It is right to believe that you commit sin. Socrates said, "Know yourself," and man is such that he commits sin from the time he is born until he dies. So man is a poor person who has no goodness and not a single rightness before God. Therefore, we must believe that Jesus saved us with the baptism He received from John and

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the blood of the Cross. Truly, man has nothing to boast of by his own deeds.

The Lord says, *"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26)*. By believing the fact that the Lord bore all our sins with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, we can be saved from all sins, praise God, and rejoice. And we can boast of the Lord, call the Lord Lord, give thanks, and say before people, "I have no sin." Otherwise, by oneself, one cannot say those words, "I have no sin; I am righteous." How do we know? Though a person commits sin from birth until death, a person who does not know himself well swears before God, "I will never commit such a sin again. If You will just remit this one sin, I will not do this from next time on."

But, dear fellow believers, that is said because one does not know oneself. If we know ourselves, we cannot help but say that we give thanks for saving such a person as me. *"Let God be true but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4)*. If we know and realize this word that no one is good but God alone, I believe that our faith will grow tremendously in a one-to-one relationship with the Lord and that we will live a bright life of faith.

We human beings have no true goodness, and if there is any, there is only false goodness. It is hypocrisy. It means that there is no goodness. Then someone may ask, "People do good things as they live; if that is not goodness, what is it?" That is hypocrisy. It is falsehood. When we look at this word that no one is good but God alone, it is right. Can a person truly give up his life for another person and give up everything he has for the benefit of another person? He does so for himself and for the world that will perish; there is no one who, because he himself is truly good, can give up everything he has for such a matter that has nothing

to do with him. People do good because it has something to do with themselves.

A little while ago, when I asked, "Is man one who commits sin from birth until death?" the answer was that he commits sin from birth until death. That is the right question and the right answer. If so, if Jesus had not had all the sins that we commit until we die transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, we could not be saved. Even though we have been saved now, if the Lord had not borne even those sins—the sins we will commit again as we go on living, the sins we commit until our breath stops—we could not be saved, nor could we say that we have been saved.

But because our Lord had all the sins that you and I commit until we die transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, He became our perfect Savior. If so, we must acknowledge that God alone is good. *"'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' And those who heard it said, 'Who then can be saved?' But He said, 'The things which are impossible with men are possible with God'" (Luke 18:25–27).* It means that as far as man is concerned, there is no one who can be saved by not committing sin, by keeping the law of God, or by having perfect deeds.

But He says that with God it is possible. Jesus came to this earth and saved you and me from all the sins of the world—that is, from original sin, actual sins, and future sins—with the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River and the blood of the Cross. Quietly savor for a moment that love with which He saved us. Though no one knows what sins a person will commit in the future, He knew even those sins and had them all transferred to Him with the baptism He received, and saved us from all the sins of the world. And since the covenant made with

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my Lord never changes, when we know the Lord's salvation—how certain and unchanging a salvation it is—we cannot help but give thanks. The Lord, by saving us with the baptism He received at the Jordan River and the blood of the Cross, made us able to enter heaven. We will die once after living on this earth, and the one who takes possession of this by faith enters heaven. Therefore, we who believe in the baptism Jesus received and His blood have been saved from all the sins of the world and have become those who enter heaven. When we think of all this grace of God, it is a remission of sins for which we are thankful and which is so very precious.

This gospel could not be bought even with riches. Let us suppose that some rich man comes before Jesus and says, "I will give You many riches. Save me. I will give You these riches, so with them give relief to all the poor, and by that merit send me to heaven and let me obtain eternal life." Rich people who tried to obtain eternal life with such a heart were not approved by Jesus, and went to hell because of the lack of their faith. But because God's salvation is so precious, man cannot do it, but God accomplished it. We human beings must acknowledge that we are those who go against God until we die.

Those who claim to believe well oppose Jesus

Looking at the Old Testament, the people of Israel went against God until their nation was destroyed, and in the New Testament era, too, Jesus came, but those who went against Him were the ones who claimed to believe in God. Who were the people who said to crucify Jesus? They were these three groups—the chief priests, the Pharisees, and the scribes—the highest upper class and the leading class of that nation, who were

believing in God well at that time. When one listened to the teaching Jesus spoke, it was not a word of the earth. It was the word of the kingdom of heaven. So the poor in heart believed. Those who had nothing in this world, the sick, the widows, and also many women and men believed.

Yet this leading class handed Jesus over to be crucified. They released Barabbas and handed Jesus over to be crucified. And as if that were not enough, they incited the people and made them say, *"His blood be on us and on our children" (Matthew 27:25)*. Let us look at the chief priests, the Pharisees, and the scribes. The chief priests are the leaders of the law of God. These people offer the sacrifice once every year and judge all the affairs of the nation of Israel. That is, they hold trials. The chief priests were people who believed that they had in themselves the way by which the sins of others and their own sins could be remitted at any time. Also, the Pharisees thought that they had kept the law well and kept it from being corrupted and had kept the word of God well—that not only had they themselves kept it, but they had taken the lead in making others keep it as well—and that therefore they had merit. The scribes are the powerful. They were those who had their own rightness that, while holding power, they had believed in God well and protected that nation well. So these three kinds of people were all rich in heart.

These scribes, Pharisees, and chief priests rejected Jesus. In John chapter 3, Nicodemus, who was one of the Pharisees and a representative of them, appears. Nicodemus was a leader in power and religion. That man was a person who was seeking God, and he was waiting for the Messiah. But even this man did not know that Jesus was the Son of God and the Savior. So he just called Jesus Teacher. But Jesus explained to him with the word of the Old Testament, *"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)*. So

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later Nicodemus was born again, and when Jesus died on the Cross, he took part in the work of taking Jesus' body down from the cross and burying it. Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee—this man was a person who was seeking God. Is Jesus really merely a man, or is He God? He is God. Though in His very nature He was in the form of God, He came to this earth clothed in the form of a man and saved people.

The people who recognized Jesus as God, who recognized Him as the Savior—such people were those who had nothing to be proud of in themselves. Only those who had not the slightest thing to be proud of recognized Jesus and were saved by believing in the baptism of the washing away of sins that Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross.

The scribes, the Pharisees, and the chief priests were those who had many things to be proud of in themselves. In this age, too, people who have many things to be proud of in themselves agree up to the point that Jesus is the Savior. They even agree up to the point that if one believes in Jesus, one has no sin. But they cannot agree that Jesus removed all sins with the water and the blood. Why is that? Because they do not know. Because they do not know the truth that Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River in order to bear the sin of mankind. So they believe only in the blood of Jesus. They say that all sins were removed only by the blood. But the only truth of salvation is that Jesus, by receiving baptism from John for sinners, had all the sin of mankind, all the sins of each person, transferred to Him, and by receiving the judgment on the Cross, removed all that sin.

People who believe only in the blood of Jesus are people with much of their own righteousness. Jesus did not save us by the blood alone, but saved us with the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River and the blood of the Cross. But a person with much of his own righteousness does not acknowledge the

baptism of the covenant that Jesus received in order to bear the sin of mankind, and the blood of the covenant on the Cross. In the Old Testament, *"Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat" (Leviticus 16:21)*, and it was sent away. Even today, people who believe in Jesus but have much of their own righteousness—clergy, people who give many offerings, people who hold high offices, these leading classes who say they attend church—do not believe in the baptism of the covenant that Jesus received from John, just like the laying on of hands on the sacrificial goat in the Old Testament, in order to save us sinners from all the sins of the world, and so they are not born again. A person with such a faith is like that because wealth is piled up in his heart. If one is to believe in Jesus, one must have no pride or goodness of one's own, and only when one has none does one accept the salvation Jesus accomplished with the water and the blood.

If we are to become the poor in spirit, only when we know how lacking we are and how many sins we will commit in the future, too, can we fully accept Jesus as the Savior and accept what Jesus has done. But people who say, "I am confident that I will hardly commit sin from now on," are modern-day Pharisees and those who oppose Jesus.

Another group are those who think that because they hold a high position in a denomination, because they have built up much merit in the visible, institutional church, and because, even if they have sin, they have built up much merit before Jesus, they go to heaven. Such people are not born again and go to hell. But Jesus removed even the sins of this person with the baptism He received from John and His blood. All one has to do is believe. To receive the salvation of eternal life, one must believe in the

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baptism Jesus received and the Cross. Believing in only one thing, the blood of the Cross, is not enough.

The Bible says, *"Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead" (Ecclesiastes 9:3)*. Dear fellow believers, think about it. Think about how you were born from your mother's womb and lived without sense, and then later came to your senses, and about how you have lived until now. Have you not lived until now truly thinking mad thoughts and doing mad deeds? Is there perhaps someone who would say, "That is you, not me"? Of course, there may be some who would say so. But such a person, since he has not believed before God that his sins were passed on to Jesus through the baptism Jesus received from John, is still a sinner, and since he does not believe in the punishment of the Cross of Jesus, he will receive punishment in the future.

Dear fellow believers, have you not harbored mad thoughts? Not only have you harbored mad thoughts, but have you not done mad deeds? It means that all our human lives are like that before God. From now on, too, will we not live committing sin, whatever sin it may be, until we die? Are you confident that you can live without committing sin? You are not. Then, do you know the fact that Jesus removed even all those sins and give thanks to Jesus? Such a person is precisely the one who is poor in spirit, and such a person is precisely the one who will be saved. And the One who saved such a person is our God. Just as He said that with men it is impossible but with God it is possible, God has saved us.

But to this rich young man, Jesus said to sell all that he had and distribute to the poor, and come and follow Him. At that time he was sorrowful in his heart. He said that he had done all the commandments: do not murder, do not steal, do not commit

adultery, honor your parents. Nevertheless, our Lord, knowing the heart of that rich young man, told him to sell all his riches and distribute to the poor and follow Him. This rich young man could refrain from committing murder in action, and could strive not to steal. It is not that he never did them at all. He also tried to honor his parents and tried not to commit adultery. Nevertheless, in the heart of this rich young man, riches had become his god, so though he said he lived keeping the law of God, in reality he was not following the word of God but following these riches. Jesus knew that fact well, and that is why He told him to sell all his riches and distribute to the poor and after that to follow Him. It is a word that says: you have not believed in God; you are not following God; nor are you keeping the law for God's sake; therefore you cannot go to heaven; unless you cast away that wealth in your heart, you can never come to heaven, nor obtain eternal life, nor obtain salvation. Nevertheless, it means: you cannot do it, but if you discover yourself and realize the fact that the riches you truly regarded as God in your heart are not God, and want to believe in the true God, you, too, can be saved. That is why our Lord said to believe in the baptism Jesus received and His blood.

The water and the blood of Jesus remitted the sin of the world

There are many people in this world. But do you actually believe in God, or do you believe in riches as a god, like this rich young man? The problem lies here. If we believe in God, the wealth we have is nothing. As long as we only use this wealth well, like a good steward, this wealth never becomes sin before God. But if we think of this wealth as God and believe in it as

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God, this wealth becomes an idol. In every person's heart there is the wealth of the world. People pursue the wealth of the world. But if we truly want to follow God, riches are nothing. We must listen to the word of God that says, *"The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine" (Haggai 2:8)*. Because all this is God's and is what God has entrusted to us, we merely manage it. And if we believe in God as God, we must submit before the written word of God. When the word says, "You are a sinner," we say, "I am such a person," and when it says, "You are one who commits sin until you die; you are one who harbors a mad heart and does mad deeds until you die, and then dies," we say, "I am such a person."

In the word it says, *"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots?" (Jeremiah 13:23)*. This word means that because I was conceived as a sinner from the time I was conceived in my mother's womb, I cannot possibly change myself. Only when God saves me from all sins with the water of baptism and the blood of the Cross can I be saved. Lord, has Your salvation saved me? The water of the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross have saved me. Thank You. It is by becoming the poor in spirit and truly accepting with thanks the salvation the Lord gives that one is saved.

The word of the Bible that we have is the word of God, which the holy God recorded. It means that what He spoke through His servants before He came was recorded. So we call this word of the Bible the word of God. Because the holy word was recorded in writing, it is called the Holy Scriptures. Believing this word as the word of God is precisely believing in God.

Do you believe that Jesus, at the Jordan River, said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and received baptism from John and thereby saved us all? Do you believe that He washed away all your sins? Do you believe that

He received the judgment in your place on the Cross? Do you believe that Jesus died in our place and, having died, rose again in order to make us live again? And do you believe in that God who is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God and will come in the future? Then you are a saved person. Our Lord, in order to deliver us from all sins, saved us from all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross. We give thanks to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Eternal life that can be obtained neither by riches nor by deeds

< Luke 18:18–30 >

“Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ So Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not bear false witness,” “Honor your father and your mother.”’ And he said, ‘All these things I have kept from my youth.’ So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, ‘You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’ And those who heard it said, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But He said, ‘The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.’ Then Peter said, ‘See, we have left all and followed You.’ 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

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kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.'"

Even a person who has faithfully done what he had to do can feel uneasy in his heart in the face of eternal life. It seems that if he could find out what more he must do and fill that up as well, he could be at ease, but whether our deeds can guarantee eternal life is another matter. The question of the ruler who came to Jesus stood exactly at that place. The Lord exposed the deeds he put forward and the riches he relied on, and taught from whom one must receive salvation.

The ruler's question of what more he must do

"A certain ruler asked Him, saying, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'" (Luke 18:18). The ruler called Jesus Good Teacher and asked what he had to do. Jesus said, *"No one is good but One, that is, God" (Luke 18:19)*. This is not a word denying that the Lord is God, but a word that makes the ruler look again, before God, at the goodness he was thinking of. By people's good evaluation or by standards one has set up oneself, one cannot prove perfect goodness before God.

When Jesus spoke of the commandments that forbid adultery, murder, stealing, and bearing false witness and that say to honor one's parents, the ruler answered that he had kept them all from his youth. In his answer there was confidence about the life he had built up. But the Lord did not acknowledge, on hearing those words alone, that he lacked nothing. He exposed the gap between his confession that he had kept all the commandments and his heart that actually relied most on riches.

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We, too, may regard ourselves as good enough for the reason that we have not greatly exposed sin outwardly. But if the craving in our hearts or what we rely on more than God remains as it is, the deeds we have kept outwardly cannot change that heart. Before the word of God, we must examine not only the life we can show to others but also what our hearts are holding on to.

The sorrow revealed between riches and the Lord

"When Jesus heard these things, He said to him, 'You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me'" (Luke 18:22). Jesus, telling him to distribute his riches, commanded at the end that he follow Him. Because the ruler was very rich, he became very sorrowful when he heard this word. He may have been ready to add the work he lacked, but before the word to lay down what he relied on and follow the Lord, he could not respond with joy. It was revealed how much riches were holding his heart.

We must not turn the weight of this word into merely a matter of the heart that has nothing to do with riches, either. This is because the riches the ruler actually had collided with his obedience. If, while saying that we believe in God, we do not listen to the Lord's word about how we are to use what we actually have, we, too, come to stand in the same place. We must examine before the Lord why, when it comes to sharing with poor neighbors, only the loss frightens us.

But the act of giving up all one's property does not become the price that washes away sin. The Lord's word does not mean to buy eternal life by piling up more merit of charity, and the

boast of having abandoned riches must not become yet another self-righteousness, either. What the ruler needed was to turn from the heart that clung to what he had and the deeds he had kept as though they were salvation, and to believe in and follow the Savior who was before him.

The kingdom one cannot enter by human ability

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:25). Just as a camel cannot go through the small eye of a needle, with the heart that relies on riches left as it is, one cannot enter the kingdom of God. The rich man the Lord spoke of is not only a person who merely has many riches, but also a person whose heart is full of his own righteousness. The people who heard this word also asked who, then, could be saved. The Lord did not make the door of salvation a little narrower so that the people who strive more would pass through it. He makes us lay down the very thought of accomplishing salvation with the strength we are holding on to.

Riches are necessary for us to live, and they can also be used to serve God and help neighbors. What becomes a problem is the heart that believes in riches as if they were God and thinks that with that power everything is safe. We must know the fact that even with many riches one cannot remove sin and cannot guarantee life after death. Conversely, since one is not automatically saved merely for the reason that one has few riches, either, both the rich and the poor need the Lord's salvation.

This fact is not a word meant to leave us abandoned in despair. Only when we acknowledge what we cannot do can we

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receive by faith the salvation God bestows. As long as we regard deeds better than others' or the comfort of our livelihood as the guarantee of eternal life, it is easy to treat Jesus as a teacher from whom we get only the teachings we need. The person who knows that he cannot escape from sin by himself comes to Jesus as one who must receive salvation.

The salvation of sinners that God accomplished

"He said, 'The things which are impossible with men are possible with God'" (Luke 18:27). The word that God can do the salvation that man cannot do is not a vague encouragement to take heart. It is a word that God Himself undertakes and accomplishes the matter of sin and judgment that a sinner cannot resolve. The commandments the ruler strove to keep only make one realize sin and cannot remove sin, but God Himself prepared the way to remove that sin. Jesus, the Son of God, by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, had all the sins of the whole world passed on to Him at one time, and the ruler's sins, too, and our past, present, and future sins—all the sins of a lifetime—were passed on to the Lord at that time.

Because He had the sin of the world passed on to Him, the Lord bore that sin and was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died. Since He rose again from death after receiving in our place the punishment we were to receive, He does not tell us to fill up further the merit of salvation that remains for us. Believing in the Lord's baptism, the blood of the Cross, and His resurrection is the way to receive salvation, and this salvation cannot be bought even with riches. Because the gospel of the water and the Spirit makes known what God has actually

accomplished, we rely not on a vague possibility but on the salvation He has completed.

We must hold on to both the fact that we cannot do it by our own strength and the fact that God has done it. If we look only at the first fact, we are discouraged because of our own weakness, but if we believe the second fact, we come to give thanks to the Lord, who saved even such people as ourselves. Within that thanks, our attitude toward riches also changes. This is because there is no reason to rely on riches, which cannot give eternal life, in place of the Savior, and because we can use what has been entrusted to us for the work that pleases the Lord.

The promise given to those who have followed the Lord

"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). Peter said that they had left what was theirs and followed the Lord. Jesus was not unaware of their labor and what they had lost, and He promised to those who had followed for the sake of the kingdom of God the blessings of this present time and of the age to come. He causes them to gain new brothers and sisters within the faith, to be cared for together, and finally to enjoy eternal life together with the Lord.

This promise is not a command to abandon responsibility for one's family, nor a contract to receive more money than the property one has given up. It is a promise that even if there is something one loses while following the Lord for the kingdom of God, the Lord does not leave that person empty-handed. Since

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eternal life is not wages calculated from our sacrifice but the life the Savior gives, a disciple's devotion, too, must not be turned into a means of buying salvation.

Now let us think again about the first question of what more one must do to obtain eternal life. What we need is not to find and fill up one last merit, but to believe in Jesus, who accomplished the salvation that man cannot. Because we believe in Him, we can use rightly what we have today and follow the Lord. I ask you to lay before the Savior the heart that was sorrowful in the face of riches, and to walk on relying on the promise of the Lord, who has given eternal life. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The word of suffering that the disciples did not understand was fulfilled just as it was spoken

< Luke 18:31–34 >

“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.’ But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.”

Hearing the word up close does not mean that one immediately understands its meaning as well. Even when it is a word one has clearly heard, if it does not agree with one’s own thoughts, one may be unable to accept it in one’s heart. The twelve disciples, who were going up to Jerusalem with Jesus, were like this, too. The Lord spoke of the suffering, death, and resurrection He would undergo, but the disciples did not know that word. This short text shows us both our attitude in knowing

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the word and the Lord, who goes on accomplishing salvation even when we do not yet understand.

The written word that would be fulfilled in Jerusalem

"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'" (Luke 18:31). Jesus told His disciples that they were going up to Jerusalem, and said that all things written through the prophets would be accomplished concerning the Son of Man. What would happen in Jerusalem was not an unexpected failure that Jesus would suffer because He did not know of it in advance. The Lord, knowing what would befall Him, let His disciples know that it was the fulfillment of the written word.

When we think of the Cross, we may see only the suffering revealed before our eyes and the evil deeds of people. But Jesus first makes clear that the word of God existed even before that event. The Lord's death was not an event in which the One who came to save failed to accomplish His will and disappeared; it was a matter within the will of God, who intended to save sinners. Therefore, the disciples had to accept what was coming as the word the Lord had spoken, rather than judging it by their own expectations alone.

The fact that God accomplishes what He has promised is important for our faith today as well. Just because we want salvation, we cannot decide the way of salvation as we please. We must know how God said He would save sinners, and how Jesus fulfilled that word. If we put forward only the thoughts familiar to us rather than listening to His will, we may miss the

purpose for which the Savior came, even though we know the events of the Bible.

The sinless Lord, who would be mocked and insulted

"For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon" (Luke 18:32). Jesus said specifically that He would be delivered to the Gentiles and be mocked, insulted, and spit upon. The suffering the Lord would undergo was not merely a vague anguish of heart, but insults that people would actually carry out. When we hear of that scene, before thinking only about the magnitude of the pain, we must see who it is that suffers those insults. It is the Son of God, who came to save sinners, who receives such treatment.

The fact that the Lord knew of His suffering does not mean that the suffering was light. Nor do the evil deeds of the people who mocked the Lord become good for the reason that the will of God is accomplished. Jesus did not suffer in order to declare the sins of people right; He went forward on that path in order to save the people who were under sin. Therefore, this prediction is not a word that justifies evil, but a word that shows the love of the Savior, who bore it.

When we think of that love, we come to examine again our faith that follows the Lord. We cannot think that, because the Lord has saved us, we must always be respected by people and our circumstances must also be good. This is because on the path the Savior went there were also people's rejection and insults. Even so, we cannot deliberately create suffering, or demand only silence from a person who is suffering unjust treatment. The center of the text does not lie in a person's obtaining salvation

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by enduring pain, but in the Savior Himself bearing suffering for us.

The resurrection on the third day that He foretold together with His death

"'They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again'" (Luke 18:33). After speaking of the scourging and death, the Lord also said that He would rise again on the third day. Therefore, if we read this prediction cutting it off at death, we miss the end of the word the Lord spoke. Jesus did not say that He would turn back to another path to avoid suffering, nor did He say that He would end up held fast by death. The One who would be killed is the very Savior who would rise again.

Why did the sinless Jesus have to go even to the place of death? Before going up to Jerusalem, the Lord had already had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River. In that sin of the world are the sins of the disciples and our sins together, and not only the sins committed in the past but all the sins of a whole life, extending to the present and the future, are included. Since the Lord, who bore sin, went forward to the Cross in order to receive in our place the judgment for that sin as well, the baptism at the Jordan River and the Cross at Jerusalem were one way of salvation.

The blood Jesus shed on the Cross and His death are the redemption by which He bore in our place the punishment we were to receive. Therefore, we must not think of the Lord's baptism and the Cross separately. The One who had our sins passed on to Him through His baptism died bearing those sins, and rose again on the third day just as He had said. We who

believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit rely on Jesus, who accomplished this work of salvation. Our salvation is not built upon the emotion of feeling pity for the Lord's suffering, or upon a resolution to imitate His endurance.

Because we believe in the risen Savior, we can look to the life the Lord has given even in the face of death. We have such hope not because our deeds are perfect, but because there is the Lord, who bore all our sins, received the judgment, and rose again. Even when our own faults are revealed, we must not regard sin lightly, but return to the Savior, who took even that sin upon Himself. When we believe in the salvation that the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection testify of together, we come to look to the grace of the Lord from the place where we were looking only at our own lacking selves.

Patience toward the disciples who heard yet did not know

"But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken" (Luke 18:34). The disciples understood none of what Jesus had said. The text says that this saying was hidden, and tells us again that they did not know the things the Lord had spoken. It is a scene that shows that one cannot be said to have understood the whole word merely by the fact of having followed the Lord for a long time. Looking at the disciples' lack of understanding, we must not exalt ourselves, saying that we ourselves already know everything, but must acknowledge that we, too, must learn so as to understand the word rightly.

We cannot make up from this short verse every reason why it was hidden. But we can see the fact that the Lord did not

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withdraw His word or stop His way toward Jerusalem just because the disciples did not yet understand. The Lord told them in advance of the work of salvation, and went to accomplish the very work He had spoken of. The certainty of salvation lies in the work the Savior accomplished according to His word, rather than in how well the hearer understood at that moment.

Therefore, when there is a verse we do not know well, we must not pass over it pretending to know, but listen to the word again. Let us not leave out the meaning of the Lord's suffering or of His baptism for the reason that it differs from the story we were expecting. If we want to know salvation, we must listen to the end to what the Savior did, and what is needed is a heart that wants to learn, rather than the pride that we already know all about that work. The place where we share the word together, too, must become a place where we clearly learn the Savior's will, rather than displaying our own knowledge.

The sight of the disciples, who heard the word up close yet did not understand, makes us look back on our own shortcomings. But this text leaves us the word of the Lord, which is more certain than the shortcomings of the disciples. The word they did not understand was fulfilled just as it was spoken. Look to the Savior, who, though He knew of His suffering and death beforehand, went to Jerusalem and rose again. Do not leave the word you have heard as mere familiar knowledge, but believe with your heart in Jesus, who fulfilled that word for us. ✉

The word of suffering that the disciples did not understand was fulfilled just as it was spoken

Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

The blind man followed the Lord, who heard his cry, and praised God

< Luke 18:35–43 >

"Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' He said, 'Lord, that I may receive my sight.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.' And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God."

In a place where many people are moving together, one person's desperate words can easily be drowned out. When Jesus was coming near Jericho, too, the multitude was passing by, and by the roadside a blind man sat begging. When he asked for help, those who went before rebuked him and told him to be quiet. But

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this story does not end with that man's cry being blocked. In the place where Jesus stood still, we see the mercy of the Lord, who cares for one person whom people easily pass by.

The plea directed to the Son of David

"And he cried out, saying, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'" (Luke 18:38). This man heard the sound of the multitude passing by and asked what it meant. When the people told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he called Jesus the Son of David and cried out for Him to have mercy on him. In that call appears the faith that did not treat Jesus as merely a person passing along the road, but relied on Him as the Savior who would show mercy to him.

What he asked for was not an acknowledgment that he was qualified to receive it. Because he needed the Lord's mercy, he did not hide his condition but asked for help. The matter of making him see could not be settled with what he had obtained by begging, nor was it brought about merely by the fact that there were many people passing by him. He cried out toward Jesus, and hoped that the Lord would care for him.

"Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'" (Luke 18:39). The rebuke could not shut his mouth. Since the power of this plea lay not in the loudness of his voice but in the faith that relied on Jesus, we must not accept it as a method of prayer by which one obtains an answer by making a loud noise. Even amid the people's rebuke, the One he relied on was Jesus, and he did not withdraw his heart that wanted to lay his problem before the Lord.

We, too, may hesitate to come to the Lord because of people's evaluation. While thinking about how others will view our shortcomings, we fail to ask for the help we actually need. But people's eyes cannot do away with the fact that we need salvation. If we have come to know through the word who the Lord is, we must come in faith to the Savior, who will have mercy on us.

Jesus, who stood still and asked what was needed

"So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' He said, 'Lord, that I may receive my sight'" (Luke 18:40–41). Jesus did not keep on passing along the road, but stood still. And after commanding that the man be brought, when he had come near, He asked him what he wanted Him to do for him. Unlike those who went before, who tried to make him quiet, the Lord gave him a place to tell Him directly what he needed.

He told the Lord that he wanted to receive his sight. Because he told the Lord his actual need in answer to the Lord's question, rather than looking for words that would sound plausible to other people, we learn from his plea the attitude of prayer that speaks honestly. The Lord knows our circumstances, but we can tell Him our situation and ask for His help. Faith is not a heart that pretends that its own weakness does not exist, but a heart that comes to the Lord with that weakness.

There are times when we, though we say we follow the Lord, treat someone's plea as if it were an annoying noise. If we do not listen to the words of a person who needs help for the reason that the work we must do together is pressing, we miss the heart of

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the Lord, who stood still. We cannot solve every problem with our own strength, but we can listen to that person's need, tell it to the Lord together with him, and carry out the care we are able to give. Looking to see whether there is anyone who has been quietly pushed aside in the crowd is also a love that we who have received the gospel must learn.

The word that made the eyes see and the faith that believes in the Savior

"Then Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight; your faith has made you well'" (Luke 18:42). Jesus told the man to receive his sight and spoke of his faith. The text goes on to tell us that he actually came to see. The Lord answered the need he had asked for, and the man came to see by the word of the Lord. If we turn this event into a story that points only to a realization in the heart, we miss the concrete mercy Jesus bestowed on that man's body.

The word that his faith saved him does not mean that faith itself produced power apart from the Lord. Jesus, on whom he relied, spoke and made him see. Therefore, we must not make the strength of our own conviction the basis of salvation, but must know who the Savior we believe in is and what He has accomplished. Jesus, who showed mercy to this man, is the Son of God, who came to solve the problem of our sins as well.

The Son of David whom the blind man called upon is the Savior who came according to the promise. When Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River, He had all the sins of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all, and our sins of the past and the present, and even the sins we will commit until we die, are all contained in that sin of the world. Because He bore the sin of the world in this way, the Lord shed His blood

and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and rose again from death. What we must believe in is not our own earnestness, but Jesus, who accomplished the remission of sins in this way through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit tells us how the Lord's mercy dealt with our sins. We must not stop at acknowledging our shortcomings, but must accept with our hearts the Savior, who bore that sin and even received the punishment. This salvation does not become certain by how much other people acknowledge us. Because we believe in the salvation of Jesus revealed in the word, we can get out of the place where we were trying to bear our sins and endure the judgment by ourselves, and give thanks to the Lord.

Nor must we expand the healing in this text into a promise that a person who believes is always healed of sickness at the same time and in the same way. Here, Jesus spoke to this man and made him see. We must believe that fact and tell the Lord today's pain as well, but we must not rashly judge a person who has not yet been healed as having no faith. The faith that relies on the Savior and the love that cares for one another's weaknesses must go together.

The person who followed the Lord while praising God

"And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God" (Luke 18:43). After he received his sight, that man followed Jesus, giving glory to God. The person who had sat by the roadside asking for help now became a person who followed

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after the Lord. His joy did not stay only with the change that had happened to him, but went on to praise directed toward God, who had accomplished that work. The people, too, seeing that sight, praised God together.

When we remember the grace we have received from the Lord, the direction of our lives, too, turns toward the Savior. Rather than forgetting the Lord after our difficulty is resolved and living as before, we come to want to know more of the One who cared for us and to live according to His word. It is the same with gratitude for salvation. Without keeping the fact that we have received the remission of sins only as our own sense of relief, we can preach Jesus, who saved us, to others and serve Him.

The cry of one person, which seemed about to be drowned out amid the rebuke of the multitude, finally led to praise offered together. In between, there was the Lord, who stood still, heard his words, and made him see. Let us, too, come to Jesus without hiding the plea we need to make because of people's eyes. And follow the Savior with the joy of having received the Lord's mercy, and give ear also to the words of the person who asks for help beside you. ✉

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CHAPTER

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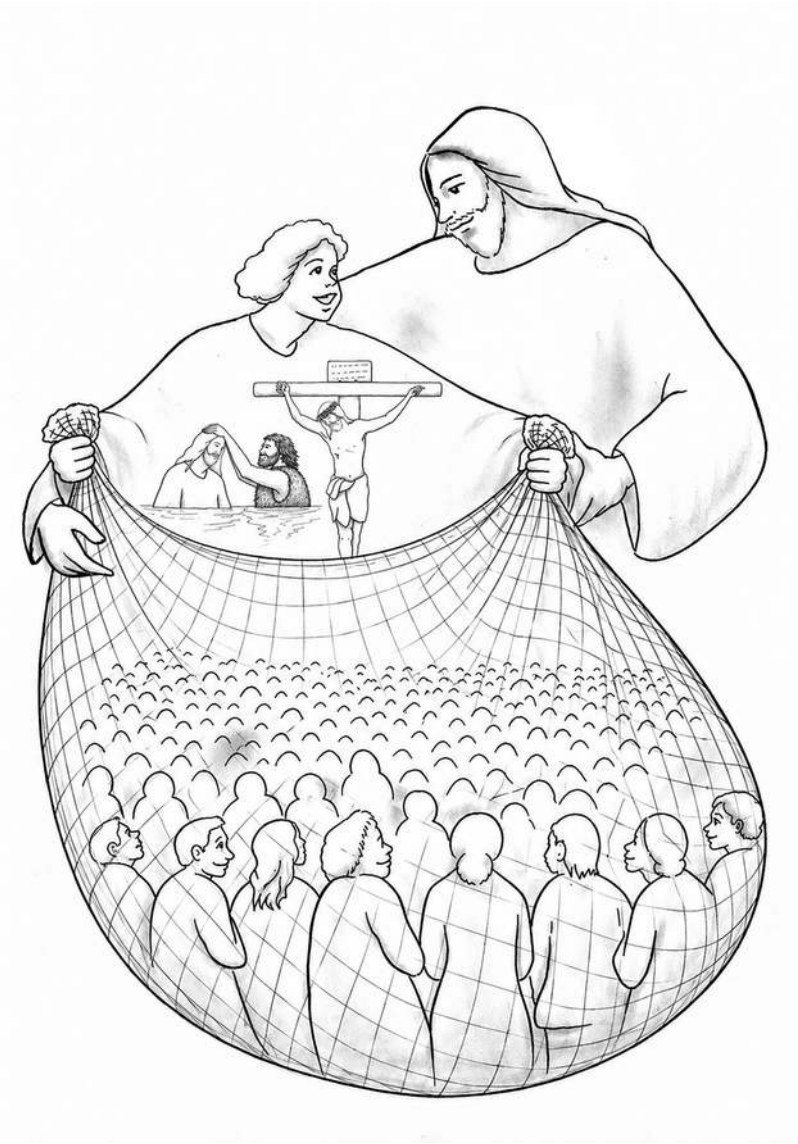

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Today salvation has come to this house

< Luke 19:1–10 >

"Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.' So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, 'He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.' Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.'"

Once we come to know someone's past wrongs, whatever that person says, we first become suspicious. Even when we hear him say that he will change, the old assessment comes first, and we may even regard with displeasure the person who willingly

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meets with him. The people who saw Jesus going into the house of Zacchaeus in Jericho were just such people. Yet in that very place, which the people murmured about as the house of a sinner, the Lord declared that salvation had come. How did such different words come to be spoken while looking at the same person and the same house? If we follow this difference, we come to know the will of the Lord, who came to find sinners, and the change that His grace brings about.

The Lord, who first called the man who sought to see Him

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector and a rich man, but among the many people he could not see Jesus. Being short, he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree, and looked at the road along which Jesus would pass. What happened then did not end with his seeing Him once from afar. *"When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house'" (Luke 19:5).*

Jesus called him by name and said that He would stay at his house that day. It was not a meeting granted after Zacchaeus had first explained his good deeds or promised how much he would give in the future. Because the Lord met him first, he could make haste and come down and receive Him joyfully. The heart that thinks that in order to meet the Lord one can come to Him only after settling the problem of sin entirely by one's own strength must change its thinking before this call.

We, too, have faults we want to hide and past deeds that are hard to undo. Words that pretend not to know them while knowing them can only soothe the heart for a moment; they

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cannot solve the problem of sin before God. Jesus came to find us in order to save us, knowing our sins. Therefore, we must not try to dress up our condition and show it to the Lord, but must believe the word that calls sinners and come to Him. The joy of Zacchaeus, too, was not the joy of having his qualifications acknowledged, but the joy of receiving the Lord, who had come to find him.

The purpose of salvation revealed before the murmuring people

The people took issue with the fact that Jesus was staying at the house of a sinner. *"When they saw it, they all complained, saying, 'He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner'" (Luke 19:7)*. But just because the word "sinner" was in their words, it does not mean that they also knew the meaning of salvation. The people who slandered Zacchaeus as a sinner were in fact no better than he, but they differed in that they did not know themselves. The heart that tries to keep its own rightness by keeping sinners at a distance cannot understand the heart of the Lord, who came near to save sinners. Through this meeting, Jesus made clear the purpose for which He had come. *"The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10)*.

The lost are not people who have fully prepared by themselves the way to return, but people who were originally children of God and then left God through sin and could only come to destruction. What we, being such people, need is not an assessment that we are better than others, but the Savior, who will deliver us from sin. The word that the Son of Man has come means that God came clothed in human flesh, and that the Lord

who drew near to Zacchaeus came as a man in order to find us. If we know this love, we cannot judge, for the reason that we know another person's faults, that he has no need of the word of salvation.

Just as the Lord went into the house of Zacchaeus, the Lord Himself also opened the way by which He comes into our hearts. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, Jesus had all the sins of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. Because all the sins we commit from the time we are born until we die were passed on to Jesus through that baptism, the Lord bore that sin and was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died, receiving in our place the judgment for sins that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. The Lord, who removed sin in this way through the baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross, dwells as the Holy Spirit in the heart of the person who believes in that gospel. The love that came to find sinners did not stop at the goodwill of letting wrongs be covered over, but appeared as the salvation in which the Lord Himself bore sin and its judgment.

The grace received leads to responsibility toward one's neighbors

Before the Lord, who had met him, Zacchaeus speaks anew about his possessions and his past deeds. *"Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold'" (Luke 19:8).*

In the promise to give half of his possessions to the poor there is a heart that wants to care for the neighbors beside him, and in the words that if he had extorted anything from anyone he would

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repay it fourfold there is a responsibility that does not turn away from the loss he had caused others. The reason he, who had lived as a chief tax collector, spoke like this at the very place where he met the Lord is that the Lord, who had come to find him, had first changed his heart. The joy with which he received the Lord did not end with emotion in his heart alone, but led to the direction in which he used his wealth and the attitude with which he treated his neighbors. Because the grace he received from the Lord was precious, he could no longer keep calling right the way he had lived, holding on only to his own gain.

That sharing and restitution did not pay the price of salvation. The Lord had already come to find him first, and Zacchaeus is speaking of a new life before that grace. We cannot remove sin before God with the money we have given or the amount we have compensated, but neither can we regard lightly the responsibility we owe our neighbors for the reason that we have received grace. Because we believe in the Lord, who has given us the remission of sins, we must honestly admit our wrongs, and if there is something to set right, we must choose the way of actually setting it right.

This change is different from putting on a show in order to look like a better person to others, and it is also different from striving to be justified before God by correcting one's conduct. To undo the harm one has done and to reach out a hand to a neighbor who needs care, even where there is no one to praise us, is the fruit of grace that comes from a person who has first received the remission of sins. When the shortcomings of our deeds are revealed on that path, instead of being discouraged we must again reflect on the salvation the Lord has accomplished and ask for help. Instead of claiming that all our actions became perfect by themselves after we were saved, we live learning,

following the will by which the Holy Spirit, who is in us, leads us through the word.

The joy of salvation proclaimed in the house of a sinner

The murmuring of the people did not become the last word about this house. Jesus proclaimed to Zacchaeus that salvation had come. *"Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham'" (Luke 19:9)*.

That the Lord said he was a son of Abraham means that Zacchaeus recognized Jesus and believed, and that the Lord did not leave him, who had been pushed aside among the people, outside of salvation as he was. Among all those many people gathered on that road that day, the one who received this blessing was Zacchaeus. Here our eyes must not stay on calculating how much Zacchaeus gave, but must turn to the Lord, who sought and saved the lost. The assurance of salvation does not arise because our neighbors' assessment of us has improved, nor does it arise because we guarantee that we will live without blemish from now on. When we believe in the work of Jesus Christ, who bore sin and received the judgment in our place, we can stand in that grace.

Therefore, when we see a person who has not yet come to the Lord, let us not murmur, holding on only to the name he once had. While calling a wrong a wrong, we must be able to preach to him the word of salvation he needs and help his steps as he turns and tries to live rightly. For we, too, are not people who came to life by our own righteousness, but people who live by the grace of the Savior, who came to find us. So that the words that we know grace do not become an excuse that covers

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indifference toward our neighbors, we must share the love we have received in our actual lives.

The people of Jericho looked at the house of Zacchaeus and murmured that it was the house of a sinner, but the Lord said of that house that salvation had come to it today. The words that rule our hearts today, too, must be not people's old assessments but the word of the Lord, who sought and saved us. Believing that word and giving thanks, let us open to our neighbors the hands we had clenched, turn from the wrong path, and follow the Lord. I hope that you will live testifying of that salvation with joy, so that the grace that came to find us may reach others as well. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Zacchaeus, the tax collector who was saved

< Luke 19:1–10 >

"Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.' So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, 'He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.' Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.'"

What kind of person receives the remission of sins?

This word is the word in which a man named Zacchaeus received the remission of sins. Jesus said that He came to this

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earth *"to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10)*. Looking at the word, we can think in various ways about what kind of people receive the remission of sins and what kind of person the one who receives the remission of sins is, and we can give thanks once again for the grace our Lord has given us.

"Jesus entered and passed through Jericho" (Luke 19:1). Jesus always has His heart set on the people in this world. It is not that Jesus has His heart set elsewhere; He has His heart set on all the people in this world.

In the region of Jericho there was a man named Zacchaeus, and this man was a chief tax collector and a rich man. This man wanted to see Jesus once, but because he was short it was difficult. So it says that he climbed up a sycamore tree and saw Jesus.

In fact, what kind of people are those who believe in Jesus and receive the remission of sins? They are people with many problems, many feelings of inferiority, and much weakness.

It says that Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector and rich. What does that tell us? It means that Zacchaeus was a thief. The Bible put it kindly. Does a person steal because he wants to steal? The man Zacchaeus was a man with many problems. Seen in human terms, he was a man with many feelings of inferiority and much weakness. Being a chief tax collector, would he want to get money dishonestly, or not want to? He would want to take it, of course. Even money gained dishonestly becomes all the more tempting the larger the amount.

What the Bible says is that such a person receives the remission of sins. It says that Zacchaeus, as a chief tax collector, was rich. However high a chief one may be among the tax collectors, one cannot become rich on salary alone. Then how did he become rich? It means that because he knew the pleasure of getting money, he pocketed a lot of money dishonestly. He

probably helped people evade taxes and pocketed money. It means that he used various means and pocketed a lot of money dishonestly. That is how he became rich.

Zacchaeus, who climbed up the sycamore tree

One day the town where Zacchaeus lived was astir. As to what was happening, it was that Jesus had come to a certain point in order to pass through this town. He would surely pass through here, and people talked about what Jesus had done, saying that this Jesus not only healed lepers but also raised the dead and calmed the rough waves.

Zacchaeus, too, as one of the people of that town, had much interest in Jesus. Even though he did not know what kind of person Jesus was, he had much interest, thinking that he would like at least to see Him once, and wondering who Jesus might be. So Zacchaeus climbed up a sycamore tree to see Jesus. Why did he climb up the sycamore tree? He did not climb up to pick the fruit of the sycamore tree. He climbed up to see Jesus.

Zacchaeus was a man who could not see Jesus from among the crowd. That is to say, he was short. So it means that he was able to see Jesus by climbing up the sycamore tree.

In fact, I want you to know that those who believe in Jesus Christ and obtain salvation are not perfect people, but people with many feelings of inferiority, many problems, and much weakness. You must know that it is not perfect people but imperfect people who meet Jesus and receive the salvation Jesus has given.

People demand something extremely perfect. But there is no perfect person. Everyone, like Zacchaeus, has a heart that wants to get money dishonestly, is weak, and has weak points in human

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terms. Such people receive the remission of sins, and Zacchaeus, as a representative, showed that such a person received the remission of sins.

The heart in which Jesus wants to dwell

Zacchaeus climbed up the sycamore tree and saw Jesus. Zacchaeus was watching Jesus as He passed under the sycamore tree, when Jesus looked up from under the sycamore tree Zacchaeus had climbed and spoke. *"Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5)*. That is what He said.

Jesus told Zacchaeus that He would stay at his house. Zacchaeus was so glad that he jumped down, received Him joyfully, and took Him into his house. Jesus knew all about Zacchaeus. Jesus knew that Zacchaeus was a weak man, knew that he had become rich by stealing, and knew that he was a man with many handicaps in human terms. He also knew that this man was not perfect. But when Jesus looked at Zacchaeus, this man was a person who knew his own shortcomings and admitted them, and who did not hide himself before God but sought salvation, the remission of sins, before God. Zacchaeus was looking down from above, and Jesus, looking up from below, said, *"Come down, for today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5)*. It means that Jesus wants to dwell together in the heart of a person like this Zacchaeus.

What kind of heart is the heart of the person in whom Jesus dwells? It is the heart of people like Zacchaeus. A person with many feelings of inferiority, many handicaps, and many shortcomings in human terms—Jesus calls such a person, removes all that person's sins with the baptism He received from

John and the precious blood He shed on the Cross, and wants to dwell in that person's heart. Jesus saves such a person and dwells as the Holy Spirit in such a person's heart.

We want to become perfectly complete. But Jesus said, *"The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10)*. Jesus came to this earth to find the lost—people who suffer because of their own shortcomings, lost souls who, because they were born as descendants of Adam and Eve, inherited weakness, had many shortcomings, and truly could not but go to hell—and to save them from sin. In other words, it means that He came to save all mankind from all sins.

When Jesus looked at Zacchaeus, because He saw all of Zacchaeus's wretchedness, He said, *"Come down, for today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5)*, and at that one word Zacchaeus joyfully hurried down and held a feast at his house.

When we meet the Lord, we become new people

And Zacchaeus said, *"Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold" (Luke 19:8)*. Once a person meets the Lord and receives the remission of sins—once he, though he himself is so lacking, believes in the Lord, who had all his sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, rose again from death, and removed all his sins, and once Jesus dwells in his heart—he becomes a new person. It means that he will now no longer do the stealing he used to do so well. He has become a new person.

After Zacchaeus met the Lord, he became a new person. It means that in the past he had stolen enormously, but after meeting the Lord he became a new person. It means that now he

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wanted to live righteously. He had lived stealing every day and eating well on it, growing a fat belly on it and swaggering, swindling and extorting, but it means that now he would not live for this pleasure but would truly live for others.

Once a person is born again—once he knows all these things, his feelings of inferiority, his handicaps, and his weakness, knows the word of God, acknowledges according to the word of God that he is one who cannot but go to hell, and then believes that Jesus came to this earth to save him, who could not but go to hell, and received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again—salvation comes into his heart. The remission of sins comes. "Jesus has taken away all my sins. Jesus has become my Savior. I have truly become a righteous person. I was not one who could become righteous, yet I have become righteous." A thankful heart arises, and he thinks, "My deeds may not have changed that much, but my heart has changed completely. Before, there was sin in my heart, but now there is no sin in my heart." Now he has become a wholly new person.

That is why Zacchaeus, with a new heart arising in him, speaks before the Lord. "I will give half of my possessions to the poor." It means that now he wanted to live righteously. *"If I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold" (Luke 19:8)*. It means that now such things were over. It means that the wrong life he had lived until then was now over.

Truly, if we believe that the Lord has saved us ourselves, with all our shortcomings, who according to the law of God could not but go to hell, with the water and the blood—with the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross; if we believe in our hearts the fact that when Jesus received baptism from John all our sins were passed on to His head; if we believe the fact that thereby there is no sin in our hearts, then a new life begins.

We become like Zacchaeus. The person who has received the remission of sins is a person like Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, a rich man, a short man, and a man who received little recognition from the people of the town. Before God, all of us are such people. We are people with shortcomings, people who have some weak parts, and who have human weak points. Even so, He called such people. Our Lord said, *"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:32)*. It means that He came to call sinners and make them righteous. Our Lord has saved us from all sins and made us righteous.

Our Lord said to Zacchaeus, *"Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9)*. Though you and I are so lacking, our Lord has saved you and me. He has removed our sins. He has made us righteous. It means that He has made us people who can do new and very righteous things. He has given you and me that blessing He gave to Abraham, and today He has given the salvation He gave to Abraham to you and me as well.

The person who knows himself

We must consider whether you and I are not people like Zacchaeus. Because he was short, he climbed up the sycamore tree to see the Lord clearly. He met Jesus. This man was a person who, even in ordinary times, knew well what he was. This man was a person who, when he pocketed taxes dishonestly, pocketed enormous amounts.

Zacchaeus knew well how much money he was pocketing dishonestly. Even when he compared himself with many people, it seemed that when he stole, he really stole more than others,

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that he was also more lacking ethically and morally than others, and that he was lacking in human terms as well; so when this man heard the rumors about Jesus, he truly wanted to believe and confirm them.

Wondering whether Jesus was really so, Zacchaeus climbed up the sycamore tree and looked down, and Jesus looked up at him and said, “Come down. I must stay at your house.” It means that Jesus is the Lord who removes all the sins in the heart of such a person, dwells in the heart of such a person, makes such a person a child of God, and takes him to the kingdom of heaven.

You and I must throw away our fixed ideas. “Since I am a perfect person, since by the standard of ordinary people my manners, morals, and ethics are fairly decent, isn’t that why the Lord called me and I am living a life of faith like this?” But ordinary people are even worse than Zacchaeus and yet do not know themselves, whereas Zacchaeus was a person who knew himself well. When Jesus looked at Zacchaeus, he was a person who had the faith and knowledge fit to receive salvation. He was a person who truly longed for Jesus Christ and was waiting for the Savior. He was one who, if only Jesus appeared, would seize Him at once and believe. When Zacchaeus looked down from above, Jesus really looked up, knew all about Zacchaeus, and told him to come down, and Zacchaeus, too, knew that Jesus knew all about him. He went down and also served Him a meal at his house.

When we stand before someone who knows all about us, we tell everything. Jesus knows all about you and me. He knows even what you do not know. To think, “He probably does not know me well,” is a delusion. Jesus knows even what sins you will commit in the future. However much you cover yourself, you cannot be covered.

Are there not such people among you? There are also those who think they themselves are fine, but whom the people next to them see as really crooked. Jesus knows all about such people, too. Just as the word says, *"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6)*, the Lord bore our iniquity and died.

We are really crooked and stubborn people. Jesus knows all about such weakness of ours. Do you, too, admit your own weakness? As we go on living, the things that are not fine show up all the more.

The people of the town slandered Zacchaeus. They were worse. You, too, all have weaknesses. But Jesus knows all about us as we are. Jesus told Zacchaeus to come down, and when Zacchaeus met the Lord, what did the Lord say? He said, *"Today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9)*. Because our Lord knows all about us, because when our Lord met us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit He knew with what iniquities we were born and that we would live committing all these iniquities our whole lives, He told us to come down. Our Lord met us. Our Lord removed all our sins. Our Lord had all your sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. And He bore the sin of the world and went to the Cross and died. This is how Jesus saved you and me.

Believe first, and then you will be changed

Dear fellow believers, if your thoughts are very proud, I ask you to humble your hearts. Go before Jesus Christ, hold on to Jesus Christ, and believe in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross. I ask you to receive the remission of

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sins like Zacchaeus through faith. When you receive the remission of sins, you are bound to become a new person even if you try not to.

When a person receives the remission of sins, he changes. His thoughts change. His actions change. His faith changes. His wisdom changes. Do you really want to become a right person? Do you want to become an admirable person? Believe in that salvation by which Jesus saved us with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross. Accept it in your heart. Then you become a new person. One does not become a right person by striving to become one; one becomes a new person by believing in Jesus Christ in one's heart, by believing in the baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross as one's own salvation, by believing in Jesus as one's own Savior. One's actions become upright. One's heart changes.

Dear fellow believers, do you want to become a new person? Believe in Jesus. If you want to go to the kingdom of heaven, to become a servant of what is right, to become a worker of God, and to live uprightly, all you need to do is believe in the salvation of Jesus Christ. Then God comes to stay. *"Today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5)*. The Holy Spirit comes upon our hearts, and when we hear the word of God, that Holy Spirit leads our hearts, holds us, and guides us so that we live righteous lives. Therefore, if you really want to live uprightly, I ask you to believe in this gospel. If you believe, you become an upright person; if you do not believe and only strive, you become merely a stubborn person.

After I met the Lord, I could understand what Zacchaeus said. "I will give half of my possessions to the poor." I understand it. When we meet the Lord and truly believe, a new heart arises. I really want to live rightly. I want to live this life that God wants.

Before I was born again, I was like ordinary people. I had a great desire to live rightly, but I was a person who had iniquity that kept me from living rightly. Now that I have met the Lord, I have changed. In the past, even while saying that I did not sin, I did many wicked things, but after I received the remission of sins I changed. I have a heart that wants to devote my youth to the Lord and live for Him, to offer my thoughts, my will, and everything I have for the Lord, and to live for what is right. It means that there is joy in living in this world. When we truly meet the Lord, this is what happens.

If you really want to become a right person, believe in the Lord. Then the Lord will change you. Believe first. Then He will change you. If you try to correct your actions without believing, you will gradually go down the wrong path.

Dear fellow believers, you have heard this word about how Zacchaeus was saved. Were not you and I also Zacchaeus spiritually? We were Zacchaeus. We had handicaps. We are weak. When we reach a certain situation, we are all weak. But we really wanted to be saved, and while we were wondering who would save us from this sin, Jesus appeared. Jesus came to find you with the word of the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, with that gospel. We accepted this gospel. By accepting this gospel, you and I became new people. So we have come to live very righteous lives before God. By accepting this gospel, we have become children of God.

If any of you find that your actions are not easily corrected, do not be discouraged by it. Chew on this gospel, preach this gospel, boast of it, and ruminate on it. Think about the fact that when Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River, all your sins were passed on to Him. Look at the fact that He received baptism, died on the Cross, and accomplished salvation. Your heart will be made new.

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It is not you who will change yourselves; the Holy Spirit changes you. Put your expectation in God. I ask you to meet Jesus Christ and hold on to Jesus Christ. And even after you are born again, I ask you to keep following the way of Jesus. I ask you to believe that as you learn and hear the countless words of God, wisdom will arise in you and a new way will open up for you.

He has given you and me a truly amazing salvation. We give thanks and thanks again before the Lord. Having become new people, like Zacchaeus we are offering our very lives to the Lord. We always devote ourselves to the Lord's work. We are doing work that can save many people. The Lord has enabled us to live such righteous lives. It is not because we are so fine that we live righteous lives. The Lord met us, who are like Zacchaeus, people with many handicaps and much weakness. *"Come down, for today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5)*. We were people who could not but go to hell because of sin, but the Lord came to this earth, received baptism from John, and died on the Cross, and saved you and me from all sins. He has enabled us to live righteous lives.

We give sincere thanks. We must spread this salvation the Lord has given us to the whole world, live righteous lives, and then meet the Lord. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Serving the gospel is the most right thing to do

< Luke 19:1–10 >

"Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.' So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, 'He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.' Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.'"

God, who meets those who want to live righteously

God comes to find and meets those who want to live righteously. God knows well who those who seek Him are. God

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knows well the heart of such a person who really wants to live righteously. In this word we have read, a chief tax collector named Zacchaeus appears. This man, hearing that Jesus was coming to his town, ran out because he was short and climbed up a sycamore tree, and while looking to see who Jesus was, he came to meet Him. When Zacchaeus was up in the sycamore tree, Jesus, passing under that sycamore tree, looked up and said, *"Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5)*. Zacchaeus came down very joyfully and held a feast, and said to the Lord, *"Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold" (Luke 19:8)*. What do these words mean? We see that until then he had really wanted to live righteously but had gone on without being able to live that way, and that now, after meeting the Lord, a heart that wants to live righteously arose in Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector. In those days the nation of Israel was a vassal state of the Roman Empire. So an Israelite would collect taxes from the people of his own country and hand them over to Rome. But he would not hand over all of it; if he had collected a hundred, he would hand over only about fifty or seventy and keep the rest for himself, and in this way he collected a lot of taxes and kept a large share for himself. He was a man who had lived very unrighteously. So when Jesus went into the house of Zacchaeus, the people murmured, *"He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner" (Luke 19:7)*. But it means that when this Zacchaeus, who had climbed up a sycamore tree and was looking down to see who Jesus was as He passed through his town, met Jesus' eyes—at the moment he saw who He was—a new heart, a heart that wanted to live righteously, arose in this man's heart.

When we meet the Lord, a heart that wants to live rightly arises

We human beings have a heart that wants to live righteously. Though we have such a heart, before we meet Jesus our lives are all unrighteous. We are like Zacchaeus. We lived unrighteously, taking other people's money. But after Zacchaeus met Jesus, he said that he would give half of his property to the poor. In other words, he would live rightly. It means that a heart that wanted to live entirely for what is right arose in the heart of Zacchaeus. And since he said, *"If I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold" (Luke 19:8),* this means that a great change took place in the heart of Zacchaeus. It means that the one who stole would now turn his heart and live righteously. From the time he met the Lord, there was a change in the heart of Zacchaeus.

We, too, when we meet the Lord, have a heart that wants to live rightly. And after we meet the Lord, we can live rightly. Before we met the Lord we could not live rightly, but after meeting the Lord we want to live rightly. It means that a heart that really wants to live righteously and uprightly has arisen through the Lord. Our Lord had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross and removed those sins, and is seated together with us in our hearts as the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit who is holy. Just as our Lord came into the heart of Zacchaeus and raised up in him a heart that wanted to live uprightly, it means that He has raised up in your hearts and mine, too, after we met the Lord, a heart that wants to live rightly. Dear fellow believers, is that so, or is it not? God has put such a heart in our hearts. We want to live rightly. We want to live for what is righteous. Our God has raised up in us a heart that wants, however we may have lived in

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the past, now to make a new start with a new life and live for what is right.

So our Lord enables us to live such a right life. Our Lord works within us. He raises up in us a heart that can do what is right, helps us to do what is right, and God supports us from behind. Dear beloved saints, God has clearly raised up in us a heart that wants to live for what is right, and we must not pretend not to have heard the word of our Lord, who raised up such a heart in us. Since our Lord has given us such a heart and is raising it up even now, we must live the rest of our lives responding with our hearts to the word and the call of the Lord, who raised up this heart in us. I, too, before I met the Lord, thought that I had lived a good life in my own way and had lived for what is right, and you must have thought so too. But in reality, after we met the Lord, it means that God gave us—not our old righteousness or our goodness, but—a heart that wants to live for what is right even though we have no strength. So our Lord has given us this precious heart, the heart that wants to live for what is right, and has led us, so that we serve what is right in the church, spread the gospel, live for the Lord, and live our whole lives for what is right.

Dear fellow believers, it is not because we are so fine that we are in this church. It is not because you are good and right that you are in the church. It means that because God has put in our hearts and raised up a heart that wants to live for what is right, we have now come into the church and are living for what is right, serving our Lord and living a life of faith. All of this has come about through our God. Our Lord knows well those who have a heart that wants to live rightly. And He also meets such people. Zacchaeus knew himself well. And Jesus, too, knew Zacchaeus well. It means that Zacchaeus wanted in his heart to live rightly, but until then there had been no one to guide him

rightly and lead him to do what is right. After seeking out and looking to see who Jesus was and then meeting Him, the heart of Zacchaeus changed completely. It means that a heart that said he must live for what is right arose in him. In this world there are people who want to live for what is right. Of course, it is not something that only a few special people have; that desire of the heart is in you and me, in everyone. I believe that everyone has it, unless his heart has been seared with a hot iron.

Only when we meet the King of righteousness can we do what is right

But even if we want to do what is right, unless we meet the King of righteousness we cannot do what is right. Without meeting Jesus, without being led by Jesus, we cannot do what is right. So for us to make a pledge to serve the Lord is a truly good thing for you and me. That is not something we do looking at some minister or saint; we make the pledge in order to do what is right for Jesus. The reason making a pledge is so very good is that it becomes a good opportunity for us to do the right work by which we can serve the Lord before God, and also a good occasion for our heart toward the world to be cut off. If the saints are left alone, they fall completely into the world. Acquiring this and acquiring that, they sink deeper and deeper into the world.

Dear fellow believers, when you serve the Lord, having served the Lord becomes something worthwhile. Though until now we have served the Lord with very little in the midst of difficulties, all of it remains worthwhile and still stands firm today. In fact, our acquiring the things of the world and doing the things of the world have no end, and even when we do them they are not worthwhile. There is no work as worthwhile as this

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work of serving the Lord. Even if we serve the world, it is nothing much. It gives no satisfaction. But when we serve the Lord, even if we have served with very little, we are satisfied. It means that we served the Lord with little in the midst of difficulties, and yet many people are being saved. How righteously God has enabled us to live! Though we offered little before God, our God has led us to live righteously. God has raised up a righteous heart in us and has led you and me to do the righteous work of preaching the gospel even to faraway places.

After this Zacchaeus met the Lord, he said, "If I have extorted anything from anyone, I will repay it fourfold," and if so, Zacchaeus had already lost all his property. For since it had all been stolen, even if he repaid everything it would not be enough. Yet it means that his heart became like that. It means that he was changed into a completely new heart. When God saved us, He also completely changed the hearts of us who were saved. Dear fellow believers, I ask you not to forget or ignore that. Our Lord has given us a new heart. He has made us do new things. Still, might it be that because our flesh is strong, we ignore it when our Lord gives us a righteous heart and gives us strength to do righteous work? When our Lord raises up a righteous heart in our hearts and makes us do righteous work, when He leads us, we must obey. God has raised up in us a heart to do many right things and has made us do the work. It means that God works that way in you and me. Dear fellow believers, I ask you not to follow only the flesh. If, saying that you have received the remission of sins, your heart sinks into the world, it sinks without end. And when the heart sinks into the world, there is absolutely no peace in the heart of the person who has received the remission of sins; the heart is uneasy and distressed. It is more distressing than serving the Lord. When the heart sinks into

the world, there is no satisfaction. When the heart is not kept, distress comes. And instead of everything going well, things do not go well. In the end one falls into a great snare. But if we follow the Lord, doing righteous work and serving righteous work as the Lord raises up a righteous heart in us, then though it is hard and difficult, our Lord leads us on the way of peace and leads us on the way of blessing. It means that you must know that God has raised up such a heart in us.

We must know that this is not because we are righteous, but because the Lord has put such a heart in your hearts and in my heart. Might there not be, among those who have received the remission of sins, some who, even after receiving the remission of sins, are always bound to the world, wondering how they will live, what they will eat, and what they will drink, and simply stake their lives on what they have? With what you have, you can never live abundantly. Do you think that if you have a lot of money you will live abundantly? People without money will think so—that if they have a lot, they will live their whole lives without much worry. But money depends on how it is used. If your heart says, "I have this much, and whatever happens I will just scrape by on this," then you will not do what is right your whole life. You will spend your whole life focused on making a living, and then die. But if you live for the Lord, even if you have nothing of your own, you live richly, you live helping others, and you live your whole life as a rich person, doing what is right and righteous. We must know what righteous work is and what way of living is truly upright. In fact, if money cannot be used for righteous purposes, it is nothing. When a person becomes a slave to money, he is degraded into a worthless human being. A person must live doing righteous work and so bring his whole life to a close.

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In the heart of this Zacchaeus there was, his whole life long, a heart that wanted to do righteousness. *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6)*. Dear fellow believers, do you want to live doing righteousness? If you truly do, if God has given you such a heart, if you want to live for righteousness, I believe that God will entrust right work to us so that we can live abundantly for righteousness and for what is right. Our God is the One who gives abundantly. That is so, as long as we have that heart that wants to live for righteousness.

There is a burden in doing what is right. But we must think about what the right work is and take part in the right work. We must know whether what we are doing now is right or not, and act accordingly. God clearly raises up a right heart in our hearts. But because we do not even think it over and are needlessly afraid, the righteous heart dies down, and we neither do righteousness nor achieve our own will, and we end up living our whole lives wretchedly. We must not be deceived. We must think about what the right work is, make it our goal, and run toward it.

Serving the gospel is the most right thing to do

We must know what is right. In this world there are exactly two things our Lord told us to commemorate. He told us to commemorate the Lord's Supper, the Passover rite, in which our Lord came to this earth and gave His body and blood and saved us from all sins. The other thing He told us to commemorate is the deed of a woman who poured fragrant oil on the head of Jesus. For Jesus' coming death on the Cross and burial, that woman broke an alabaster flask of fragrant oil and poured it on

the head of Jesus, and the Lord said that wherever this gospel is preached, what this woman had done should be commemorated. So, if we ask what the most right work in this world is, it is serving the gospel. Serving the gospel is the most right work. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? Serving the gospel is what the Lord receives most gladly, what is most worthwhile before the Lord, what is stored up as a reward before the Lord, and the work in which the best fruit is borne. It means that our Lord is most pleased with serving—whether with material goods, with prayer, with our bodies, with service, with time, or with anything—in building up the church and preaching the gospel to souls, with doing what is right for the gospel. It means that He commemorates it. After this woman met the Lord, she broke the alabaster flask of fragrant oil, bottle and all, and poured it on the head of Jesus. Then the people around her slandered and rebuked the woman, saying, "That woman is mad. Why does she break that and pour it on Jesus' head? It would have been better to sell it and give to the poor." And they also said to Jesus, how could He just sit and watch this woman doing something so unbecoming? But Jesus said that the poor would always be with them but that He would not always be with them, and said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her" (Matthew 26:13)*. It means that this woman did what is right. And it means that this is to be encouraged. We must know that what this woman did is right, and learn it. Helping poor neighbors never comes to an end however much we do it. The whole world helps poor nations, yet are there not still people starving to death even now? But while helping the flesh ends when that person leaves the world, serving this gospel of Jesus Christ does not simply end. This bears fruit. When we serve the gospel, countless people receive the remission of sins.

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This is precisely what is right. Through the service and sacrifice of those who served the gospel before us, through their doing what is right, how many people who come after us are saved! Souls receive the remission of sins because Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and bore that sin and shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment in our place. Since Jesus rose again from death and saved us, you and I believe in this salvation and preach it to other souls as well.

He delights in the faith that serves with little

What is it that the Lord praises in the Book of Revelation? It is that they kept this word with little faith. The Lord is greatly pleased when we keep our faith to the end. If we let this faith be corrupted, we come to enter into countless sufferings. Writing to the seven churches in Asia, the Lord said, *"To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7),* and said, *"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial" (Revelation 3:10). "You have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name" (Revelation 3:8)*. Our Lord exhorts us with His word that, though many of our works are seen to be not right, we must keep this faith that we have, this faith with which we are now believing His word. He is exhorting us to keep at least that remaining faith, though nothing else remains. It means that our Lord is interested in our keeping the faith, and is also interested in our serving the gospel. The Lord is interested in those who do what is right after meeting the Lord, in the Lord's people. The Lord remembers all of our following God and doing what is right, and He said of

even the smallest thing we do, even giving a cup of cold water to one of the little ones, *"He shall by no means lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42)*.

If so, we must know how greatly God acknowledges as right work the serving of the gospel by you and me. The Lord is pleased. Seeing a poor widow put two mites into the treasury, the Lord said, *"Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had" (Luke 21:3–4)*, and praised that destitute widow. It means that whether we have much or little, what matters is the heart that wants to do what is right, that follows what is right and serves what is right, the heart that hungers and thirsts for righteousness, the heart that wants to do righteousness. Dear fellow believers, take part in small works, too. Take part in great works, too. Make a habit of serving the Lord. There will keep being things to serve in, and I believe that God will grant you everything you need so that you can serve. When we serve the Lord, the Lord supplies us with everything we need so that we can serve the Lord. He supplies not only what we use to serve the Lord, but also supplies us, as an extra, with all these things we need to live on and use.

When we serve the Lord, the Lord serves us

Just as the Lord raised up a right heart in the heart of Zacchaeus, He has raised up in the hearts of us born-again saints, too, this heart that wants to live doing what is right; so the point is, let us not deny this. Let us obey this and live for righteousness. This is what is right. If you hold in your hand the tiny bit you have and live on that, you live your whole life with only that.

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But if you live by faith, serving the Lord and praying, you give more to the Lord and yet you yourself also live more abundantly. We must learn this secret. If we fret stingily over only what is our own, the Lord tells us to live our whole lives with only that. But if we serve the Lord while having nothing, the Lord fills us abundantly in order to accomplish His will. This means that when we serve the Lord, the Lord serves us. If you serve the Lord, the Lord serves you. This is the secret in our lives. This is something hidden. It is something only those who have served the Lord are meant to experience. To him who overcomes, the Lord said, *"I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it" (Revelation 2:17)*. In our Christian lives, too, the one who has served the Lord comes to experience God helping his life. Those who do not serve the Lord live only at the level of what they have. But the person who serves the Lord lives richly. Dear fellow believers, we must truly give thanks to God. This is a secret. Not only the remission of sins is a secret; this, too, is a secret.

A person of faith is different. With the same thing, for some people it amounts to no more than barely feeding themselves, but a person of faith uses it to the utmost in serving the Lord and reaps fruit dozens of times over. You have received the remission of sins. Having received the remission of sins, how will you live now? It means that if you begrudge what is yours and live holding on only to that, your property does not increase. If you live your whole life that way, you live holding on only to what is yours and then die. But if you live for the Lord, you live richly. Even after giving away, you live richly. This is what the word we have read tells us.

We do not know how much money Zacchaeus had piled up in his life. But since he was a chief tax collector, he must have

had a lot of money. When he had a lot of money, this man did not help anyone with a single penny. But after meeting the Lord, he said that he would cut off half of his property outright and share it with the poor, and said, *"If I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold" (Luke 19:8)*. It means that this man's life became rich in this way. The Zacchaeus of before and the Zacchaeus after meeting the Lord—which one lived more richly? It means that the Zacchaeus after meeting the Lord lived richly. This is a rich man. Zacchaeus lived through the Lord. It means that he, who climbed up a sycamore tree because he was so very short, recognized who Jesus was. The Lord revealed Himself to him. Jesus, too, called him. *"Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5)*. How did Jesus know Zacchaeus? Jesus had come to that town to meet Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus lived richly. He lived rightly.

We who have received the remission of sins must know that we are fundamentally to serve the Lord. We must know that this is the very basic and normal life of the righteous who have received the remission of sins. If we who have received the remission of sins do not serve the Lord, the Lord does not serve us either. Our Lord also serves the one who serves the Lord. The word says, *"Give, and it will be given to you" (Luke 6:38)*. Our Lord says that this is God's rule. If you want to be loved by the people of the world, serve the world. If you want to receive grace from God, serve God. We receive our remission of sins through faith, but as for our reward, we reap what we sow. *"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven –ASV" (Matthew 5:10)*. Those who serve the Lord are served by the Lord. Those who have served the world suffer because of the world. We must know this. Whether to do it or not depends on the person himself, and it is

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between God and you. Dear fellow believers, try serving the Lord. The Lord will never leave you as you are. He will repay you in some way and clothe you with grace, so that you will receive from the Lord more service than you have rendered to the Lord. It means that those who have served know this. It means that the Lord does not work directly but, borrowing the hands of us saints who have received the remission of sins, borrowing our mouths, borrowing our legs, eyes, and ears, does through us all the work He wants to do, and gives more blessings to everyone who has been used, so that they bear more fruit and He can use them more. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? This is God's principle.

Dear beloved saints, the Lord raises up a right heart in us for what is right, so I ask you to follow that right heart. I ask you to live the rest of your lives righteously. I hope that you will not live in vain. I ask you to live uprightly. Do you want happiness? Follow the Lord. Happiness is as good as already secured. Do you want to live receiving blessings? Follow the Lord. That is guaranteed. God has raised up in us a righteous heart that wants to do righteousness. Even now our God is raising up a righteous heart in us. Because we have a right heart that wants to serve the Lord in this and wants to do that, if we do not do righteousness, if we do not serve the Lord even for a single day, our hearts are so distressed that we cannot bear to live. Is it so with you, too? God has raised up a righteous heart in us. He has given you and me a heart that wants to live rightly. We praise and give thanks to our God. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Have faith like Zacchaeus

< Luke 19:1–10 >

“Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.’ So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, ‘He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.’ Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.’”

Zacchaeus, who climbed up the sycamore tree

I would like to speak about Zacchaeus in Luke chapter 19. Dear fellow believers, you know Zacchaeus well, don’t you? Among those who believe in Jesus, there would be no one who does not know Zacchaeus. This word is the very passage in

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which Zacchaeus climbed up a sycamore tree to see Jesus. It is a well-known passage, as Zacchaeus the tax collector, who climbed up the sycamore tree because he wanted to see Jesus, appears even in a hymn. Zacchaeus accepted Jesus and received a blessing, and by welcoming Jesus into his heart, he underwent an amazing and great change. This event of Zacchaeus gives us a tremendously amazing lesson. It says, *"Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho" (Luke 19:1)*. 'Jericho' has the meaning of fragrance, and it refers to this world. Spiritually speaking, that Jesus entered the region of Jericho, which has the meaning of fragrance, in the nation of Israel means that our Lord left the throne of the kingdom of heaven and came into this world.

It says, *"Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.' So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully" (Luke 19:2–6)*.

Looking at the personal details of Zacchaeus, this man was a chief tax collector and very rich. That he was a chief tax collector means that he was the head of the office that collected taxes. Since his salary was fixed, it would have been usual for him to have just enough property to live on moderately; but seeing that Zacchaeus was tremendously rich, he had sat in a key post and pocketed a great deal of money under the table.

That this man Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector and rich means that Zacchaeus was a person who had worldly status and also a person who had a great deal of material wealth. The weak point of such a Zacchaeus was that he was short. Zacchaeus, who

had an interest in Jesus, hearing that Jesus happened to be passing through the region of Jericho, where he lived, climbed up a sycamore tree with the thought, "On this occasion, let me at least take a look and see clearly what kind of person Jesus is," and came to see Jesus. At that time, from under the sycamore tree, Jesus said, *"Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5)*. When Zacchaeus came down very quickly, received Jesus into his house, and served Him a meal, an amazing change took place in his heart. The amazing change took place in which he said, "If I have extorted anything from anyone—that is, if I have taken anything away from anyone—I will repay it fourfold, and I will also give half of my possessions to the poor."

We are now looking at the word concerning Zacchaeus. When Jesus told Zacchaeus, who was up in the sycamore tree, to come down, what did Zacchaeus do? He quickly came down from the sycamore tree. He quickly came down from the sycamore tree and a change took place; what does this word say in the Bible? Verse 10 tells us this: *"The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10)*. This becomes the word that the Lord, who came to seek and to save the lost—that is, Jesus—came to this earth seeking such a person as Zacchaeus and saved such a person. Jesus, who came to find you and me, who have sin like Zacchaeus, had the sin of the world transferred to Him once and for all with the baptism He received from John, and by bearing that sin and shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, He received in our place the judgment we were to receive. When we believe in Jesus, who rose again from death, as our own Savior, we, too, receive the remission of sins and undergo a change of heart.

Looking at Zacchaeus, we see that he was a person with strengths and weaknesses: he was a chief tax collector, he was

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rich, and he was short. But regardless of such human conditions, it is clear that the heart of Zacchaeus was turned toward Jesus. We can know this when we see that when Jesus told Zacchaeus to come down, Zacchaeus came down in great haste. Through this word we must know how Zacchaeus was able to meet the Lord and how he was able to receive such a change of heart. Zacchaeus was, in worldly terms, tremendously rich and also had a position, and as a human shortcoming he was short; but when our Lord told him to come down, he came down at once without hesitation. This means that, whatever kind of person Zacchaeus was, he recognized who Jesus was. Having usually only heard by word of mouth who Jesus was, he met Him in person and knew that He was the Savior the people of Israel had been waiting for, who would save them from all their sins and circumstances. Zacchaeus accepted this fact in his heart. That is why Zacchaeus was able to receive Jesus the Savior into his heart and obtain salvation.

But if, when Jesus said, "Zacchaeus, come down," Zacchaeus had thought, "My goodness, how does He know my name?" and come down from the sycamore tree, and it had ended with his merely receiving Jesus into his house and serving Him a meal, it would have had no meaning at all. But when we look at the words this man Zacchaeus said to Jesus after he had received and welcomed Jesus into his house, a very amazing change had taken place in the heart of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus said that he would cut off half of the wealth he had and distribute it to the poor, and he said that if he had extorted anything, he would repay it fourfold.

Everyone has a handicap

When we hear this word of the Bible, we must know what it says spiritually and what change it causes to take place spiritually. This is because this very word is a word spoken to you and me. You and I are, like Zacchaeus, people who have much of the world's wealth, honor, and material things, and we are also people who have some human weakness and fault. Therefore, we must know the reason why such an amazing change took place when Zacchaeus met the Lord, and we, too, must receive the blessing of a great change of heart like Zacchaeus. I am not now trying to say that you and I should distribute the property we have and help the poor. Rather, in this age, you should guard well what you have. Many people, holding the firm preconception that a Christian believer, as a matter of course, must unconditionally help the poor and do many good deeds, think that the sermons of worldly Christianity will flow in that direction. But the Bible rather speaks contrary to such things. Helping the poor and helping the pitiable are things that the religious people of other religions in this world can do far better than Christian believers, and quietly at that. This Bible is not speaking of such things.

The Bible speaks about our lives and about us human beings, and it tells us of the things most important to a person: salvation from sin, eternal life, and the way to go to heaven. That is why, when we hear this word, we must hear it casting away our own thoughts, and must connect it well to see what this word really has to do with ourselves. Do you, too, have wealth, honor, and also physical weaknesses, or not? Everyone has them. A tall person has human weaknesses of his own, in his own way. All of us have shortcomings that cannot be known by wealth, honor, and outward appearance alone.

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In fact, whether in such outward aspects or in inward aspects, everyone has a handicap. There are some people who have a great deal of money and are rich, and who also look quite fine physically, but who could not attend school for long and so have a low level of education. So don't stories occasionally appear in the newspapers about such people, saying that someone went back to high school at an advanced age and graduated thirty or forty years later, or that someone who had never even set foot on the threshold of a university was given an honorary diploma by some university? This means that everyone has at least one area in which he is lacking, whether worldly or physical.

While Zacchaeus had climbed up the sycamore tree and was looking down, Jesus told Zacchaeus to come down. Then why would Zacchaeus have climbed up the sycamore tree? Because he had a physical handicap, he clambered up the sycamore tree to try to see Jesus. A sycamore tree usually grows well even lying sideways in this way. Jesus was passing under that sycamore tree. As Jesus passed under the sycamore tree in that way, His heart connected with that of Zacchaeus.

Truly, Zacchaeus had been waiting for someone in his heart. He was waiting for such a person as this: someone whom he could respect, someone who would solve his problem of sin, since he had committed many sins, someone who would also restore his honor, someone who would give him salvation, give him eternal life, and give him blessing. Zacchaeus came to see that Jesus passing by from up in the sycamore tree, and Jesus, looking up from right under the sycamore tree that Zacchaeus had climbed, said, *"Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5)*. So that heart of Zacchaeus connected with the heart of Jesus. Zacchaeus met Jesus and underwent a change of heart. Their hearts had connected.

Jesus is the Creator and the Savior

Dear fellow believers, what grace did Zacchaeus receive? When Zacchaeus met Jesus, he did not merely meet Jesus physically and respect Him, but recognized Him spiritually. Zacchaeus, who recognized who Jesus was, came to receive grace in his heart. Jesus is the Son of God, who came to save mankind from sin, and the Creator of all things in this universe. We believe in Jesus, and we must not think of Jesus as one of the sages of the world. Jesus is the Master of creation, who made all things in this universe. And He is the Savior, who came to save people from sin. He is the Savior, who came to this earth to save you from all sins. He is the Messiah, who removed our sins, changed us from the status of sinners to the status of the righteous, transformed us into children of God, and gave us blessing. Zacchaeus, who met such a Jesus, who would take responsibility for his past, present, and future as well, received all that grace the Lord could give.

What does it mean that Jesus went into the house of Zacchaeus? It means that Jesus, too, recognized that Zacchaeus was seeking the Savior, and Zacchaeus, too, recognized Jesus the Savior. And that Jesus went into the house of that Zacchaeus means that Zacchaeus received Jesus into his heart, and that Jesus, too, went into the heart of that Zacchaeus. In other words, this says that Jesus Christ gave Zacchaeus not only true salvation from sin but also all the blessings of eternal life.

What do we think of Jesus? To the question, *"Who do you say that I am?" (Luke 9:20)*, we must be able to confess, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*. We must know Him in that way.

People explore the universe and try to know it, but who is the One who made that universe? It is Jesus. What does the word

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Jesus mean? It means Savior. The term Jesus Christ means the One who is God, the King of kings, and the Master of creation, who made all things in the universe, and who came to this earth as our Savior. That is why He is called Jesus Christ. So when we say that we believe in Jesus, we are believing in God Himself. And in believing in that God, it means that we believe in Him not merely as God, but as the God of salvation, who came to save you from destruction and the curse, to make you children of God, and to give you blessing.

What did Jesus do for you when He came to this earth for you? Jesus saved you and me from sin. And He gave us the blessing of becoming children of God.

The reason Jesus received baptism from John

Our Lord received baptism from John the Baptist in order to remove your sins and mine. In the Gospel of Matthew there appears the scene in which Jesus receives baptism from John. *"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him" (Matthew 3:13–16).* You must know what Jesus gave you when He came to this earth. Jesus came to this earth, bore your sins, died on the Cross, and rose again from death, and so became your true Savior. Since He took away your sins and received the judgment for you, God has given you the blessing

of becoming children of God. Jesus promised that He would come to this earth to save you and me, and He actually was born on this earth clothed in human flesh, and when He turned thirty, He received baptism from John. As Jesus said when He received baptism from John, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, Jesus received baptism and bore your sins and mine. This means that Jesus received baptism from John in order to bear your sins and mine. God, who was pleased with that work, said, when Jesus received baptism from John and came up from the water, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)*.

How did Jesus, coming to this earth, remove your sins and mine, and how did He become our Savior? How did He remove the sins of Zacchaeus as well? In order to remove the sins of you and me and of Zacchaeus, Jesus came to this earth and received baptism from John the Baptist at the age of thirty. Baptism is the word 'baptizo (βαπτίζω),' and it has the meanings 'to immerse, to be submerged, to be washed, to bury.' Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, and this baptism is not the abbreviated baptism of today, in which water is put in a bowl and sprinkled on the head with the fingers while saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." In the water of the Jordan River, when John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, placed both his hands on the head of Jesus and laid his hands on Him, Jesus went down into the water and came up. This is what is called immersion, or baptism.

Jesus came to this earth and received this baptism at the age of thirty; why did He receive baptism? The reason Jesus received baptism from John at the age of thirty was to fulfill all righteousness. This means that Jesus received baptism in order to do the right work of removing the sins of all people.

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What did Jesus do when He came to this earth for you and me? He bore your sins and mine by receiving baptism. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, He had the sins of all people transferred to Him. People commit sin from their mother's womb until they go into the grave, and from Adam until the last person dies on the last day; Jesus received baptism in order to take away all of these sins. However long you may live, from the age of one until you die, Jesus bore all those sins. Jesus received from John the baptism by which He bore all the sins of this world without leaving out those of a single person, and with that baptism He Himself had all sins transferred to Him and received the judgment for sin on the Cross. Thus He accomplished the whole purpose for which He came to this earth to save you and me from sin. Jesus did all that work which He had planned and promised from before the foundation of the world.

How was the heart of Zacchaeus changed? If Zacchaeus had received Jesus, thinking, "How does Jesus know my name?" and Jesus had gone into his house, had a meal, and simply passed on, saying, "Thank you. May you be richly blessed. Farewell," then there would be nothing for us to realize as we read the Bible, and even if we realized something, it would have little meaning. Because the greatest problem of all people—whether Zacchaeus, or you and me—is how to solve the sin in the heart, if that problem of sin is not solved, other things are in fact not important. Zacchaeus, you and I, and all people have numerous sins that we commit in conscience, in thought, and in deed—whether sins committed knowingly, sins committed unknowingly, sins only we ourselves know, or sins others know—and those sins are the greatest problem. Next after that problem comes the problem of not having worldly wealth and glory, of not having honor, and then after that, of having some

human weakness. Whether or not one has received the remission of sins in this life is the decisive problem that determines whether one goes to heaven or to hell in the life to come. So although Jesus performed countless mighty works and wrought miracles, the work of removing sin and ending the problem of sin stands out the most, and that is the most meaningful thing, the thing we must realize, know, and believe. Jesus came to this earth to save you and me from sin and received baptism from John in this way. Believe in the baptism by which Jesus bore all your sins so that you may receive the remission of sins in this life and go to heaven in the life to come. When were your sins passed on to Jesus? Do you, too, know that fact exactly? This word tells us that. Although you believe in Jesus and have the same Bible, you may not have heard such a sermon before. But whether you heard it long ago, hear it now, or hear it in the future, at any rate, once you hear it, you can know the truth: "Ah, Jesus did not come to this earth to save me from sin and simply die on the Cross. He did not save me merely by the blood of the Cross alone." It was not on the Cross that Jesus bore our sins, but when Jesus received baptism from John. This means that Jesus, by receiving baptism, had all your sins and mine transferred to Him.

So because Jesus received baptism, had sin transferred to Him, and made us clean, baptism has the meaning of being washed. Your sins and mine were passed on to Jesus through the laying on of hands, and so our sins were washed away. Therefore, you must know this fact: "By Jesus receiving baptism from John, your sins and mine were passed on to Jesus. Jesus received baptism and took away our sins."

Some people say that the Bible is not as precise as science. But that is said out of misunderstanding. In the Bible there is wisdom that goes beyond science. In the Bible there is an infinite amount of the knowledge and information the world needs, and

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among them the highest peak, whatever else one may say, is that Jesus removed all our sins and washed us clean to a conscience without sin.

Then when did Jesus Christ take away your sins and mine? Jesus Christ took them away by receiving baptism from John in the year He turned thirty after coming to this earth, and your sins and mine were passed on to Jesus. He said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and then it says, *"When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water" (Matthew 3:16)*. Because Jesus received baptism and bore your sins and mine, your sins and mine were passed on at this point. By believing this, all sins are washed away. Because Jesus bore this sin, He was nailed to the Cross and received the punishment for sin, that the wages of sin is death. Therefore, by believing in Jesus Christ as our own Savior, you and I can be perfectly saved by believing that whatever sin it may be—sins committed in the heart, sins committed in deed, or sins committed in hiding where no one knows—all were passed on to Jesus Christ and He received all the judgment in our place.

Dear fellow believers, Jesus took away all the sins of all people, without leaving out a single person. Some people believe that He took away only the sins of those chosen before the foundation of the world, but that is not so. God is the God of everyone, not the God of merely a few people. Therefore, by faith anyone can be washed from sin, escape judgment, and have a clean heart.

How was Zacchaeus able to receive a change of heart? Because your sins and mine were passed on to Jesus with the baptism when Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, all our sins were washed away. Because we believe that our sins were passed on to Jesus, the sins in your heart and mine have been washed away and there is no sin. *"Behold! The Lamb of*

God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Jesus bore the sin of the world, was nailed to the Cross, and received the punishment of the Cross, and so saved you and me from all judgment. If there had been no baptism that Jesus received from John, there would be no death on the Cross either. "*Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22)*. If Jesus had not shed His blood, there would be no remission of sins; but because Jesus had our sins transferred to Him with the baptism He received from John, He was able to shed His blood. So He died for you and me, rose again on the third day after His death, and lives forever, and even now He has become the God of those who believe in that Jesus Christ. To those who believe that the Lord came to this earth and removed your sins and mine with His baptism and the blood of the Cross, He becomes the eternal Savior. To those people who have been saved by believing in their hearts that their sins were passed on to Jesus and that Jesus received the judgment for all sins in their place, God becomes the God of salvation. Therefore, a change takes place in the heart of the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The change that takes place in the heart of the believer

What change takes place? Just as Zacchaeus, having received Jesus, said, "I will set aside half of what I have and distribute it to the poor," such a change of heart takes place. What change is that? In those who believe that our Lord received baptism from John, bore all our sins, took away our sins, washed away our sins, and received the judgment on the Cross, and so saved us perfectly, there takes place the change in which a heart that cares

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for other souls arises. Those who believe that the Lord has truly become their Savior have a heart that is so very thankful for that salvation the Lord has given, and so they cannot help but live for the souls of others. This means that the righteous, who have no sin, cannot help but do this noble work of preaching the gospel to others. And it means that, although in the past one lived unrighteously, like the worst of misers, now a new heart has arisen that can live for others.

From under the sycamore tree, Jesus said, *"Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5)*. Then Zacchaeus came down from the sycamore tree. And he received Jesus into his house and received great grace. So this Zacchaeus, having received a great blessing and a change in his heart, made such a confession.

When Jesus looked at Zacchaeus and told him to come down, Zacchaeus came down immediately. What about you? You, too, are people like Zacchaeus, who have honor, wealth, and human handicaps as well. What if the Lord asked you, who are like this, "Come down. I must stay at your house. I have saved you. I want to come into your heart"? Whether you and I are outstanding or inadequate, can we at any rate obey the word of the Lord and open our hearts to the Lord immediately? Dear fellow believers, when the Lord says that He has saved you and me with the water and the Spirit, do you accept it with thanks? There is a great blessing for the one who, like Zacchaeus in this word, recognizes Jesus, believes in Him, and follows Him. The person who truly accepts it by faith and with thanks becomes a wonderful child of God. *"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)*. And he receives amazing blessings both in this life and in the life to come.

Do not make excuses but come down immediately

Dear fellow believers, the Lord says that He has saved you and me with the water, the blood, and the Spirit. When we accept in our hearts the word that the Lord has removed your sins and mine and made us children of God, a great change comes upon our hearts. Because the Lord has removed our sins, making us as clean as white snow, and made us children of God, you and I must truly come down to Jesus and, according to the word of the Lord, say, "Yes, I believe," and truly become people who have faith like Zacchaeus. Whether one's position is high or low, whether one's honor is lofty or one bears much disgrace, whether one's human weaknesses and faults are many or few, everyone must believe in his heart in that gospel by which Jesus has saved us with the water, the blood, and the Spirit. Some people, while saying that they believe in Jesus as the Savior, believe without knowing the fact that Jesus removed all their sins with the baptism He received and the blood of the Cross and caused them to be born again of water and the Spirit. And some people, because they think themselves so great, cannot accept Jesus into their hearts as their Savior and cannot believe. They think like this: "I am a person with such honor in the world; would I pettily go to church?" There really are many such people in the world. There are people who do not believe even when the word of God comes down to them, saying, "I would go to a big church; would I really attend such a tiny church as this? I would go to a big church to believe in Jesus; could I come to a church as small as a speck and believe in Jesus?" That is nothing more than one of the excuses of the many people who do not believe in the truth of Jesus. Some do not believe because they have too much money, and there are also cases where some cannot believe in Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood, as their

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Savior because they are too lacking. Those who, when they hear the word of God, are blocked by all sorts of such human thoughts and excuses and do not believe are blocking by themselves the way by which blessing comes.

What about Zacchaeus? He, too, would have had many reasons not to believe in Jesus, but when Jesus told him to come down, Zacchaeus did not hesitate. When Jesus said, *"Today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5)*, Zacchaeus accepted it. And he quickly came down from the sycamore tree and received Jesus into his house. Dear fellow believers, it is right to accept it in your heart truly like this, by truly believing in Jesus in your heart: "It is truly so. The Lord bore all my sins. The sins I committed from the age of one to the age of ten were also passed on to Jesus, and He took away the sins I committed up to the age of twenty, and the sins I committed up to the age of thirty and forty as well; and I do not know when my life will end, but I believe that the Lord came to this earth, had my sins up to that time transferred to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John, and was nailed to the Cross once and for all, and so saved me." If the word of the Lord says so, then whatever your circumstances may be, you must come right down from your place and believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior. You must believe like this, like Zacchaeus. When Jesus tells a person to come down in his heart, setting aside all his circumstances, the one who, whatever his status may be, comes down immediately and believes immediately receives the blessing.

Dear fellow believers, the Lord has saved you and me with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is the truth. He said, *"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)*, and this water refers to the baptism Jesus received from John. The gospel of the water and the Spirit speaks of the fact that Jesus became a man, bore your sins and

mine by receiving baptism, received the judgment for sin on the Cross, and so saved you and me. Yet how could it be right not to believe in your heart and to make other excuses? I ask you to examine well what you truly are before God. Could I perhaps put forward this excuse or that excuse before God, for fear that my dignity might be lowered, or displaying a sense of superiority or inferiority because I am so outstanding or so inadequate? Rather than making excuses before God, it is wise simply to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the truth that the Lord has given. The Lord knows everything about you and me. He knows well how weak you are, He knows well how proud you are, and He knows well what your problems are. Therefore, when He says that the Lord came to this earth, received baptism from John, bore the sin of the world, was nailed to the Cross, fully accomplished the judgment for sin and died, and rose again on the third day after His death, and thus saved you and me, all we need to do, on our part, is to believe, saying, "I believe. Since the Lord tells me to come down like this, I come down, and since He says He has saved me like this, I believe that truth." Everyone must have the faith that believes in the salvation God has given you and me by obeying it with true faith. Do you believe?

Dear fellow believers, this is not just a sermon. It is a sermon, but it is a word with the power of life, by which sin disappears only when you actually believe it in your heart. It speaks of reality to people who have sin in their hearts.

If you go to a general hospital and visit the psychiatry department, the doctor in charge asks the patient, "What ails you that brought you here?" "I came because my head hurts." Then the doctor asks various things, such as, "What is your occupation? How old are you? How are things at home? Have you ever failed in business? Have you ever suffered a shock?" Then the patient answers them all. The doctor writes down carefully what the

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patient has answered. And then he gives a prescription accordingly. Dear fellow believers, it is said that Jesus is a physician. The physicians of the world come to know by asking about and writing down the symptoms, but Jesus already knows all the problems. He knows all about your problem of sin, and He knows all about how you suffer because of sin and are cursed because of sin. He also knows all about how you serve as slaves of the devil because of sin, and He knows all about how, though you hate sin, you keep committing sins you do not want to commit. He knows all about how there is sin in your heart that does not disappear even when you repent. Because the Lord knows everything, He came to this earth and, without asking us, had your sins and mine, all the sin of mankind, transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John. Whether the sins of some dictator or the sins of any person, Jesus bore them all through the baptism He received from John. If someone's conscience seems good and he seems to be without blemish and perfect, that person is the very hypocrite and false one. Speaking of people just as they are, there is no one who is not vicious and evil. Everyone is vicious and evil. Since all people were born sinners through one man's sin, we human beings are born with the twelve sins and live bearing the fruits of the twelve sins all year round, through all four seasons, and then die. Our Lord bore such sins of yours and mine once and for all by receiving baptism from John once and for all. *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. And bearing the sin of the world once and for all, He was nailed to the Cross, received all the judgment for sin, shed His blood, and said, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*. And Jesus Christ, who rose again on the third day after His death, testified for forty days, and went up into heaven before the eyes of His disciples, is your Savior and mine. He came to this earth to remove your sins and mine,

and through His life of thirty-three years He removed all the sins not only of you and me but of all the people living on this earth, and so saved us perfectly in this way.

When the Lord has done this for us, if you and I make this or that excuse and say that we cannot believe, we are deceiving God. "I am too embarrassed to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. I have already believed in Jesus, so how can I believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit? Of course there is sin in my heart, but if I believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit anew, wouldn't that be embarrassing? My position is fine right now, and my situation now is not one in which I can believe in Jesus again. Because my office has now become very high, even though I have not been born again, I am a high person." Are you perhaps like this? If so, you must remember the fact that when Jesus said to Zacchaeus, *"Zacchaeus, make haste and come down" (Luke 19:5),* Zacchaeus came down. And when Jesus said, *"Today I must stay at your house,"* Zacchaeus received Jesus right away. In the same way, you and I, too, must receive by faith that Jesus Christ who saved us.

My Savior, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. The Lord came to this earth, received baptism from John and bore my sins, died on the Cross for me, and rose again from death and saved me. We must accept Jesus into our hearts by faith, saying in our hearts, "The Lord is the God of my salvation. He is my Savior." With what faith? Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John and bore our sins once and for all, was nailed to the Cross once and for all and shed His blood and died, and through His thirty-three years of life saved you and me once and for all, perfectly, from sin, from destruction, from the curse, from every weakness, and from the devil. By believing that in our hearts, we must be saved just as Zacchaeus was. This word is speaking of that. It is not telling us to do good deeds.

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When we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins, we are so very thankful for the grace God has given. How thankful we are that the Lord received baptism and bore all our sins! Out of gratitude and thanks, such a right heart arises that wants to preach this gospel to others. And it speaks of the change of heart in which, though one has done many bad things until now, one now wants to do right things because a new heart has arisen. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

Dear fellow believers, do you and I commit many sins, or not? We do. Especially for modern people living in this age, sin has become so everyday and familiar that to discuss sin with modern people and tell them not to sin is the greatest of discourtesies. We must know how precious the truth of the water and the Spirit is that the Lord has given us in such an age.

The Lord said that He saved you and me by water and blood. He said that He saved us by Jesus receiving baptism from John and dying on the Cross. Now what is important is whether you have in your heart the faith that truly believes in Jesus as your Savior. Jesus requires such faith of you. However much Jesus has saved you from sin, if you do not accept Jesus in your heart, it is of no use. When Jesus received baptism from John, my sins, too, were passed on. Jesus took away not only my sins but all your sins as well. Since Jesus took away not only our sins but also the sins of our children, the sins of our parents, and the sins of all people, Jesus told us to spread this gospel of the water and the Spirit to all people in the whole world. Since Jesus has removed all our sins, and we receive the remission of sins by believing in that Jesus Christ, this means that we must accept Jesus Christ as the Savior by faith. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

Dear fellow believers, did you commit sins during this past week, or not? You did. If we gather again next Sunday and I ask, "Did you commit sins during the week, or not?" all of you will again answer, "We did." Has Jesus removed not only the sins committed until now but even the sins to be committed in the future, or not? He has. Then how did Jesus remove all sins? Did He remove them by being nailed to the Cross? By being nailed to the Cross, Jesus received the judgment; but it was when He received baptism from John that Jesus bore your sins. We must know this properly. That is why He said, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32)*, and He said, *"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)*.

The words 'the water and the Spirit' appear many times in the Bible. In Titus there appears the word *"the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5)*, and in 1 Peter it nails it down firmly, saying, *"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)*. Therefore, people must have the faith that truly believes in their hearts in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Since Jesus received baptism from John and bore all the sin of the world that all mankind commits throughout their whole lives, bore the sin of the world and received the judgment for sin in your place, and rose again on the third day after His death and became your Savior and mine, you must truly believe this fact in your heart.

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With the heart one believes unto righteousness

Although God is alive and created this universe, if there is no heart in you and me that fundamentally believes in God, then even God, who created heaven and earth, is not in your heart. But if there is in your heart faith that believes in God, and a heart that believes this word of God, then God has a great deal to do with you. To believe and follow, just as it is written in the Bible, that Jesus did the saving work of the remission of sins is to receive God into one's heart. If you and I read the written word of God with our eyes, hear it with our ears, confirm and know it through sermons, and believe in God, then we also believe in what He has done. By that faith we are saved.

God said, *"With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10)*. He said that with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and to become righteous is for all one's sins to disappear and to be acknowledged as right before God. In order to remove all sins and become righteous, a lamb, a sacrificial offering, was needed. This testifies that Jesus Christ, who came as the sacrificial offering, is the Savior who accomplished this work. Jesus Christ came to this earth as the Lamb of God, bore the sin of the world by receiving baptism from John, died on the Cross, and saved you and me. So the righteousness of God, which is the right work of God, is the baptism Jesus received from John and the Cross. In Greek, the word 'dikaiosune (δικαιοσύνη)' means 'justice, righteousness.' The Son of God came to this earth and did a just work in order to save you and me. He did not come and say, "I will save only you whom I like and send all the rest straight to hell"; rather, the Lord Himself came to this earth to save you and me from sin, came to this earth clothed in human flesh, justly received baptism from John and

bore sin, received the judgment for sin on the Cross, and rose again from death, and so saved all mankind justly.

We should no longer fall into wrong religion and believe wrongly, but believe just as the Lord has justly saved us and accept it in our hearts. He has saved us righteously, and what is truly important is whether you and I lay everything down and believe in that Lord in our hearts, or not. Dear fellow believers, do you believe in God? Do you believe in what God has done, what Jesus Christ has done?

Dear fellow believers, in believing in the Lord, we must know and believe through the word. How were your sins passed on to Jesus Christ? They were passed on when Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist. Such a word is clearly and precisely recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. When we see this word recorded in the New Testament, we must know this word as it is and accept it as it is. Just as Zacchaeus came down when the Lord said, *"Zacchaeus, make haste and come down" (Luke 19:5)*, when the Lord says that He removed all your sins and mine when He received baptism from John and so fulfilled all righteousness, we must believe it right away in our hearts, just so. 'So when Jesus received baptism and came up from the water, He had our sins transferred to Him with the baptism in this way. That is why it says in the Gospel of John, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. That is why He was nailed to the Cross, saying, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*, and shed His blood and died, and rose again on the third day after His death. That is how He became our Savior.' Dear fellow believers, you must believe in your hearts in this way. Although Zacchaeus was rich, was a person with honor, and was a person with a handicap, he believed in Jesus as his Savior, and by believing in what the Lord had done, he received the blessing of a change of heart. Dear fellow believers, I want such a blessing to come upon

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you, too, by believing in the Lord's gospel of the water and the Spirit in your hearts like Zacchaeus. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Wait for the King who will come again and be faithful in the work entrusted to you

< Luke 19:11–27 >

"Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore He said: 'A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, "Do business till I come." But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, "Master, your mina has earned ten minas." And he said to him, "Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities." And the second came, saying, "Master, your mina has earned five minas." Likewise he said to him, "You also be over five cities." Then another came, saying, "Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put

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away in a handkerchief. For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow." And he said to him, "Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?" And he said to those who stood by, "Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas." (But they said to him, "Master, he has ten minas.") "For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me."'"

When we think that what we have been waiting for will soon be accomplished, it is easy to reckon first what we will receive afterward. The work that actually must be done until that day looks small, and if the result does not appear quickly, the waiting itself feels meaningless. When they had come near Jerusalem, people thought the kingdom of God would appear right away. In the face of that expectation, Jesus spoke about a nobleman who went away to receive a kingdom and the silver he entrusted to his servants. This parable leads the heart that asked only when the good day would come to the place of examining what we have been entrusted with and are living out today, believing in the Lord who will come again.

Wait for the King who will come again
and be faithful in the work entrusted to you

The people who expected the kingdom to appear right away

Luke first tells us the reason Jesus spoke this parable. *"Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately" (Luke 19:11).*

The fact that Jerusalem had drawn near and the thought that the kingdom of God would be revealed right away were not the same thing. People put their own expectations first as they saw the shortened distance, but Jesus knew the work He would accomplish and the time the disciples would live through after that. The story of the nobleman who went into a far country to receive a kingdom and then returned corrects their hasty thinking. That there is a time of waiting does not mean that the king will not come, but means that in the meantime the servants must live according to the word of their master.

We, too, while believing in the Lord, sometimes put ahead of the word the expectation that our circumstances must soon change. When the change we expected is slow, we regard even the grace we have already received as small, but the promise of the Lord does not become true only when it fits our schedule. The faith that the King will return does not let us leave today's life empty, but makes us carry out the work entrusted to us today according to the will of the Lord.

The command to do business with what was entrusted until he returns

Before leaving, the nobleman called his servants and entrusted the silver to them. *"So he called ten of his servants,*

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delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come'" (Luke 19:13).

He gave ten minas to ten servants, and the servants who appear later each tell what they did with the master's one mina. The master did not demand that they produce something out of nothing without giving them anything. There was first something entrusted, and there was the clear intention that they do business with it until he returned. Only when there is a heart that recognizes what one has received can the command be accepted not as an unfair demand but as work entrusted to us.

Just as each servant received the same one mina, we, too, have received the same salvation from the Lord, and our service begins there. Jesus came to this earth and, receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, had all the sins of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. Since the sins we commit throughout our whole lives were passed on to Jesus at that time without exception, the Lord bore those sins, was hung on the Cross, and shed His blood and died, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death and became the eternal Savior. Into the heart of the person who has received the remission of sins in this way, the Lord gives the Holy Spirit, and He has also given the strength to live by faith and the talents to serve the gospel. This is the one mina entrusted to us.

There is no need to complete again by our own strength the salvation the Lord has accomplished. But we who have received that grace can offer our life, time, and talents for the will of the Lord, instead of using them only for our own desires. Helping those who preach the word, praying together, and explaining the gospel we have heard to those close to us are also ways of participating in the grace we have received. The word that it is

until the master returns becomes an exhortation not to keep putting off such service to some vague later day.

The repayment of the king, who recognized faithfulness in a small thing

The master, who returned having received the kingdom, called his servants and asked how they had done business. When the first servant said that he had earned ten minas with the master's one mina, this is how the master spoke: *"And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities'" (Luke 19:17).*

The second servant also said that he had made five minas with one mina, and the master put him over five cities. The two servants did not compare each other's results and speak of their own superiority, but confessed that they had worked with what the master had entrusted. Nor did the master rebuke the second servant for the reason that he had earned less than the first. The labor they had done with what was entrusted to them, following the will of the master, was remembered before the king, and greater responsibility was given to them.

As we hear this word, we must not give up the work given to us after comparing it with the work of others. Even labor that is not seen, if it is work needed for the gospel to be preached, we can carry out with thanks. That said, it is not that the person who has worked more buys a greater salvation. The remission of sins is the grace received by believing in the salvation the Lord has accomplished, and the faithfulness this parable urges is the attitude of valuing the will of the King in the life that has received that grace.

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The servant who hid what was entrusted to him, using fear as an excuse

Another servant kept the master's one mina wrapped in a handkerchief and brought it out just as it was. He said that the master was austere, collecting what he did not deposit and reaping what he did not sow, but the master judged his attitude by those very words. *"And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?'" (Luke 19:22–23).*

It is a rebuke that if he had really feared him so, he should at least have put the money in the bank. The explanation of the servant became words excusing himself for having done nothing with what was entrusted to him, rather than proving what kind of person the master was. Although the master had already entrusted the silver to him, that servant turned away from that grace and the intention of the entrusting. In the end, the one mina that servant had was taken away and given to the servant who had ten minas.

For us, too, there are times when the image of the Lord we have been accustomed to thinking of obscures the word. If we regard the Lord as One who always only takes away, we forget the love with which He gave up His body for us and come to resent even serving. Therefore, the more fear we have, the more we must look again at the work by which He saved us and ask for help. Rather than hiding away a heart that worries about not doing well, believing in the King who gave what we have received and starting from small things is the response of faith. Admitting one's lack and relying on the Lord is clearly different

from blaming the master and refusing the intention behind what was entrusted.

The heart that desires the kingdom but does not want the King

In the parable, along with the settling of accounts with the servants, another group of people appears. They are the citizens who, as soon as the nobleman left, sent a delegation to oppose his becoming king. *"But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us'" (Luke 19:14)*.

The people who were hearing this word were hoping that the kingdom of God would appear right away. Yet when the One who was to become the King of that kingdom entered Jerusalem, many among them abandoned Him. Within them was the heart that desired the blessing the kingdom gives but did not want the King of that kingdom to rule. Today we, too, can have the same heart. We want to receive salvation and peace, but when the word of the Lord tries to subdue our will, we feel it as interference, and so we put off the command to live according to His will until the King returns.

The Lord did not hide the end of that heart. *"But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27)*. This is the judgment that will come upon those who do not believe in the Lord to the end and refuse His rule; it is not a word that drives saints whose service is lacking into a corner. The weak conduct of a saint and the unbelief that refuses the Savior to the end are not the same thing. Even if our deeds are lacking, we can acknowledge Jesus as King in our hearts, believe in Him, and follow Him, and the

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Lord accepts that heart. Since the authority of judgment belongs to the Lord, neither does it become grounds for a person to harm others in the name of the Lord. We must examine our hearts before the word, gladly accept the rule of the King who gave us life, and obey His will.

To the people who hoped the kingdom would appear right away, the Lord taught faithfulness during the time of waiting, serving the King as King. For us today, too, instead of time to stand envying another's portion, there is a place to serve with what has already been entrusted to us. Looking to the King who will come again, let us treasure the gospel we have received and preach it. The person who gives thanks to the Lord, who remembers small labors, and starts by faith the work to be done today will hear the word that he is a good servant on the day the King returns. ✉

Wait for the King who will come again
and be faithful in the work entrusted to you

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord is the King of kings

< Luke 19:11–27 >

"Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore He said: 'A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, "Do business till I come." But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, "Master, your mina has earned ten minas." And he said to him, "Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities." And the second came, saying, "Master, your mina has earned five minas." Likewise he said to him, "You also be over five cities." Then another came, saying, "Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow." And he said to him, "Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might

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have collected it with interest?" And he said to those who stood by, "Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas." (But they said to him, "Master, he has ten minas.") "For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me."'"

The servants who did business with one mina

There is in us a heart that wants to reckon up the days gone by and come before God anew. When we reckon them up, there are things we did well and things we did poorly. In this word our Lord said that a certain noble person came to go into a far country to receive royal authority and return. As that master went to the far country, he called ten servants and gave them one piece of money each. And it says that he went away telling them to do business well with this money and, when he returned, to have earned much and give it back to him, since it was what he had given them. But among the citizens there were people who did not want their master to become king. At any rate, the master left, and the servants went on living. Some of the servants did business very well. One earned ten minas with the one mina the master had given and offered it, and another earned five minas. The master spoke the same way. He told them to rule over ten cities and over five cities. He gave them authority. But one person who had received one mina came and told the master that he had brought here, intact, the one piece of money that the master had given and left. As for why he had brought this money back just as it was, he said that the master was a tyrant and a very

austere man, and that he could not at all stand the master, who gave him one piece of money and told him to do business with it and offer it to him, so he had kept safe what the master had given, and since the master had returned, he had brought it.

The master severely rebuked this man, and told them to take what he had and give it to the one who had earned ten minas, and they did give it. And at the end the master said as follows: *"Bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27)*. He said to seize and slay the enemies who did not want him to become king.

This is a word of parable, and we must know that this word was spoken to you and me. Our Lord came to this earth, removed all our sins by water and blood, caused us to be saved, gave the Holy Spirit into our hearts, and gave us gifts. He gave us faith, and such abilities to do the work of God, to serve this gospel and to preach the gospel. And He told us to do business with these and went to the kingdom of God the Father. When He comes back, He will ask whether we did business well. Some brothers and sisters will say with great joy, *"Master, your mina has earned ten minas" (Luke 19:16)*. And some will rejoice greatly, saying, *"Master, your mina has earned five minas" (Luke 19:18)*. On the other hand, there will also be those who act like the person who brings back the one mina just as it was. As for the difference between the person who earned ten times as much, the person who earned five times as much, and the person who kept the one just as it was and brought it out—what God gave was the same, so how could there be such a great difference?—we can think about that point.

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The difference lies in whether one served the master as king

Why is there that difference? The person who earned ten times as much and the person who earned five times as much served their master as king. This means they served their master as the absolute king, as the ruler. Because they knew that their master was king, they really did business diligently with the money that king had given them, with that talent, and earned much. In fact, after God saved you and me from sin, He gave talents to you and me. He gave us all the abilities, the hearts, the faith, and the churches to do the work of God. In the Gospel of Matthew, this is called a talent. A talent refers to an ability. Aren't there people who have talents? God gave us not only salvation but also many talents with which we can live serving the Lord. He gave wisdom, He gave faith, He gave the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and basically He gave to you and me, every one of us, what is called the one talent, the one mina—that is, the Holy Spirit. Those who have the Holy Spirit have received, through the Holy Spirit, the talents to do the work of God. He made us do business with this. There were such things as earning much and earning little. Here, what is the difference between the person who earns much and the person who earns little? It is that there were those who served their master as king. He was their master, but he became king. While the king went to the far country on business and came back, some people served their master as king. One of the three did not serve him as king. That is why such a difference appeared later. If one's master is king, one's attitude would be different, wouldn't it? The person who gives absolute priority to the word that king has spoken, sets it as the goal of his life, and lives that way—that person is the one

who has a king. For the person who has made his master his king, the word of his master is absolute. It is an absolute command.

In living our lives of faith, we must examine whether we believe in the Lord as King, enthrone Him as King, and serve Him as King, or not. In fact, the One who saved you and me is the Lord, and even if we do not regard Him as King, the Lord is in fact King. He is the One who created all things in the universe, the One who made you and me, the One who gave life to you and me, and the One who, when you and I had fallen into sin and were to suffer destruction, came and delivered us from sin, delivered us from destruction, and gave us new life. He was originally our Master, but He delivered us from death and gave us new life. And He gave us many things. In fact, subjects all live because of the king. They live because the king gives them strength, gives them talents, and gives them material things and everything, not because the subjects are diligent. If our King is God, then we believe that we live because God has made good for us the air, the warm sunshine, the grain, all things, and all the surroundings around us, so that people can live. Above all, Jesus, our King, with the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world, including the lifelong sins of you and me, passed on to Him once and for all. Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross to receive the judgment for those sins in our place, rose again from death, and gave us the remission of sins and new life; therefore, we believe in this grace of salvation and serve the Lord as King.

There is nothing we have not received from God

In fact, you and I are not God, so were we born from our mother's womb by ourselves? After being born from our

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mother's womb, did we ourselves make the air, make the sun, make the natural environment? The only thing we have made is human culture, by which people can get along with one another and live comfortably. Even for that culture itself, the One who gave the materials is God, who is our King. There is nothing we have not received from God. All mankind has received everything from God. Everything we easily come into contact with—even your thoughts, your wisdom, your health, your faith, your having received the remission of sins, even the Holy Spirit within you, and even your life, your living in the days ahead, and the guarantee of all your future—all of it we have received from the Lord. There is nothing we have not received.

But the question is whether the attitude of our heart, the attitude of our faith, serves Him as King, serves Him as King at least in heart, or else treats Him not as King but entirely as a robber. In the eyes of the person who did not serve him as king and did not receive him as king, this master, who entrusted one piece of money and went away and then received ten and received five, is an austere man, a tyrant, and a robber who tries to receive without even giving. That person could think so because he did not receive him as king. *"For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow" (Luke 19:21)*. In the eyes of this person, it is like this: "What I have is mine; what have you given me? You have given me nothing, and I was born from my mother's womb, lived on my own, and cultivated my surroundings to live this well." But seen in the light of the truth, what is there that you and I have not received from God? Even our parents were granted to us by God, were they not? Parents, the brothers and sisters around you, this church, the work of God in this church, love in Christ, food—all of these things have come through the Lord. I think about whether we believe in the

King as King in our hearts in that way, whether we accept Him in that way.

Even if our deeds are lacking, our hearts can serve Him as King

We are people who are lacking. Our deeds cannot be perfect. We may do well and then do wrong, and we may try to do well and yet fail. We are not precise. We are not one hundred percent perfect. In everything we do, in everything we put into action, we cannot do it so perfectly once that it never needs to be touched again. Even so, the heart can be perfect by faith. All of us who are born again can have such an attitude of heart that the Lord is always in our hearts and that we keep the king's seat in our hearts empty and wish to have Him so that the Lord can sit there at any time. No one is excluded. All are people who have such qualifications, and all can live that way and do that. In action we cannot do so one hundred percent, but in heart we can. The question is how we see the Lord, who saved you and me: whether He is King to you and me, or an austere man, or a tyrant. If you and I are people who have received the remission of sins in our hearts, we believe that the Lord is truly King to us. Would there be anyone who is not so? "The Lord has given me nothing, yet what He wants from me is so much. That is why living this life is hard." Dear fellow believers, when the Lord told us to do the work of God, when He told us to serve, if we obey that word and believe and follow, He gives us the faith, the talents, and the blessings with which we can live serving. Because God gives, we receive, and with what is the Lord's we serve the Lord, with what is the Lord's we also make our living, and with what is the Lord's we give glory, do the work of God, and share with others.

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Is God not our Creator? Truly, in our hearts, because the Lord has saved us, the Lord is our King. He is the King of you and me. It is only that, because our faith is lacking, because our faith is weak, we have not treated the King perfectly as King. But in our hearts He is King. If only we could, we would want to do well, but being human, we are weak and lacking in this area and lacking in that area; that is all—in our hearts there is the heart that wants to serve Him as King. Jesus Christ is King to us. He is King to those who have received the remission of sins. Dear fellow believers, are the hearts of you and me like that? In our hearts He is King, isn't He? *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*. He is King, isn't He? It is only that we are not one hundred percent perfect and do not do well; the King is the King. Is there anyone who thinks Jesus is a tyrant? "Jesus is a tyrant. He tells me to serve every day; serving to some extent should be enough, but He tells me to keep serving; He always tells me to give; and now I have nothing left to offer, but He tells me to offer more." Is there anything like this? In fact, if we think about it carefully, the Lord gives to us, and when we eat and drink and then bring offerings to the Lord, the Lord gives more; He gives the ability and the blessing to do it and receives again—He is a God who does like this. He is our King.

But if one thinks wrongly and sees from a human point of view without faith, a point of view that does not believe the word of God, He can look like a tyrant. At any rate, they said, *"Master, your mina has earned ten minas" (Luke 19:16)*, and *"Master, your mina has earned five minas" (Luke 19:18)*; doesn't the one mina mean that He gave talents? Did He not give us everything—the talent to work, the talent to earn money, the talent to think, the talent of faith to live by faith, the Holy Spirit, our surroundings? Is it that the Lord gave you such talents and so you and I live, or is it that the Lord did not give them and they

simply came about because we developed them? Did the Lord not give them to us? If the Lord takes away even this life, we simply become a handful of dust. In fact, the Lord gave it all. Here the difference between earning much and earning little is nothing else. It is nothing but whether one honored the master in one's heart as king in that way, or not. Whether earning five, earning ten, or keeping the one just as it was, we can only earn with the talents the King has truly given; we cannot create what we do not have, can we? That you and I have faith as small as a mustard seed, that we have the faith by which we are saved—did the Lord not give that? The Lord gave it. It is a difference of heart.

The heart that does not want Him to be King must turn back

Such a heart that does not want Him to be King must turn back. Looking back on the days gone by, we may say that we bore much fruit or little fruit, but I truly want Jesus to be King to you. We must look back on that. It is true that, although I wanted Him to be King, I did not earn much because I was lacking. But in our hearts we wanted Him to be King. We also wanted to serve Him as King. If accounts are settled, there may also be someone who earned half a mina more from one. There would be no one who does not have even a heart of thanks to God. All would have a thankful heart. At any rate, He saved the likes of us, and among people more numerous than the grains of sand, He truly gave this gospel of the truth to you and me and caused us to hear and believe it, so that we, though lacking, heard and believed the gospel of the truth and were saved. The Holy Spirit is in our hearts. The trouble is that we do not follow the

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desire of the Spirit well, but the Holy Spirit is there. Because the Holy Spirit is there, we feel good as we hear the word. The person who has received the remission of sins—if he is one who believes that the Lord received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again from death, and so saved us, as the remission of his own sins—has a thankful heart before the Lord. All are thankful.

But whether we want Him to be King in our hearts, whether or not we have the heart that wants Him to be King—this is what is important. Here the master did not say to the one who made ten from one, "You are the first, you are the best," and to the one who earned five, "Why are you so lacking? Did you earn only five?" He gave the same praise to both, saying, *"Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little" (Luke 19:17)*. So there must not be the slightest hesitation in serving the Lord as our King. It is entirely natural. Lord, You are King. And we want to serve the Lord as King. Nothing else can be king to me. Material things, the opposite sex, some power, human cunning, the pleasures of this world, honor—none of these things is a true king. For me, only One who is at least as great as the Lord can be acknowledged as king; if it is not the Lord, I cannot acknowledge it. The Lord alone is my King. We have such a heart.

In this word of the Bible there are many other things too, but there was a person who did not want Him to be King. Those who did not want Him to be King were killed in the end. There was also the servant who kept the one mina just as it was and offered it just as it was. That servant, too, did not want Him to be King. "You are an austere man." Is Jesus austere and a tyrant, or is He the One who loves us and does for us everything He should do for us? He is the One who does it all for us. He is the King of love. He is the shepherd of love. He is the almighty God.

Although He has power, He never uses force on us; He is the good God who treats us very gently, leads us beside the waters of life and to green pastures where we can rest, and causes us to prosper and be blessed. Such a heart that does not want Him to be King is not right; it is wrong. It must turn back. We must want Him to be King. If you have received the remission of sins, if you believe the fact that you are truly precious, if you believe the fact that you are a child of God, then it means that Jesus Christ is the true King. There are those who already believe, and those who do not believe must now receive Him as King. If one does not receive Him as King, the result turns out this way. If one does not receive Him as King, then even though the Lord wants to give, one cannot receive, and so in the end one is placed in the situation of offering the one mina to the Lord just as it was. Then what is the conclusion in the end? It says, *"Bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27)*. The person who does not accept Jesus Christ as Savior and King ends up like that in the end. That end is destruction. Therefore, we who have received the remission of sins must live serving the Lord as King to the end. I do not know when the Lord will come, but it is a fact that the Lord is drawing near. Jesus Christ must become the true King in the hearts of you and me. Jesus Christ is King to you and me. Jesus Christ gives everything to you and me. Jesus Christ is the God who fulfills all the duties He should fulfill for you and me. If so, would you not receive that Lord as King in your hearts? Is there a heart that refuses to receive Him as King? I know there is not. He is the true King. But we are lacking.

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If we acknowledge Him as King, He gives us everything

I believe that once we receive Him as King and simply acknowledge the Lord as King, the Lord will do everything He can do for His subjects. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? If only we acknowledge Him as King, He gives wisdom when we are somewhat lacking, gives strength when we have no strength, gives ability when we have no strength to live on our own, gives a church, gives a spouse, and gives everything. The Lord is a good King. But the end of those who do not acknowledge the Lord as King is destruction. The one mina means that He gave the same salvation to all. Dear fellow believers, when we think about it, there is no way this could happen to us. Is there anyone among us who would end up like this? There is not. At the least, we come to church and hear the word, and though lacking, we still come out and want to serve, and though we are not yet mature and do this and that, in our hearts we say, "Jesus, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. I believe that You are my Savior, my King, my Creator, and the sovereign God who gives me everything." Dear fellow believers, do you have such faith? Do you believe like that? Has He given such faith to you and me, or not? He has. At the very least, He has given that much. In fact, Jesus is our King and the One who gives us everything; who else gives us air, gives us good surroundings, gives peace to our hearts, removes our sins, makes us live well, gives us food for both spirit and body, and loves us? Who on earth is there besides Jesus Christ who does so for us? The Lord alone is our God who does so for us. We are simply thankful. We acknowledge that He is King. But there has been much that was truly lacking. And we cannot say that there will be no lack as we live from now on. Since He said, *"Do not*

swear at all: neither by heaven" (Matthew 5:34), we cannot swear. We cannot swear like that, gritting our teeth and clenching both fists, that we will do well from now on. We cannot do everything well from now on. We cannot guarantee that we will do well. But one thing we can confess. We can confess that the Lord is my God and the God who saved me, and that if there is a king, the Lord is our King. As for the rest, we have the heart that asks, "God, please help us to live well in that way." Dear fellow believers, is that so? We have such a heart. If only you acknowledge Jesus Christ as King, if you acknowledge Him in your heart, Jesus will know it all and help you. And I believe that He will give you strength, give you blessing, and supply everything so that you can serve the Lord well. He is the God who surely does so. *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7)*. Who is the One who speaks to us like this and gives like this? Who is the One who works like this and gives to us whenever we ask, whenever we seek? It is Jesus Christ. We receive the Lord in our hearts and acknowledge Him. If perhaps we acknowledge Him in our hearts but fall into a place where we cannot do so in our deeds, I want Him to deliver us and lead us, and I want Him to give to you, and to give to me, the heart, the faith, the talents, the surroundings, the material things, and every blessing with which we, as subjects, can attend and serve the King well. I believe that God knows our hearts and will give everything in that way.

Only, when we examine the hearts of you and me, I hope that you will examine whether you want the Lord to be our King, whether you have the heart that wants it, and if it is somewhat lacking, that you will take time to confess, "In my heart I do want it." We acknowledge it. We confess it. I hope you will take such time and, though lacking, serve Him as King, ask for help, and

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live with the King in your hearts. Let us live well and then meet the Lord. I believe that if we give thanks before our God and, even if we have not earned ten minas, live faithfully like those servants who earned five minas, He will say that we were faithful in a very little and give us authority over many cities. I praise the Lord, who has given us such a heart and given us grace. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The man who received one mina, the one who cannot serve the Lord as King

< Luke 19:11–27 >

“Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore He said: ‘A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, “Do business till I come.” But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, “Master, your mina has earned ten minas.” And he said to him, “Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.” And the second came, saying, “Master, your mina has earned five minas.” Likewise he said to him, “You also be over five cities.” Then another came, saying, “Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put

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away in a handkerchief. For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow." And he said to him, "Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?" And he said to those who stood by, "Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas." (But they said to him, "Master, he has ten minas.") "For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me."'"

The citizens who did not want him to reign

Let us consider this together on the basis of the word we have read. I want us to live according to this word.

This word is what Jesus spoke to His disciples. *"A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come'" (Luke 19:12–13)*. He gave this charge, went away, and came back, but it is that among his citizens there were people who said, *"We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14)*. This word that the Lord spoke is the word that God actually speaks to us within the church and in this world.

The nobleman gave his ten servants one mina each, told them to do business, and left. When that master returned and settled

accounts, to the servant who had done business with one mina and earned ten minas he said in praise, *"Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities" (Luke 19:17)*, and to the servant who had made five minas with one mina he also said, *"You also be over five cities" (Luke 19:19)*. But one man did not do business; he kept the one mina wrapped in a handkerchief, and when the master returned, he brought it out just as it was and said that he had known the master was an austere man and had feared him, and that since the master was a man who collected what he did not deposit and reaped what he did not sow, he should take back what he had given. Then the master judged him to be a wicked servant and took the one mina from him, and he told them to bring those enemies who had not wanted him to reign over them and slay them before him.

What can we learn here? The servant who received one mina and kept it wrapped in a handkerchief did not trust his master or carry out the work entrusted to him. As we go on living our life of faith, what can we learn through this word? It is that there are people who believe in Jesus but do not want Jesus to become their King. It is that such people do exactly the same thing, think exactly the same thoughts, and bring about exactly the same result as the man here who kept the one mina wrapped in a handkerchief.

But it says that the person who is not like that, the person who thinks of Jesus as his King and believes in Him, does business faithfully as this word says, earns much, receives praise, and receives many blessings.

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Religions in which man is king and the faith in which the Creator is King

What do people who do not believe in Jesus think of Jesus? They do not think that Jesus is their King and their God. In religions such as Confucianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, man is king. Man is god. In the case of Hinduism, it is said that if one completely kills the self within oneself, one realizes that there is a god within oneself. So they said that one reaches nirvana, a state of selflessness. It is that when one feels no hunger at all, has no thoughts of one's own, and feels that one is completely empty inside, they say one has reached the state of a god. It is that in order to become a god oneself, one must kill all one's own thoughts and one's own stubbornness. To put it in conclusion, it is that man is god.

Hinduism places importance on the afterlife, but Confucianism says that the present life is important. Confucianism is a religion that pursues things only in the present life: living well without getting sick in the present life, not doing bad things, and teaching one's children well. Buddhism is similar to Hinduism; it says that if one pays off, with good deeds in the present life, the karma of the wrongs one did in a previous life, one will be born in the next life as a very good person, reach the state of a god, and live doing good to others.

What is the common denominator of these? It is man-centeredness. Man is king. Man is God. But Christianity is different. Christianity says that there is a Creator who made me, made you, and made this world. We are created beings made by His will. And in order to save us from sin, He came to this earth, received baptism from John for us, died on the Cross for us, and saved us. It is that He delivered us from sin, from death, from

destruction, from the curse, and from the devil, and made us children of God. Those who believe in Jesus believe this way.

Yet even among those who believe in Jesus, there are people like the man who received one mina. It is that although Jesus is their God and their King, they do not want to serve Him as such. On the throne of their hearts they themselves are king, Jesus is a being who helps them only when they need Him, and ultimately they themselves are king. There are many such people in the church. It is that there are many even among the born-again.

When we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and are born again, we receive the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts, and the person into whose heart the Holy Spirit has come is a child of God. Yet is there anyone among you who does not want Jesus to become your King? Jesus is already King; it is because, on our side, we do not acknowledge Him as King. I hope that you will truly come to acknowledge Jesus as King.

The person who has not broken his self

Let us think about what kind of person serves Jesus as King and what kind of person cannot serve Him as King. The person who cannot serve Him as King is the person who, though his heart is willing and his thoughts are earnest, has not broken his own self. It is that even while going before Jesus and believing the word of God, and even while saying that he follows the will of God, because he himself is king to himself, if there is anything at all that challenges him, he has a heart that wants to seize it and do something about it. Such people are people who do not break themselves because of the word of God. From the time people are born, there is something called one’s own self.

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There is the self of the outer man and the self of the inner man, and that is what is called pride. It is that one puts it forward before God. What about the person who has not broken himself even after receiving the remission of sins? He cannot submit to the King, cannot obey Him, and cannot be obedient to Him. It means that when the Lord speaks, it feels like interference and he becomes irritated.

Everyone who has not snapped off and thrown away his thought that he is right, his own stubbornness, or his own goodness, as one snaps a bamboo stick, is such a person. It is because he does not serve Jesus as his King. If one serves Jesus as King, what is there to be stubborn about before Him? Everything is settled by the word of the King. It is that one breaks even what one thinks is right. I hope that you will experience such things. I hope that there will be such things.

As we live our life of faith, there are times when we feel that our pride is hurt and that it is dirty and sickening, that it seems a human being cannot live as a human being at all, that we can no longer go on living a life of faith, that we have received the remission of sins but it seems we cannot live like a human being.

That is that one cannot acknowledge Jesus Christ as King. It is that one has still not come down from the seat of the king. Jesus is King, but even before we were born, we ourselves were king. We must come down from that seat and seat Jesus on the throne, and we must acknowledge Him as our Master, saying, "The Lord is my Lord, the Christ, the Son of the living God. O Creator, O Master who made me, O Lord who saved me from sin, You are the Lord who rules over my life and death, my fortune and misfortune." But it is that one is still king oneself, just as when one was in the religions of the world. Because one is king oneself, one comes not to acknowledge Jesus even though He is King.

Such a person is exactly the same as the man who received one mina. What kind of people must we become? We must become people who believe in Jesus in their hearts, people who can break their own stubbornness, thoughts, self, and everything else at any time if it is said that the King is pleased with it. We are lacking, and at times we fall and often act stubbornly, but it is that in the end we must become people who have broken their own stubbornness before the King. When we have become such people, we come to serve the King as King; when we come to serve the King as King, we receive blessings, become workers of righteousness, and can live faithfully. It is that because we have a willing heart, we come to live faithfully. Jesus, whom we serve willingly in this way, had the sin of the world, including our sins, passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and in order to receive the judgment for that sin in our place, He shed His blood and died on the Cross. Because we believe in this grace, that Jesus saved us from sin by rising again from death, we receive with thanksgiving the work the Lord entrusts to us.

When God entrusts God's work within the church, we must think of it as our own work. It is that because it is the King's work, it is our work, and because it is our work, we come to do it as our own. It is that we do it, treasuring it more than our own affairs, even if we suffer loss.

But what is the case? It is that there are people who behave insolently before Jesus. They resist and oppose Jesus. It is that their hearts challenge and resist Him, thinking, 'My situation is like this, so what is this useless talk? He gave me just one thing, salvation, and now He keeps making a fuss, telling me to hand things over.' If one is a subject who truly respects the king, whenever the king is about to say something, one says, "I will do as you command." When subjects keep stirring things up

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against a king of the world, his royal authority is weakened, and he ends up watching his subjects' faces and being short-lived.

Jesus is the absolutely strong One. He is God, who created the universe and all things. Yet it is that Jesus does not act coercively. Jesus made the universe and all things, and He saved you and me from sin and made us His own people. Even when we try to resist Him although He has removed all our sins and made us children of God, Jesus says, "I have saved you like this. I want you to live a little for others. If you are thankful that you have been saved, share it with others." Yet it is that one swaggers and resists Him. But although Jesus has great power, He does not strike that person, and says He will see him next time. He says He will have to have someone else do it this time. When the King asks, "I am going to do this work; will you do this work for Me?" a subject who serves Him as King says, "Thank You for entrusting such work to someone like me. I am grateful," and it is that he receives it very gladly and does the work gladly. Jesus has such a person do the work and gives him blessings.

And sometimes He comes back again. "It seems I could not have you do the work last time; I am sorry. Will you try it once?" If one swaggers and does not accept it this time either, it is that on Jesus' side He never forces anyone. It is that although one has truly received much, as soon as Jesus appears and is about to have one do something, as soon as Jesus merely asks for something, one feels as if He is interfering and swings one's legs idly. Jesus does not do anything directly to such people.

To whom does He entrust that work? Jesus entrusts it to the workers under Him. "That person acts that way because he does not know, so make him realize and know. If he is left as he is, won't he do it once or twice and in the end oppose Me and be destroyed?" It is that He tells them in this way to awaken him from his ignorance so that he may know the King as King.

People who do not acknowledge the King—dear fellow believers, if there is a self and that stubbornness is not broken, if one does not decisively break one's own pride and stubbornness, then because your self challenges Jesus, it is that you must break it decisively, whether you break it yourself or break it through receiving fellowship. For one who has become a subject of the King to challenge that King is treason. That is the very thing that brings a curse, and it is death. Challenging the king once or twice may be let go, but if one keeps challenging him even after several years, one is charged with the crime of treason. One is charged with the crime of challenging the royal authority. It is exactly the same in the relationship between God and us. When we accept the gospel, too, we must acknowledge that the word of God is right. Even after accepting the gospel, the person who breaks his own pride, when it is said that what God says and what Jesus says is the will of God, breaks himself, saying, 'What am I, a mere nobody?' When one tries to break oneself, it hurts. But even though the heart hurts, one breaks oneself as one snaps off a branch.

The person who breaks himself is a person of character

Dear fellow believers, do you know that there is a self within you? Can you break it? The person who breaks it is a person who has attained the Way. No matter how much religious discipline one practices, it is of no use. It is not something achieved by meditative prayer; breaking what is called 'I,' one's own pride, before the word of God and before the will of God—that is living the life of a saint. That person is an excellent person. That person is a person of character.

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The person who cannot break himself is not a person of character. A person who is not a person of character never admits that what is right is right, even when some part of it is right. The reason people fight every day is that they do not break themselves. It is that they should break themselves if it benefits everyone, but they do not. Then who are the people who can decisively break themselves before what is right? It is we Christian believers.

It is not controlling the saints with the law; rather, it is precisely the person who has broken himself before God who can enable those under him to break themselves and can enable them to believe. One must break oneself. The Lord said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23)*.

As we go along a certain road, we come to a fork. It is said that whichever road we take, we will reach the destination. Then we may go whichever way we like. But when we stand at two roads, the Lord speaks. He opposes the road we want to take and tells us to go the other way. Even when we calculate, there is no benefit and it has nothing to do with us, but it is that if the Lord orders it so, we must break ourselves. The person who breaks himself in this way is truly a person of character, truly a servant of Jesus Christ, a worker of God, and a person of faith who follows the will of God.

As we go on living our life of faith, there are times when, going along one road, we meet two roads. At the two roads we break ourselves to the will of God and go on, and next, three roads may appear. At such a time we could go as we please, but when the Lord has told us to do this, we must break ourselves and our own stubbornness there and obey that word. That person is precisely a person of character. That person is a great person. He is a big person. One is not a general just because one is

stubborn and has strong arms; the person who knows how to break himself is a great person.

There is nothing we have not received

There are people who, after meeting the Lord and following Him, leave the Lord because they cannot break themselves, and say before the Lord, "You are an austere man. You are a very bad man. How can You ask me to give what You did not even give me?"

Did the Lord really not give? Is there nothing the Lord has given us? Is there nothing He has given to His own servants? So that our bodies could live, He gave us all things: the sun, the air, the light, and the grains. He gave us what we eat and drink, what we can use until we die. The Lord gave all these things that we eat and drink until we die.

Is there anything our souls have not received from the Lord? We have received everything. Our Lord removed our sins. He came to this earth, received baptism from John, had all our sins transferred to Him, received all the judgment for sin, and saved us. The Lord made us sinless. So is there anything we have not received? Having received everything, what reason is there not to break ourselves? Where is there any reason to oppose Him?

It is that people, as if what is visible to the eyes were the whole of life, have made that the crystallization of the self and have finally completed their life with it. 'I can live knowing this much, earning this much money, living at this level, and enjoying myself this much.' It is that they have decided on that.

It says, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7)*. If one does not break oneself before God, who made one, saved one from all sins, and gives one food, clothing,

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and drink for one's whole life, what kind of great person is one? When one truly thinks of oneself, there is a great deal that is lacking, but it is that one should at least follow the great will that pleases God. There are people who do not break their stubbornness to the very end, like a gambler who stakes his entire fortune on one game, aren't there? They stake their whole life on one shot and end up penniless beggars.

We must not be like that before God. Doesn't God, having compassion on us, overlook all our trivial shortcomings and wrongs? Didn't our Lord, having compassion on us, bear all our actual sins as well and receive the judgment for them? It is that we must at least serve God as King. It is that we must acknowledge Him as King.

Is your life your own? How many people there are who put up their pride before the Lord! Just as one holds on to the food in one's hand and never lets go of it, clinging only to it even when offered something bigger, it is that from childhood until one's last breath one keeps putting up one's pride. There are people who, even when they have nothing to eat, hide their circumstances for the sake of appearances, dress up their outward appearance, and show no sign of hunger. That is what is called keeping up appearances.

Before God we must honestly admit what we are. Is there anything about Jesus that is unkingly, so that we cannot acknowledge Him? In the world there are also many religions that say their own gods are God and do not serve Jesus as King. In Christianity there is clearly the name of God. The names of the LORD God and Jesus Christ clearly exist, yet in the world there are more people who do not serve Jesus as King than there are Christian believers.

Christian believers, too, and saints who have received the remission of sins, too, are like that because they have pride; but

one should put up one's pride where it belongs—what pride can one have before God, who made one? God called Jacob *"you worm Jacob" (Isaiah 41:14)*. One must not put up one's pride before God.

The man who received one mina said, "You are an austere man. You try to receive without even giving." So the master said, *"Bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27)*. The end of the one who opposes the Lord is destruction. Therefore we who have received the remission of sins must live serving the Lord as King to the very end.

Live for the King

For whom must we Christians live? Whatever we do, we must live for the King. We are a people for the King. We must live for Jesus Christ. When His kingdom is expanded on this earth, before long we will reign, and when His kingdom returns, we will enjoy eternal life. There are many things that have been so until now because people, though in the church, did not know. And I know that until today it has been so in many cases because, although they did believe, their self was too strong and no one preached such a sermon to them. Though we cannot do one hundred percent well as the King desires, we must break our own self at least in our hearts.

Because it must be done by the word, because one must break oneself as a person, no one else can break it. Even if one is beaten with an axe, it does not break. One must break it oneself. If one is told to follow the Lord, one must break it. We live serving Jesus as King. Is Jesus, then, something to be ashamed of? No, He is not. I hope that at the very least you will not become the

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man who kept the one mina wrapped in a handkerchief. If you cannot become the man who earned ten minas, I hope you will at least become the man who earned five minas. If you break your own self, you can become so.

I hope that even at this very moment you will think deeply and break it. Break it once in your life, and have faith in your heart, set your heart that way, and confess, saying, "Truly I am nothing before You, Jesus; You, Jesus, are my Savior, my King, and my God. There is none but You, the triune God. God alone is my God and my Master, the Lord alone is the One who gives me blessings, and the One I will serve is none but You. Whether I die or live, I will follow only You"; and whenever your own rightness rises up above Jesus, I hope that you will break it. Then Jesus says, *"Because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities" (Luke 19:17),* and entrusts many things to you and blesses you. I hope that you will become those who earn five minas, those who earn ten minas, before God, and I want the Lord to give you such faith. ✉

Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

What have they seen, that they praise with a loud voice?

< Luke 19:28–40 >

“When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. And it came to pass, when He drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, that He sent two of His disciples, saying, ‘Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here. And if anyone asks you, “Why are you loosing it?” thus you shall say to him, “Because the Lord has need of it.”’ So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them. But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, ‘Why are you loosing the colt?’ And they said, ‘The Lord has need of him.’ Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him. And as He went, many spread their clothes on the road. Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: ‘“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!” Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’ And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, ‘Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.’ But He

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answered and said to them, 'I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.'"

In a place where people rejoice together, it is easy to raise one's voice according to the atmosphere. But if it is not clear what one has seen that makes one rejoice, one's praise can be shaken even by a single word of opposition. Beside Jesus as He entered Jerusalem were disciples who praised loudly, and there were also Pharisees who demanded that He rebuke them. The Lord did not make that praise stop. Following this road, we must examine where Jesus the King was going, what the disciples saw that made them praise, and what the person who serves Him must believe and testify of.

The steps that went on ahead toward Jerusalem

After speaking the parable of the minas, the Lord went to Jerusalem. *"When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem" (Luke 19:28).*

Jesus, who went on ahead of the disciples, knew the end of that road, because He had already spoken of the suffering, death, and resurrection He would undergo in Jerusalem. Therefore these steps cannot be understood as a march to win people's welcome and take a comfortable seat. The Lord went forward on that road, knowing what He would undergo, in order to accomplish His will to save sinners.

We who follow behind Him must also know the purpose for which the Lord goes. If we follow with a glad heart only when there is people's applause and think we have taken the wrong road when difficulties come, we are judging the Lord's road

according to our own expectations. When we look at the Lord, who went on ahead on the road of suffering in order to save us, we come not to misunderstand the labor that accompanies serving as immediate evidence that the Lord's love has disappeared. The faith that knows what the Lord intends to accomplish holds our steps.

The colt prepared according to the word and the disciples' service

When He drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, Jesus sent two disciples. While having them go into the village opposite and loose and bring a colt on which no one had ever sat, He even gave them the words with which to answer the owners' question. *"If anyone asks you, 'Why are you loosing it?' thus you shall say to him, 'Because the Lord has need of it.' So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them" (Luke 19:31–32).*

The disciples found it just as He had said, and when the owners asked, they answered that the Lord had need of it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus, threw their own outer garments on it, and set Jesus on it, and they also spread their outer garments on the road. The Lord, who was going toward the Cross, not only knew the end of that road, but also knew in which village and at which house a colt was tied and what its owners would ask, and He told them in advance. Therefore in this scene the role of the disciples was not to make a place to exalt themselves, but to take part according to the word in the road the Lord had already known and determined. The concrete labor of preparing the colt and offering their garments became the work of serving the Lord.

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Today, too, the Lord uses our hands and our time in the work of preaching the gospel. Even though not everyone can preach the word in front, we can work by preparing a place for people to hear the word together and by sharing the labor that is needed, and the value of such work is not determined by how great it looks in others' eyes. When we lay down the desire to stand at the center ourselves and treasure the work the Lord accomplishes, we come to undertake even small preparations and help with thanksgiving.

The praise offered to the King while remembering His mighty works

When they drew near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples rejoiced greatly. There was a clear reason for that joy. *"As He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen" (Luke 19:37)*.

The mighty works of the Lord that they had seen were the basis of their praise. They had seen Him raise the dead, heal the sick, and feed many people with a few loaves, and because they remembered those works, they gave glory to God and exalted Jesus as the King who comes in the name of the Lord. *"'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!' Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Luke 19:38)*.

The same praise that the heavenly host sang when Jesus was born now rang out again before the King entering Jerusalem. That there is peace in heaven means that reconciliation is accomplished between God and man, who had become enemies because of sin, and this King was on His way to do that very

work. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River, Jesus had all the sins of His people passed on to Him once and for all, and because He thus bore the sin of the world, He went to Jerusalem, was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and received in our place the judgment for sin that we had to receive. And He rose again from death and lives as the Savior who accomplished our salvation. When we receive and believe this work the Lord did as the work He did for each of us, we receive the remission of sins, and peace is accomplished between God and us.

Therefore our praise must not stop at an expression of vaguely feeling better, but must be knowing and believing what Jesus did for us and exalting that grace. Because the Lord is the One who accomplishes salvation, the glory, too, must be given to the Lord, and because we know the grace of the redemption He paid for us, thanksgiving arises in our hearts. Even if today's circumstances are not comfortable, the sin the Lord has already borne and the salvation He has accomplished do not change. That fact becomes the basis for praising God even in the midst of difficulties.

Even if the person who serves the Lord sometimes receives thanks and recognition, he must remember the fact that the praise was directed to the King who rode on the colt. The colt, too, received glory because the Lord rode on it. If we, too, have been of help by preaching the gospel to people, we must make clear the fact that the One who saves them is Jesus. If, while preaching the Lord's work, we leave behind only the names and abilities of people, we have lost the direction of praise.

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The testimony that cannot stop even amid opposition

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd told Jesus to rebuke His disciples. But Jesus did not accept their demand and stop the praise. *"He answered and said to them, 'I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out'" (Luke 19:40)*.

The fact that the Lord is King does not disappear just because people make others keep silent. The word that the stones would cry out reveals that this praise directed to Jesus is fitting and that no one can stop what the Lord has done. This word is also a word spoken to us, who would come to believe in the Lord later. The gospel we are to preach, too, is not news that becomes true by people's permission or becomes false by people's opposition. Because we believe what the Lord has accomplished, we must testify of that grace without being ashamed of it.

That said, one cannot prove one's faith merely by making a loud noise. Just as the disciples' praise was based on what the Lord had done, our words, too, must make clear how the Lord saved sinners. Rather than words that win by pressing down the other person, what is needed are words that accurately explain the love of the Savior, who delivered us from sin and judgment. Let us neither hide the word of salvation for fear of ridicule nor treat the hearer carelessly out of a desire to show our zeal.

What is important in the place where we follow the Lord is not a momentarily heightened atmosphere but a faith that does not lose sight of what it sees and praises. What the disciples saw was the Lord's mighty works, and what we have seen is the work by which He saved us through the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. Remembering what that King has done, let us take part in the labor entrusted to us today. Even when people's

reactions change, I hope that we will preach the grace of the Lord who saved us and give glory to Him with our mouths and our lives. ✉

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Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

Let us give thanks for the grace of the Lord, who chose us

< Luke 19:28–40 >

“When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. And it came to pass, when He drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, that He sent two of His disciples, saying, ‘Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here. And if anyone asks you, “Why are you loosing it?” thus you shall say to him, “Because the Lord has need of it.”’ So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them. But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, ‘Why are you loosing the colt?’ And they said, ‘The Lord has need of him.’ Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him. And as He went, many spread their clothes on the road. Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: ‘“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!” Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’ And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, ‘Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.’ But He

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answered and said to them, 'I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.'"

Loose the tied colt and bring it here

Looking at this word, we find the word that Jesus was going toward the city of Jerusalem. Then, when He drew near the district called Bethany, Jesus said to His disciples, *"Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here" (Luke 19:30)*. When Jesus said so, the disciples would have asked what they should do if they were caught by the owner while doing that, and what they should say if the owner asked why they were loosing it. So the Lord said, *"If anyone asks you, 'Why are you loosing it?' thus you shall say to him, 'Because the Lord has need of it'" (Luke 19:31)*. Then the disciples went and actually did just as Jesus had told them.

When the disciples of Jesus went to the village opposite, there really was a colt tied there. In the old days, a colt was usually tied with a rope to a single stake driven into the outer yard. The disciples of Jesus, who saw the donkey, began to untie the tied donkey as if it were their own, without even speaking to the owner. If that had happened in this present age, it would have been a criminal act for which one would have to serve time in prison, caught by the law. Jesus was not one who did not know that, yet He told them to do so.

While the disciples of Jesus were loosing the colt, sure enough, the owner of that colt appeared and said, *"Why are you loosing the colt?" (Luke 19:33)*. Then the disciples of Jesus said, *"The Lord has need of him" (Luke 19:34)*, and loosed the colt that was tied and brought it to Jesus. The disciples of Jesus took

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off their outer garments and made them a saddle on the back of the colt, and spread their outer garments on the road where Jesus had to walk. And when Jesus mounted the donkey, the disciples led the colt carrying Jesus from the front and entered the city of Jerusalem.

Perhaps you may wonder what this word has to do with us now. In fact, this animal, the donkey, is an animal destined to bear nothing but burdens for its whole life. So Jesus told His disciples to loose and bring the colt that was tied, and He mounted the back of the colt that the disciples had loosed and brought. The very fact that the Lord mounted the back of a colt that was originally supposed to carry and haul nothing but baggage cannot but be a great event. Since Jesus loosed and mounted a donkey that had to go about every day carrying nothing but baggage, the colt, not by its own intention, came to carry the holy and precious Jesus, and it also carried Jesus to the end, entered the city of Jerusalem, and received a tremendous welcome from the people together with Jesus.

The glory received by the donkey that carried Jesus

The disciples of Jesus praised God, thinking of the things Jesus had done. They saw Jesus entering the city of Jerusalem and gave praise, shouting at the top of their voices. Then people looked at the disciples of Jesus and pointed their fingers at them, saying, "They are crazy, crazy," and finally the Pharisees went so far as to say, *"Teacher, rebuke Your disciples" (Luke 19:39)*. Then Jesus, who heard that, said, *"I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out" (Luke 19:40)*.

In fact, Jesus' entering Jerusalem now was in order to be tried in the city of Jerusalem and be crucified. This was something that happened after our Lord had received baptism from John, and it was the prelude to our Lord's dying on the Cross and rising again on the third day after His death to accomplish all the Lord's work. In other words, Jesus' entering Jerusalem was a preparation for our Lord to open the gate of heaven.

So when our Lord rode on the colt, the disciples rejoiced greatly, and the people praised, saying, *"'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!' Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Luke 19:38)*. The people were so glad and welcomed Jesus so much that even the colt would probably have been astonished. Perhaps the colt thought to itself, 'Why, when I was tied up at our house, people kicked me as they passed by and beat me like a village drum, but since I started carrying Jesus, people take off their clothes and spread them before me, break off fragrant leaves and spread them, and as if that were not enough, people even bow down to me.' The donkey would have been astonished like this.

And how triumphant the donkey must have felt! It would have felt as if it were the one receiving the glory, and receiving the enthusiastic welcome, it would have become majestic without realizing it. The donkey was only plodding along carrying Jesus, but with people praising and welcoming it in front, the colt would have been overjoyed. 'Is this a dream, or is it real? To think that there are people who welcome me like this! The people I knew before hardly gave me food and only whipped me with a switch or kicked me whenever they saw me, but why are these new people welcoming me so enthusiastically?' It is certain that the donkey would have been astonished, thinking this. If this donkey had been clever, it would have known that it was receiving glory because of Jesus, and if not, after bringing

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Jesus into the city, the donkey would probably have gone out into the field and run wild, thinking itself great. In any case, when it entered the city of Jerusalem, the donkey, too, felt very good, and Jesus, too, was very pleased.

The donkey Jesus rode received much glory because of the Lord. We must think about the relationship between the colt spoken of in this word and Jesus, and about how this colt was able to receive such glory, and we must think about what this word is telling us.

The destiny of the donkey, which must bear burdens and serve

Originally, a colt was destined from birth to be born in order to bear and haul burdens. And after being used in that way, if it suffered an injury or fell ill, it was said that its life was over, and it was treated as a useless beast and killed; people ate the donkey's meat, and they stripped off the donkey's hide and made it into things people needed and used them. Because a donkey was born to be used in that way, even if it seemed harsh, it had to accept it. This, we can say, was the original destiny of the donkey.

If the destiny of the colt is to bear burdens and to haul burdens, what is the destiny of man? For a donkey, being born on this earth and bearing and hauling some burden was, whether it liked it or not, serving people. Serving people by bearing and hauling burdens is the destiny of the donkey. In the same way, man, too, was destined to live serving someone or something. Just like the destiny of a donkey that is owned by some master and has to live its whole life serving its master and hauling burdens, man had to be subordinate either to man or to God. We

must know that to be subordinate to one of the two, man or God, and to live one's whole life for that and then pass away, is a destiny from which man cannot escape.

It seems that man is born free into this world, but in fact, from the moment he is born, he is tied to people and bound to the world. So unless there is some special change, he has to live his whole life serving only people in the world. He himself thinks that he lives freely in the world according to his own will, but in fact, life is being tied to the world, dragged along as the world leads, serving only people until death, and then coming to an end. Do you think this applies only to people of some particular class? It is the inborn destiny of all the people of the world, and countless are the people who cannot cast off that yoke until they die and so live and pass away in that way. How does the destiny of man differ from that of a donkey? The life of a person who has not been born again is like that of a donkey, which is used for people its whole life and even after death is used by people for everything, its meat and its hide. If you think that, while not living before God, yours is not a futile life that is subordinate to the world and used by the world before passing away, but a life lived freely according to your own free will, that is a great delusion. Dear fellow believers, through this word God is telling us that man is just like such a donkey. The Lord said that the donkey in this word refers to you.

Also, our Lord told them to go to the village opposite and loose and bring the colt that was tied, and if the owner asked why they were taking it, He said, *"Thus you shall say to him, 'Because the Lord has need of it'" (Luke 19:31)*. And He added that they should bring a colt on which no one had ever yet sat.

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The Lord loosed us, who were tied to the world

For you and me, born on this earth, the only difference is whether we will be tied to people or tied to God; we are surely tied to one of them. Fundamentally, we were destined to be tied to the world, to live our whole life laboring in subordination to people, and then to die. One day the Lord loosed us, who were tied in a state in which we could only live and die in such a destiny. The Lord told them to loose us, who were tied to the master called the world, and bring us. And He had them say to the one who asked why they were loosing us and taking us that it was for the Lord to use. The Lord, the Master of the world, looked with pity on those who live tied to the world He Himself made, and He loosed such people as us. He told them to loose and bring the colt that was tied, never yet used by anyone, in order to use it for the Lord, and it is that this word means that the Lord looses, in order to use them, those pure ones who are tied to the world but have not yet been stained by the people of the world.

You and I, born on this earth, must surely serve one of the two: serve people or serve God. We cannot serve both at once; we must serve only one thing, and fundamentally we were tied to the world. Before being born again from sin, everyone, because of sin, served this world as a slave and was tied all his life to the problems of food, clothing, and shelter; was tied to death, afraid that he might die; and worried much about and longed for such things as birth, aging, sickness, and death, and the glory of the world. We were living tied to such things. ‘How can I obtain eternal life? How can I avoid dying? How can I become rich? How can I avoid getting sick?’ Worrying about dying and about getting sick, hoping that nothing would go wrong with our bodies, how we struggled as we lived! It seemed

that we were striving to solve those things, but in fact we were living for them. How can a person in the world not cling to such things? In the end, since one cannot get out of such things, one accepts it as destiny and strives, tied to the world, to live even a little better in the world. In this way, if one is not used by God, anyone can only be used by people, and if one is not in God, one can only be tied to the world forever.

Our Lord loosed you and me, who were tied to the world. *"Because the Lord has need of it" (Luke 19:31)*. Loosing us, who were tied to the world, the Lord spoke thus. And among those who have been loosed and brought for the Lord to use, there are some who are used first, and there are also those who are being trained so that the Lord may use them profitably. When the Lord uses us, He does not use us just as we are. Since the Lord cannot use those who have sin, only when they have received the remission of sins and been loosed from sin does the Lord train and nurture them in order to use them. In other words, to be used by the Lord, one first had to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and be born again as God's people without sin. And only the righteous who have been born again of water and the Spirit were loosed from the world and no longer used by people.

You and I, who have received the remission of sins, must consider where we will be used and what kind of destiny we had at all. What was the fundamental destiny of you and me, born on this earth? We were those who, born on this earth, whether we liked it or not, could only live as slaves, tied to people and serving people for our whole lives, and then die. Though it is a word we do not readily want to accept, we cannot but accept it, because we really were born with such a destiny. Dear fellow believers, do you admit that? 'I am a free person.' I know well that you all want to be that. Everyone would want to be that, but

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in fact no one is a free person. Especially the soul of man is tied somewhere; it could not be free. You and I, as soon as we were born, were subordinate to people and to the world and were already living like slaves in the world, only we did not realize it. The Lord called such people as us.

What you and I must think about is this. It is whether you, like the donkey in this word, were at first a tied colt but will become a donkey loosed by the Lord and used by the Lord. What about you? Will you become one who is used by the Lord like the donkey the Lord used, or one who is still tied to people, serving people as a slave and used like a slave? Since it is the fixed procedure that if one is not used by the Lord, one is used by the people of the world, we must surely think about whether we will serve the world as slaves or be used by the Lord, and to which we will be subordinate. If we do not think about it and put off even the decision until later, whatever our own intention, we can only be counted as people who have resolved to serve the world as slaves after all. I know that you do not want to become like a foolish beast that runs down that road without even knowing it is being destroyed.

There were many colts in this world, but the other colts had no value. Only this colt, which carried the Lord on its back and was used by the Lord, had value. In any case, a colt has the destiny of doing nothing but hauling burdens and then, when it grows old or falls ill and is no longer useful, being beaten, slaughtered and eaten, or thrown away. But the colt that had never carried a person was specially chosen and used by the Lord. If the Lord had not called it, it was in a position where it would have had to haul people's burdens its whole life, but overnight its position was changed because of the Lord.

Will you bear a burden of dung, or bear the Lord's burden?

Dear fellow believers, do you happen to know what a burden of dung is? In the old days there were people who went from house to house leading a donkey and scooping out dung. Such a man carried around a jar with a small mouth so that the dung he put in would not spill out, and he scooped the dung and put it into that jar. But even with a jar with a small mouth, if the donkey carrying the jar met a bumpy road, or staggered because it was tired and looked elsewhere, the dung could slosh and spill, so he rolled up straw tightly and plugged the mouth of the jar firmly. He lifted it and loaded it onto the carrier he had prepared on the colt's side. Then he slapped the rump of the donkey loaded with the burden of dung and told it to go, and the donkey, not knowing any better, waddled along carrying the sloshing burden of dung. No matter how heavy the donkey found it, the master was not one to lighten that burden, and no matter how bad it smelled, it was not a situation where it could be cleared away, so to endure and keep going, bearing the burden of dung, was the donkey's destiny for that day. Even though it was anxious and afraid that it might spill or fall over, the donkey had to go bearing that burden of dung. The master, having the donkey carry the burden of dung along, poured it all out once in a field.

Also, there are days when the donkey bears a burden of urine. Carrying a jar filled with yellow water is harder than a burden of dung. That is because the urine water sloshes more than dung. Since the waves of urine water are stronger than the waves of dung water, the donkey has a harder time keeping its balance on the day it is loaded with a burden of urine. Still, it must bear it. Even though the sloshing urine water is burdensome and dirty,

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it is its destiny to accomplish the work that must be done today. And if by mistake its foot fell into a hole, it could get drenched in urine, so on that day the donkey had to move very carefully.

And on some days, a back-carrier is put on and it is loaded full of rotting manure. Since there is a limit to what can be carried on a donkey's back, people use what is called a handcart, a two-wheeled implement for hauling things. Grain, salt, and all kinds of loads are put on the handcart, and livestock such as donkeys, mules, or oxen must pull it from the front. This load is extremely heavy. The donkey must struggle up a road that is not even level, with heavy sacks of grain loaded on the handcart. How heavy it is—it is so heavy and hard that the donkey's legs tremble. Besides, is there any good road out in the countryside? If it meets a hillside or a bumpy uphill road with gravel, that day, if things go wrong, is the day it is beaten to death by its master, or dies of exhaustion, or it is all over. When it is too heavy to move forward and the donkey's legs are only shaking because it is so hard, the master beats it from behind with something like a whip and tells it to hurry and climb with all its might. Then, if it seems really hopeless, people also push the handcart from behind, but the donkey, having lost its strength, cannot climb well. Then it is whipped again without fail, foam comes out of the donkey's mouth, and it is the day the donkey completely dies.

It is fortunate if it at least manages to climb with all its might, even while being forced on and beaten with a switch. I once saw a mule that, climbing a hill, only struggled because it had no strength and still could not climb even though it was being beaten with a switch. Then suddenly there was a snapping sound, and the mule just collapsed on the spot. Because people were pulling hard from the front and the master was whipping from behind, the leg of the mule that was trying to climb by force had broken. If it were a mule that had met a good master, he would

at least have had its leg treated, but most masters, saying that a mule exists anyway to haul burdens and that it is better to buy a new mule that hauls burdens better than to have it treated and use it, send the mule with the broken leg off to the slaughterhouse. I have seen a mule's life end in that way.

For their whole lives, animals like mules, donkeys, oxen, and horses must always go about bearing burdens, whether carrying people, hauling grain, or hauling manure. That is because for such livestock, going about bearing burdens for their whole lives is their fixed destiny.

You and I, too, from birth, had to go about bearing people's burdens for our whole lives. From birth until we grow old, fall ill, and die, we must bear people's burdens all the time. We must bear burdens for our children, bear burdens for our parents, and there is no end to bearing burdens toward the world. We must keep on doing it. Like the donkey that must bear various burdens such as manure or grain every day, we, too, must keep bearing whatever burden there is. In fact, animals keep hauling burdens in order to be fed. So a master who wants to work his donkey harder puts a muzzle over the donkey's mouth, in case the donkey, while carrying its burden along, might nibble at the grass in the field. That is because if the donkey eats any other grass, it is full even without the food the master gives, and so it slacks off in the work of hauling burdens. So even though green grass has sprouted in the field, the donkey cannot eat it even though it wants to. Because if the donkey does not finish all its work, the master never gives it food, the donkey must work even harder in order to eat.

Dear fellow believers, people, too, are practically like such a donkey. If a person does not work, there is absolutely nothing to eat. If one does not earn money by working at a job, one absolutely cannot eat. A donkey and a person are the same. They

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are the same in being stubborn, the same in bearing burdens, the same in dying after only working, and the same in living and passing away without value. This is the donkey-like destiny of the person who does not belong to God and is tied to the world.

People, too, like donkeys, work their whole lives in order to make a living. So the time of being a student, under the shelter of one's parents, is after all the most comfortable time. Then, once one attends a university, one already begins to worry about getting a job, thinking, 'What kind of work shall I do, and what kind of burden shall I bear, so that it will be less hard and I will earn more? What must I do to make a living?' When one thinks about that, it is distressing.

But university ends after only a few years, and soon the time comes when one must get a job. When one gets a job at some company, signs an annual salary contract, and enters as a new employee, one must shape oneself to suit that company. One must do well as one's superiors direct; if one fails to do as the superiors want, one must put up with at least being scolded or cursed at; and if one cannot finish all the work one was doing at the office, one must come home and do it again all night long. If the documents one has prepared in that way have been done wrong, and the superior throws the documents down in front of one's face, says disparaging words, and tells one to write them again, even though one's pride is hurt, one must bow politely, pick up the documents carefully, and come out. What does one get while having one's pride and one's dignity all trampled on like that? One month's salary. It is food. One brings home just enough to barely make ends meet and eats on it for a whole month. Only by working again while eating that does one get the food to eat the next month. Seen that way, people's working in the world is just like eating a month's worth of food taken in

advance. In the end, a human being has to live as if in debt like that for his whole life. That is how we people are.

But the Lord said to loose the young colt and bring it, that He would use it, and loosed us from such a world. The Lord removed, with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, all the sins of us humans who had been living tied to the world. It is that He enabled us, who could only live serving the world as slaves, to receive the remission of sins and to serve the Lord.

The glorious donkey that bears the King's burden

Seeing here that the colt was used before God, we come face to face with the important question of by whom we will be used once we are truly born again, who our master is, what kind of master we want to live serving, whether we want to live serving people as our master or whether we want to live serving Jesus as our Master. What is it like if we live serving Jesus? Just as the colt here received praise as it entered the city of Jerusalem and was clothed with glory together with the Lord, we, too, will enter the city of Jerusalem and enjoy great glory. We can see that though a donkey is a donkey, it was clothed with glory because it was the donkey that carried Jesus. The donkey that was destined to live bearing nothing but burdens of dung all its life but entered into the glory of receiving praise refers to the righteous person who has been born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit and lives for God. The righteous person who has been born again of water and the Spirit has come to carry Jesus on his back and live a glorious life because of Jesus. For the one reason that we believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and were born again, we were loosed from the world and could carry Jesus, and because we carried Jesus, we

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have come to live a life for obtaining glory, without worry about what we eat and drink. Now that we live not tied to the world and serving people, but for God, who made us and saved us, our destiny has, as it were, been changed into dazzling glory. How rewarding is the destiny of us born-again righteous people, living for God! Can bearing a burden of dung even be compared with bearing Jesus? Just as the donkey was clothed with glory because it carried Jesus, we can truly have a rewarding whole life because we have served and carried Jesus. That we have come to have the destiny of entering the city of Jerusalem at the end and receiving endless applause and glory is dazzling glory.

We must know exactly what God is saying to you and me through this word. It is that we ourselves must know clearly what burden we really must bear. If God has saved you and me through the gospel of the water and the Spirit and now calls us because the Lord has need of us, we must respond to the call with right thinking and right faith. At the moment of destiny, since the Lord calls us, saves us, changes our burden, and changes the road we are to go, we need only follow the guide, set our hearts by faith, and say "Yes" to God's calling.

Being used by God is in itself so glorious and good. We were born with a destiny in which, for our whole lives, we could bear nothing but dirty burdens of dung or urine, but it is that now we have been called so that, being born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we can serve the Lord, do the Lord's work, and bear the Lord's burden. We, the born-again, have met the moment when our destiny is about to change, like this colt that entered the city of Jerusalem with the Lord and received great praise and glory, and we have been called by the Lord. *"Because the Lord has need of it" (Luke 19:31)*. Since the Lord, saying that He will use us, has loosed the rope that tied us to the

world, we are now people of God's world. This is such a blessed thing.

Is there anyone among you who does not know and does not admit that you were born with a destiny like that of a colt? 'I am a human being, not a colt. I am a free person; I am not tied up like this.' Dear fellow believers, a human being is a human being, but he is a human being born bearing a destiny like a donkey's. And a human being must live tied somewhere, doing the work of serving. There is no way you do not know that. Aren't you living diligently every day, harassed by the affairs of the world, with the anguish and distress of the world, trying to satisfy your craving toward the world? That is what being tied is. To what do you want to be subordinate, and for whom do you want to live? Do you want to live tied to the world and being faithful to people? Being subordinate to people is like bearing a dirty and painful destiny, as a donkey goes along bearing a burden of dung. If you must bear a burden anyway, wouldn't you rather bear Jesus' burden? For us, who are placed in a destiny where we must bear some burden anyway, to be tied to the Lord, serve God, and be used for the gospel is a far more glorious, valuable, and rewarding life. It is that if we are used by the Lord and tied to the Lord, we are used for the Lord every day, and so that is the most glorious thing.

You must know where you are tied and where you are being used. If you are being used by the Lord, how thankful a thing that is—it is truly a far more precious thing than you know. Dear fellow believers, a burden-bearer is a burden-bearer, but the burden-bearer who bears the Lord's burden and the burden-bearer who bears the world's burden are completely different. All people were born before God with the same destiny of burden-bearers, but we, the born-again, have been born again as glorious burden-bearers who bear the King's burden. It is that

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though we are burden-bearers, we have been called as burden-bearers who bear the King's burden. Some people have been called and have responded to it, while some people, though they are being called, do not know it and still say, "I don't want to be tied. I am a free person," wrongly thinking that being tied to the Lord is being restrained.

Dear fellow believers, you must know the fact that it is destiny for a person to bear burdens. Because we are alive, we must do some kind of work. If we do not do this work, we must do that work. If we do not do God's work, we must do people's work. Whether we serve people or serve God, we must surely serve something. Why is that? Because we were born on this earth and are living and breathing. We are not dead people. Because we are alive, we must do something. Do you know that you were born with the destiny of a colt? And do you believe it? Are you a donkey, or not? I, too, am a donkey.

There may be some who would say, 'We are human beings, so why compare us with a donkey, a beast?' But the reality is that when we humans live tied to the world, we are treated as beasts worse than donkeys. And we must know, admit, and believe, according to the word of God, that we are those born with a destiny like a donkey's. If so, the word 'donkey' will not be so offensive either.

Now, if we admit and believe that we have a destiny like a donkey's, the only thing left is whom we will carry. What burden will you bear in your life—only this remains.

And in particular, the Lord told them to bring a colt that no one had ever ridden; the person who has been called by the Lord from childhood is a happy person. And the person who has just received salvation and been called is an even happier person. This is not speaking in terms of physical age but refers to the time after being born again. The one who, worn down by the

world, has lost his purity and has come before God with some other purpose cannot be used by God. It is that the one who has entered the church dreaming of the desires and glory of the flesh in his heart and hoping to be exalted himself is carrying someone other than the Lord, and so is not fit for the Lord to use. We are donkeys that must bear burdens, but after receiving the remission of sins, we must realize our destiny and must not set our purpose on anything other than the Lord. Though we are the same donkeys, whether we are used by God or used by people—that determines our lives.

If we have been called by the Lord after being born again, that is a tremendous blessing. Moreover, if one can say, 'I am a donkey, but a donkey that can carry Jesus; a donkey that can bear Jesus' burden,' then that, though a donkey is a donkey, is certainly a better destiny than that of any noble horse in this world. Dear fellow believers, isn't a donkey that carries Jesus, the King of kings, far more splendid than a horse that carries the people of the world? I hope that you and I, who have been born again of water and the Spirit and are living in the church for the righteousness of God, will never forget that we are donkeys that carry the precious Jesus. That a colt, which must bear burdens its whole life, can bear the burden called Jesus—this is truly a great blessing.

Do you want to bear Jesus' burden? Or do you want to bear people's burden? I believe that all those who have believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and been born again want to bear Jesus' burden. If you were born with a destiny in which you must haul burdens your whole life, I know it is right to want to do Jesus' work.

But many people are living their life of faith without knowing this. That is why at times they are tied to Jesus and at times tied to the world, and there are even times when bearing

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Jesus' burden feels burdensome. But if one throws off Jesus' burden altogether, one goes back to the old days—no, perhaps one is placed in an environment even worse than before, and all the heavy burdens of the world will be waiting. In the world, firewood is piled up like a mountain, waiting and tempting you to abandon the Lord, bear burdens in the world, and live together with the world. The world is always waiting to work you, saying, "Come. Move this from here to there for your whole life"; it is not waiting to make you precious. All the burdens of the world are waiting to make you and me serve the world as slaves. If, after being born again, we are unwilling to bear Jesus' burden, the burdens of the world that have been waiting quickly put the dirty yoke of the world on you. What kind of life do you want to live? I believe that rather than committing sin in the world and living only for yourselves, you want to live the worthwhile life of serving the gospel for the Lord, spreading the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world and saving souls.

For you, the world has always prepared all kinds of burdens and is waiting. The one who does not bear Jesus' burden can never avoid the world's burden. Just as a donkey cannot escape its master's yoke. When a donkey, having been used in the world to haul all kinds of burdens, can no longer be used, it will be dragged to the slaughterhouse and killed. It is right to leave the destiny of being used for everything, even its meat, hide, and bones, after death, to those who do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the end and are not born again, and for us, the born-again, to become those who bear burdens for the Lord.

The Lord came to this earth and told them to loose the colt that was tied and bring it. We had until then been living tied to the yoke of the world as if it were only natural, but the Lord

came and loosed that yoke and made us become precious donkeys that will live for the Lord from now on.

When the Lord says He has need of you, say "Yes"

When we look at people who pursue the power and glory of the world, they, without even knowing that they have become slaves to their own desires, fret and keep watch every day until their eyes are bloodshot, as if they were accomplishing some great purpose. Whether in ancient times or in the present age, anyone who does not belong to Jesus serves Satan the devil as a slave.

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). "But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God" (Galatians 4:8–9).

People, captured by the devil, served the world as slaves, and at times, dreaming of liberation, they tried to escape from slavery to seething desires, but they could only live still bearing the burdens of the world. That was true not only of us living in the present age but also of the people who lived in the old days. In those days many people suffered countless hardships because of hard labor and forced service. However hard they tried to get out of such a yoke of the flesh, they could only go on living that way without any particular result. Until one believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who saved us, life could only be like that.

If we had not met the Lord, we were destined to go on living as slaves to the world for our whole lives, tied to the external environment called a company or a workplace, or to the internal

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environment called our own thoughts, ideologies, or desires. The only way to be liberated once and for all from the yoke of the world, in which sins and trespasses are entangled with lack and desire and bind us, was to believe that Jesus Christ received baptism from John and died on the Cross. Because the Lord, through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, had all our sins and trespasses and the shortcomings of our flesh transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, we believe that all of them were passed on to Jesus once and for all and were settled by the judgment of the Cross. Since living for the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which changed our destiny at one stroke, is the greatest blessing for us, living by faith in it is, as it were, a duty we must keep.

Even if one says one does not like living and serving under either the world or the Lord, one belongs to one of the two. However much one says, "I am a free person," no one is a free person. If one is not living a life of being born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, carrying the Lord, and spreading the gospel, one is tied to the world. The Lord not only came to this earth and saved us, but also took us out of the world and called us to the place of serving the Lord. And He is still calling. "Loose the tied colt and bring it. The Lord has need of it." When the Lord says He has need of us, we need only say "Yes" by faith and be used. When the Lord says He will use us, there may be some who think, 'Do I really have to do this? I want to live freely. Use me? What for? Just leave me alone.' Dear fellow believers, know that, having been born into this world, we must be attached somewhere and be used. Yet since the Lord says He will change the pitiful life of being used by Satan the devil and by sin in the world into a blessed life of living for other souls and for the Lord, what a good opportunity this is!

I know that the one who willingly wants to be bound to the Lord is wise.

If the Lord should call you and me, born with the destiny of being attached to the world, serving it as slaves, and ending in destruction, saying that He has need of us, what would you do? Would you agree? Or would you express discontent? I know that many people here would agree. But there may be a person or two who would say, "No. I want to be saved and live my own life. I want to build a picturesque house in a quiet place and live a simple life with the one I love for my whole life."

It may sound as if one were singing of a simple life, but if you refuse the Lord's calling like that, a burden of dung awaits you. That is because, once a person is born into the world, he is tied somewhere. That is because, whether you live with the one you love or with anyone else, the circumstance of having to bear burdens does not change. If we are destined to live bearing burdens anyway, when we bear the Lord's burden we receive glory. There are hard things, too, but because we bear the Lord's burden, the Lord takes responsibility for us. And the Lord provides the ability, strength, wisdom, and every circumstance to live for the Lord. But what if, instead of the Lord's burden, you bear the burden of man and the burden of your own desires? That burden of desire presses you down and kills you. It is that the burden of the world, whether it is that burden of desire or the burden of the one you love, oppresses you and strangles you to death. What will you do?

When the Lord says He has need of you, when He says to loose you and bring you, dear fellow believers, think it over by faith and decide by faith. 'If I am to bear a burden my whole life anyway, I will bear the Lord's burden.' You must make such a right judgment. You must have the right faith. Without such

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judgment, your life becomes vain. If you and I are colts, and if we are carrying the Lord on our backs, wouldn't it be joyful?

In the old days I used to study desperately hard, memorize and learn the doctrines of theology, and preach. But, thinking about it in conclusion, that was only leading people down a road where they could not be saved and became sinners every day even though they believed in Jesus. It was a teaching in which the person who had believed longer became more of a sinner, and one was respected only by confessing to be a sinner. When someone prays, "This sinner prays in the name of Jesus Christ," all the church members say "Amen," but if one does not say the word 'sinner' when praying, even when that person's prayer ends, they hardly even say amen.

In the world there are also people who make it their lifelong work to share meals with the poor. They ceaselessly do the work of cooking meals and taking them to places where there are many homeless people or elderly people with no one to depend on, and sharing them. In people's eyes it may look as if they are doing good work, but that is only worldly work that helps the flesh; it is not the work of saving souls from sin. Those people, too, if they did not do that work, would have to do something else; they would have to do something. Like a colt loaded with the burden of the world.

We must decide what kind of donkey we will be before God, and what we will carry. The wise person will already have decided, and the person who has not yet understood the word of God will be saying something else and harboring other intentions. Such people, too, as they keep listening to the word, will come to realize, 'Ah, this is after all a word spoken to me.'

Dear fellow believers, since we were born with a donkey's destiny anyway, let us bear not the world's burden but the Lord's burden. If we must bear one anyway, let us become people who

live a happy life together with the Lord. If someone really does not want to do so, he will inevitably become a person who bears nothing but burdens of dung, but I earnestly wish that all of you who have heard the word of God will become glorious donkeys that bear the Lord's burden. Now the Lord is speaking to you. He is saying that since the Lord bore with the water and the blood all the sins and trespasses that were tied up in your hearts, you should be liberated from sin by faith, come to the Lord, and bear the Lord's burden. When the Lord looses you from the world and says He has need of you, we cannot but simply say "Yes." I hope that you will first believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the remission of sins, and join in the work of preaching the gospel to the whole world for the Lord. I believe that is the greatest blessing for you. I am thankful that the Lord has called us and used us in precious work, and I hope that our Lord will call all of you, too, and use you in the Lord's precious work. ✉

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Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

Say, “The Lord has need of it”

< Luke 19:28–40 >

“When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. And it came to pass, when He drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, that He sent two of His disciples, saying, ‘Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here. And if anyone asks you, “Why are you loosing it?” thus you shall say to him, “Because the Lord has need of it.”’ So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them. But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, ‘Why are you loosing the colt?’ And they said, ‘The Lord has need of him.’ Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him. And as He went, many spread their clothes on the road. Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: ‘“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!” Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’ And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, ‘Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.’ But He answered and said to them, ‘I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.’”

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A command that seems absurd and simple obedience

Looking at the passage we have read, it is the scene where Jesus, having spoken the parable of the minas, goes immediately afterward toward Jerusalem to receive the punishment of the Cross. On His way toward Jerusalem, *"It came to pass, when He drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, that He sent two of His disciples, saying, 'Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here. And if anyone asks you, "Why are you loosing it?" thus you shall say to him, "Because the Lord has need of it."'" (Luke 19:29–31).* This is what He said. Let us consider together this part, where the Lord has need of the colt that is tied. Our Lord said that if they saw a colt tied, on which no one had ever sat, they should loose it and bring it. And He said that if people asked why they were loosing someone else's colt, they should say that the Lord had need of it. As we read the Bible, there are things that, in a way, seem absurd. How could He tell them to loose and bring someone else's colt, and to say, when people asked why they were doing such a thing, that the Lord had need of it? From people's point of view it sounds like nonsense, but when it is seen with the eyes of faith and from the standpoint of faith, it is a story that makes sense. Our God often calls as His workers many people who are tied to the world and have not yet served this world. And there are also times when the Lord calls some people as His workers while they are in the midst of doing the work of the world.

Our Lord told them to loose the colt that was tied and bring it, and to say, when people asked, that the Lord had need of it. The disciples did just as He had told them. Aren't these disciples

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really remarkable? Even though Jesus was their Master and Teacher and also God, no matter how true that was, they were people who had flesh; so how could the disciples go into a village they had never once been to in their lives, and loose and bring a colt that someone else was using, just because He had told them to? The disciples *"went their way and found it just as He had said to them. But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, 'Why are you loosing the colt?' And they said, 'The Lord has need of him.' Then they brought him to Jesus" (Luke 19:32–35).* Dear fellow believers, is this a novel? It is a record of something that actually happened. Would you do that if it were you? If I told you that there is a colt in a certain village and to go and loose it and bring it, is there anyone who would bring it? If you were caught while loosing it, would you have the confidence to say that the Lord has need of it? Even though we believe in God and have no sin, if someone told us to bring someone else's property like that, there would be some who would feel rebellious, saying that one should talk sense and not talk nonsense. Among you, too, there would be some who would obey and some who would refuse. In the Bible, in the matter of believing in God, there are many such things that human beings simply cannot understand. Dear fellow believers, while believing in Jesus and living your life of faith in the church, do not think of believing and following only the parts you can understand with your own head. I cannot tell you how many things there are in the Bible that cannot be understood with human thinking. They cannot be understood, but in reality they are right.

We ourselves are the colt tied to the world

Since it is said that no one had ever ridden the colt that was in the world, it was still a colt; but a little later it would go about all its life in the world carrying loads on both its sides. But serving the Lord is easier than bearing the burdens of the world. In fact, this colt received a great blessing. If it had stayed as it was, it would have borne the burdens of the world, but because the Lord had need of it, it was brought, and the Lord used it. The Lord mounted it and entered Jerusalem. As He entered riding this colt, the people before Him highly praised God, saying: *"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest" (Luke 19:38)*. God works within us. God calls such pure people at the time when we have not yet served the world and are pure. He calls us to live serving the Lord all our lives and doing the work of God. This colt speaks of people, of ourselves. It is we, who are stiff-necked and stubborn. If God's people are tied to the world, He cannot use them. So, since He cannot use them, He told them to loose it and bring it. Jesus, who calls and uses us, first bore the sin of the world once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and thus also had all the sins of you and me passed on to Him. Jesus, who bore that sin and shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment in our place, rose again from death and saved us; therefore, as those who have received the remission of sins, we respond to the Lord's call.

Dear fellow believers, the Lord unties all the parts that are tied to the world in the people He uses. Before the Lord uses them, He first looks at where in the world they are tied—whether they are tied to money, tied to people, wherever they are tied—and the Lord unties them. If we want to be used by the Lord, there must be no place where we are tied. Is there perhaps any

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place in your heart where you are tied? There must be no place where you are tied other than to the Lord. God is still calling many workers and doing His work now, and God takes these colts and uses them in doing the Lord's work. Before the Lord used it, the people of the world had the colt born and raised it in order to use it themselves. The old owner raised it in order to use it himself, but when the Lord, through His disciples, unties everything that is tied and is about to use it, the people of the world resist. They say, why are you loosing it and taking it away without permission? But the word spoken here is very simple: *"Because the Lord has need of it" (Luke 19:31)*. Do these people know who the Lord is? It means that they were to say that God had need of it.

The only thing to say to the old owner's protest is *"the Lord has need of it"*

When God calls you and uses you, there are certainly places where you were tied to the world in the past. There are parts of you that are tied to your family, to certain people in the world, or to certain affairs. God sets all those parts free. When the Lord is about to use you, the first place a problem arises is the old owner. Why are you doing this? But here He spoke a very simple word: *"Because the Lord has need of it" (Luke 19:31)*. When it is God who is going to use it, what more needs to be said? And they untied what was tied and brought it, and the Lord used it. When God calls you, God calls His workers through these disciples. But when He calls us, where are we tied? We are tied to the affairs of the world. When we are used, in the case of this colt, in the case of the disciples, and in our case too, there is only this one thing to say before the people of the world who do not

understand us. The Lord said that He would use this person, He has entrusted him with God's work—there is nothing to say but that. That He had the disciples bring the colt is, in fact, His calling of workers. When He called the workers, where were the workers tied? They were tied to the world. Dear fellow believers, even if you serve the world, how much can you serve it? We must think about whether it is better to serve the world or to serve God, and when God calls you, to whom can you speak? You can only say to your family, "God wants to use me. I will serve God. I will do God's work," and speak that way to your family or before the world. The Lord did not bring a colt that was already loose, but loosed a colt that was tied and brought it. And the Lord used it.

In fact, what was tied to the world was brought, and Jesus Himself tied it and used it. What is a donkey? Is it not a worker? Where there are no cars, a colt does a tremendous amount of work. How many loads it carries on both sides of its back—a colt is a worker. This speaks of none other than you and me. Before being used by the Lord, you and I were tied to the world. So the Lord untied us through His disciples. And He told them to bring it, and He rode on the back of that colt that was brought and used it in accomplishing the Lord's will. It was spoken in the Old Testament that when Jesus entered Jerusalem He would enter riding a colt. Just as it was spoken, He had the colt loosed and brought, and the Lord used what was loosed and brought with the words that the Lord had need of it. When we serve God, there is only one word to say to the people of this world: "The Lord has said that He has need of me." People may not understand it when they hear it, but these are words worth saying. We must surely say this. There is no other excuse to make. There is nothing but these words: "The Lord has said that He has need of me, and from now on I will serve the Lord." When God calls

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you and the Lord says He has need of you, there is no other way. You are simply used. If you are stubborn and struggle not to be used and say you will be tied to the world again, that is serving the world; but if, when God calls, you say "Yes" and obey in faith, you are used before God.

"Because the Lord has need of it" (Luke 19:31). This is what you are to say before all the people of the world who are binding you. When we try to go forward serving God entirely, the people of the world will protest, asking why we are loosing it. The disciples, too, said that the Lord had need of it, and we, too, must say that the Lord wants to use us and that He has called us through the disciples. There is nothing else to say. When the Lord says He has need of it, is there anything to say? This is how God calls His workers. We do not know when or whom God will call. It does not happen because you want it. God surely does His work. In order to accomplish the Lord's right will, God calls the colt. We must know that this colt is none other than ourselves and respond to that call of the Lord.

The colt is a blessed one

In fact, it is a glory to be a colt. If it goes about carrying only the Lord, the people say, *"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest" (Luke 19:38)*, so the colt has received a great blessing. Who welcomes a colt in front of it? In fact, they welcome it because it is carrying Jesus; if a colt were alone on the street, this person would go and kick it and that person would go and kick it, and they would throw stones at it and torment it when they were bored; so the colt is truly blessed. God has called in this way those people who were tied to the world—those workers, those

brothers and sisters, those who would devote themselves entirely to the work. When He called them, such things happened, and when He calls us, what we are to say is that the Lord has need of it. When people are born, they are all colts. In the Old Testament it says that *"every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb" (Exodus 13:13)*. It says that if you want to spare the firstborn colt, you should take a lamb and offer it as a sacrificial offering. We were, in fact, born as sinners from the time we were born. We were born as human beings who are stiff-necked and stubborn. But Jesus Christ received baptism from John and had all our sins transferred to Him, and He was sacrificed on the Cross in our place and saved us. So we are now being used before God. When the Lord said He had need of it, even the old owner had no choice but to let it go. The point is, when the Lord says He has need of it, is there anything to say? But the world does not hand us over so easily. It protests, asking why we are loosing it. Dear fellow believers, isn't that so? Even so, if the Lord says He has need of it, the Lord uses it.

God calls us suddenly one day while we are doing the work of the world. At any rate, there is a time when God calls. Looking at this passage, I can see that these disciples were simple, and Jesus also spoke very simply, and because this is the truth, it came about just as He said. He simply told them to go and loose it and bring it, and if anyone asked why they were loosing it, to say that the Lord had need of it. While loosing it, the disciples were caught by the owner. Why are you loosing it? They said, *"The Lord has need of him" (Luke 19:34)*, and brought it just as they were told and set Jesus on it. How simple a truth this is! There is no other reason. He simply told them to say that the Lord had need of it, and they loosed it and brought it, and He used it. And the colt was used. When this colt entered carrying Jesus, the people praised God, but in fact the people were not

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welcoming the colt. Whom were they welcoming? The people had heard that Jesus had come to this earth and raised the dead, healed the sick, performed the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, and done many works, so they welcomed Jesus, along with the colt that was coming carrying Jesus. In fact, when we serve the Lord, there are many times when we receive glory. But in reality, the attitude of a servant is the attitude of serving, not the attitude of being served.

We, too, receive glory because of Jesus. *"Because the Lord has need of it" (Luke 19:31)*. We must give ear to this word. When God calls us, in whatever form He uses us, we must respond to it. By all means, when God calls you and you are met with protests asking why you do not serve the world, why you do not do your own work and are going to do God's work, you must surely speak. You must say that God has said He will use you to do God's work and that you must do that work. When God calls us, we must tell people the word the Lord has spoken to us.

The donkey that must serve someone—the Lord's burden is light

"Because the Lord has need of it" (Luke 19:31). The disciples said those words and brought the colt, and in the end the colt carried Jesus on its back and entered Jerusalem, and was used in God's saving of souls. We have seen that part in the word, and if God says He will use us as workers in saving all souls, we must go along with that part by faith. Though many thoughts come up and there are things we cannot understand when the Lord says He has need of us, what can we do when the Lord wants to use us? I ask you to obey, to have faith, and also to

speak, in the matter in which God says He will use you, and to cut off the cords of the world and truly devote yourselves entirely to the work.

When God calls us for the very first time, He calls us when we have received the remission of sins and are tied to the world. *"Because the Lord has need of it" (Luke 19:31)*. God calls us into the church. And having called us into the church, He has us serve the Lord with material things, serve with prayer, serve with our bodies, serve in preaching the word, serve in preaching the gospel, and He uses us in all kinds of areas. God has called us and used us in this way. But if there is anything that ties us to the world, we cannot come back. Unless what ties us is untied, we cannot be used before God. So God untied everything through these disciples. Dear fellow believers, there are people who still have many things tying them to the world, aren't there? Are you perhaps tied to money? In any case, this colt was born to serve someone. We must know that. It has to serve someone. A colt can never become a horse, and even if it became a horse, it would have to serve, and a colt cannot become Jesus. Whether it bears the burdens of the world or carries Jesus Christ on its back, it has to carry someone. We are colts. Whatever we serve, we must serve. Whether we serve the work of God or the work of the world, we must serve one of the two.

So what happens if we do not serve the work of God? We serve the work of the world. If we serve the work of the world, the burden is in fact heavier. The Lord spoke as follows: *"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:30)*. He says it is light. But what about the work of the world? It is heavy. The colt definitely serves one of the two, either God or the world. The serving is the same. But the point is that serving the world is harder. If we do not serve God, we serve the world, and if we do not serve the world, we serve God. We must be released from

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serving the world. Though we live in the world, we must never serve the world.

Dear fellow believers, who are we? Are we not kings and priests? *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people" (1 Peter 2:9)*. Then whom must we serve? We must serve God. A colt is a colt, but whom must it serve? It must serve God; must it waddle along bearing that heavy heap of manure on both sides? Even if it is just a colt, must it go about smelling the stench of dung? The worldly owner does not even wash the donkey properly. God gives it a bath. When it walks across the fields, He sends rain from heaven and washes it. But people do not even treat it well. We must serve someone. We must serve God. When we serve God, the people of the world do not understand, and at that time what we must say is that the Lord has need of us, that He has said He will use us in this part, and that God is using us now.

We are all the flower-calyx of Jesus Christ

Among the brothers and sisters and the ministers there are flower-calyxes, and this is extremely important. The ministers are not the flower; we are all calyxes. Whose flower-calyxes? The flower-calyxes of Jesus Christ. This is so with the ministers, and with the brothers and sisters, and with everyone. The ministers are not the flower. Jesus Christ is the flower. So you are all serving as flower-calyxes; only the position in which you serve as a flower-calyx is different.

You and I are equally colts, but still, how precious it is to live as a colt that serves the Lord—is that so, or is it not? What we are to say is that our sins are gone and that the Lord has need of

us. We must make this clear before God and also before the people of the world. ✉

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Sermon 11 by Paul C. Jong

He wept when He saw Jerusalem, which did not know the things that make for peace

< Luke 19:41–44 >

"Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.'"

Even in a place where everything looks calm on the surface and everyone says it is all right, a person who knows the unresolved problem and the result that is coming finds it hard to laugh along with them. When Jesus, having come near Jerusalem, saw the city and wept, there were around Him the disciples who had been praising the Lord. Why did the King, who was receiving their praise, shed tears? The Lord spoke of the things that make for peace, which this city did not know, and of the fall

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that was to come upon it. When we listen to those tears and that warning together and look back at ourselves, it becomes clear what we must know and accept today.

The heart of the Savior, who saw the city and wept

Jesus did not evaluate the state of the city from far away, but came near and saw that city. *"As He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it" (Luke 19:41)*.

The short record that the Lord wept shows with what heart He spoke the word of judgment that follows. He did not rejoice at the fall of Jerusalem or make light of the people in it. He grieved because He saw a city heading toward destruction without knowing the way of peace. If we miss these tears while reading the Lord's solemn warning, we can misuse the word of judgment as words that condemn others and display our own superiority.

The Lord's sorrow is also different from the feeling that passes over sin as if it were nothing. Because He knows where sin and unbelief lead a person, the Lord did not hide the result. It is not that He did not speak of the danger because He loves, but that, because He loves, He made the danger clear. The exhortation of the gospel toward us, too, does not stop at comforting the heart for a moment, but makes us see our actual condition, in which we must be saved from sin.

We, too, are apt to start right away with blame when someone keeps away from the word. But what we, who have been rescued by the Lord's grace from the same sin, must first have is the heart that wants that soul to be saved. If we remember the Lord's tears, we cannot have the attitude of wishing for the other person's destruction on the grounds that we are speaking

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rightly. To speak clearly of the result of sin while earnestly asking that he return to the Savior is the way of following the heart of the Lord.

The things that make for peace, which the city did not know

Jesus spoke toward the city of what it did not know. *"Saying, 'If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes'" (Luke 19:42)*.

In Jerusalem the life that was visible to the eye was going on as usual, but that alone could not be said to mean there was true peace. The things that make for peace, of which the Lord spoke, were contained in the very praise the disciples had sung just a little before. *"Saying: '"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!" Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!'" (Luke 19:38)*. The peace of heaven belongs to the person who recognizes and receives the salvation that God comes and bestows, but the city that had received that King did not actually know who He was. If one does not know the King who saves even though He has come near, the fact that daily life continues within the city cannot guarantee the safety of the soul. We, too, must not put off examining our relationship with God merely because life is going smoothly.

While still in sin, we tend to look for words that put our own hearts at ease. We think that everyone else is the same, or that it will be all right if we do more good deeds from now on, but such thoughts cannot remove sin. Peace with God can be enjoyed only when sin and its judgment have been settled. Jesus came to this earth precisely to accomplish that work.

Because the sin of a person who had become an enemy of God through sin first had to be removed for him to be reconciled with God, the Lord, when He began His public ministry, received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River and had all the sins of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. Through that baptism the sins of our whole lives were passed on to Jesus, and Jesus, bearing that sin of the world, was nailed to the Cross right here in Jerusalem, shed His blood and died, receiving in our place the judgment for sins that we were to receive, and rose again from death and became our Savior. The peace between God and us was accomplished in this way. That peace is not a comfort obtained by thinking as if we had never had sin, but is based on the fact that the Lord bore our sins and received all the judgment.

Therefore, we must regard the salvation the Lord has accomplished as more precious than the circumstances that look calm to our eyes. The Lord lamented that it would have been good if they had known the things that make for peace, and said that now they were hidden from their eyes. Before this word, we must not be spectators of others' darkness, but must examine whether we ourselves are pushing away the word of salvation that is being heard today. A familiar religious life or long-held self-confidence cannot take the place of faith in Jesus Christ.

The siege that would come upon the city that looked secure

Jesus did not speak of what would befall the city merely as a vague misfortune. *"Days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side" (Luke 19:43).*

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The scene in which the enemies build an embankment and surround the city and close it in on every side is a scene in which the security the city thought it could keep by itself collapses. At that time, the things one usually relied on do not open a way of escape. The Lord, speaking of what had not yet appeared before their eyes, awakened the heart that lives as if the present state would continue endlessly. Since the day the warning is heard and the day that event comes are not the same time, we must respond to the word we have heard today.

Having heard this warning does not mean that we can arbitrarily conclude that every disaster is a punishment for someone's unbelief. Here the Lord spoke directly concerning Jerusalem, and before that word we learn that God's judgment is right. Instead of carelessly attaching reasons to other people's suffering, we must lay down the thought that our own strength and possessions can protect us forever. Just as the walls surrounding the city could not take the place of the Lord's salvation, our achievements cannot deliver us from the judgment of sin.

That is why faith is not an attitude of leaving the affairs of the world to go any which way. It is to do faithfully the work entrusted to us today while not making it our eternal refuge. When we have much, we do not become conceited that it solves every problem, and when we have little, we do not despair as if we had lost even the grace of salvation. When we hold on to the fact that the remission of sins the Lord has bestowed makes us stand before God, we can avoid changing the object of our faith as our circumstances pull us.

The faith that accepts the word at the time of visitation

The Lord went on to speak of the fall that would follow the siege and the reason for it. *"And level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:44).*

The word that even the children within the city would be leveled to the ground and that not one stone would be left upon another reveals the weight of the judgment. It was not because He foresaw a slight loss that the Lord wept. The Lord stated as the clear reason that the city had failed to recognize God's coming and visitation. To treat lightly the time when God speaks and shows the way to return is never a small matter.

The opportunity we have today, in which the word of salvation is heard by us, is also not something to be taken for granted. While we put it off, saying that we will believe when we have more time, our lives pass by, and we cannot hold on to that time by our own strength. If we have heard and come to know what sins the Lord bore and how He bore them, we must accept that salvation in our hearts. Instead of waiting for better circumstances or the agreement of others, to believe in the Savior, who received baptism for us and received the judgment of the Cross, is the response needed now.

The Lord, who saw the city and wept, knew the peril hidden beneath its calm outward appearance. Let us, too, before those tears, lay down the self-comfort that says there is no problem and accept the word that gives true peace. We who have already received the grace of salvation must give thanks for that grace, and pray for those who do not yet know the Savior and preach the gospel to them. This very time, in which we hear the word

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of the Lord today, is the time of visitation, and the person who recognizes and accepts this time comes to enjoy the peace that the Lord, who saw the city and wept, gives. ✉

He wept when He saw Jerusalem,
which did not know the things that make for peace

Sermon 12 by Paul C. Jong

The house of God is a house of prayer

< Luke 19:45–46 >

"Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, saying to them, 'It is written, "My house is a house of prayer," but you have made it a "den of thieves."'"

When we have done the same work for a long time, there are times when we forget the original purpose and keep only the way things have been running. Though we gathered saying that we serve God, before we know it, people's gain and face may become more important, and only the words that this work must not be stopped may remain. When Jesus entered the temple, there was buying and selling going on continually there. The Lord did not accept it as it was, but spoke of what the temple was a house for. So that we, too, do not continue a wrong thing for the reason that we have been doing it habitually, we must first examine before that word the will in which God delights.

What He set right when He entered the temple

Jesus, who had wept on seeing the state of Jerusalem, went into the temple. *"He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it" (Luke 19:45).*

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The Lord did not merely look on at what was going on inside the temple, nor pass it by as something everyone had been doing. His act of beginning to drive out those who were doing business revealed that that place had departed from its original purpose. Not everything becomes holy for the reason that it is done in a religious place. The Lord showed that even if people accept something as familiar, if it is a thing that obscures the will of God, it must be set right.

The temple was not a place that people could treat as their own possession and whose purpose they could change as they pleased. The reason Jesus set right what was going on inside it is that in the house that belongs to God, the will of God must come first. This makes us look back on our own community. Even if many people gather, the work proceeds actively, and the finances increase, if hearing the word of salvation and relying on God is pushed to the back, we must ask again what we are gathering for.

We are so used to keeping up outward appearances that there are times when, even though we see a wrong, we worry that the atmosphere might be spoiled. But a community that follows the word of the Lord must be able to accept the correction that is needed. Even if admitting and correcting a wrong feels like losing face, it is right to follow the will of the Lord rather than to leave it as it is and cause more people to grow distant from the word. The act of the Lord, who set the temple right, demands such honest obedience of us as well.

Turning the house of prayer into a den of thieves

While driving the people out, Jesus told them the reason. *"Saying to them, 'It is written, "My house is a house of prayer," but you have made it a "den of thieves"'" (Luke 19:46).*

The difference between a house of prayer and a den of thieves does not lie in whether the outward appearance is tidy. The problem was that the place where people should come before God and rely on Him had turned into a place that protected people's greed. If people look after their own gain under the name of serving God and yet consider themselves safe for the reason that they are in a religious position, that amounts to covering up their own wrong with that name. The Lord rebuked the house of God being used as such a pretext.

We must not expand this word to mean that all trading of goods or making a living is itself evil. What the Lord pointed out was the question of what they had made the house of God into. We must distinguish between raising the expenses the church needs and working faithfully, and using worship and faith to satisfy people's desires. If we avoid our responsibility before the word for the reason that we have offered much money, or make an office a means of being respected by people, we end up repeating the same wrong.

Therefore, when deciding the affairs of the community, we must not ask only how much profit will come of it. We must examine whether that work helps people to hear the gospel and believe in the Lord, and whether it does not block the voice of the weak and leave only the will of the powerful. If we divide the people who want to come before God by position and wealth, it goes against the meaning of a house of prayer. In the place where we share together the grace we have received from the

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Lord, even a person who has little must be able to hear the word and speak to God.

Prayer that comes forward by the grace of salvation, not by one's own righteousness

When we hear the word that it is a house of prayer, we must also think about on what grounds we can stand before God. Earlier, Jesus had spoken of how the tax collector who went up to the temple to pray spoke to God. *"The tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'" (Luke 18:13)*.

The tax collector did not put forward before God the claim that he was better than other people, but asked God to have mercy on him, a sinner; and the Lord said of him as follows. *"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other" (Luke 18:14)*. The heart needed in a house of prayer is not a heart that seeks recognition by boasting of our labor and wealth, but the faith that admits one's own sins and relies on the grace of God. However holy the building one enters may look, one cannot remove one's sins by one's own merit.

The ground of salvation on which God receives us lies not in our devotion but in the right thing that Jesus Christ accomplished. When the Lord received from John the Baptist at the Jordan River the baptism in which hands were laid on His head, He had all the sins of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all, and all the sins we commit from the time we are born until we die were passed on to Jesus at that time. Because He bore those sins, the Lord was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died, receiving in our place the judgment we had to receive, and

He rose again from death and became our Savior. The person who believes in this grace, by which He removed our sins through His baptism and the Cross, does not have to give up coming to God for the reason that his own merit is lacking.

Therefore, prayer is not a matter of piling up more devotion to pay the price of salvation. It is believing in and giving thanks for the remission of sins the Lord has bestowed, and telling our needs to God, who cares for His children. Even when our lacking conduct is exposed, we must not try to hide it or cover it with religious labor, but must speak honestly before the Lord. Asking for the strength to turn from the wrong path and the wisdom to follow the word, we must live with a heart that relies on the grace that saved us.

The community that seeks the name and the kingdom of God

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He told them what to ask for first. *"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 prayer that asks that God's name be hallowed and that His kingdom come sets the purpose of our gathering aright. We cannot seek the glory of God with our mouths only while being absorbed in exalting our own names. If we seek the rule of God, we must place our plans and practices, too, under the word, and correct them when something wrong is exposed. If prayer and obedience are separated, even the name of a house of prayer can become like a signboard that hides the actual life.

The Lord causes the saints who have received the remission of sins to gather together, hear the word, preach the gospel, and

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care for one another. Possessions, time, and talents, too, must be used for that purpose. The person who does the work entrusted to him must look to see who is not hearing the gospel rather than expand his own rights, and the community must not turn away from the person who labors but must share the help that is needed. When we serve one another in this way, prayer does not remain merely one item in the order of the meeting, but becomes the faith that leads the life of the community.

No one can use the authority of the Lord, who cleansed the temple, to justify his own anger. What we must follow is not the act of pushing people around recklessly, but the word that tells us to serve the house of God according to the will of God. Even in the process of correcting a wrong, we must examine the facts honestly, treat people as precious, and help the community to devote itself again to the word and prayer. Let us not forget the fact that we, too, are people who must receive the Lord's correction.

When the way we have long been doing things holds us back, let us return to the word of the Lord, who said that it is a house of prayer. Hearing and believing together the grace that saved us and giving thanks to God must become the center of our gathering. Let us lay down the greed that obscures that center, and offer our labor so that people may hear the gospel and rely on God. I hope that we will live as a community that prays and serves together according to the purpose in which the Lord delights. ✉

Sermon 13 by Paul C. Jong

The people who listened attentively to the word He taught daily

< Luke 19:47–48 >

“And He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him, and were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.”

Being together in the place where the word is heard does not mean that everyone hears it with the same heart. Some try to correct their own thoughts through the word, and some try to do away with the uncomfortable word in order to keep their own position. When Jesus taught in the temple, too, that difference was revealed. The people listened attentively to the word of the Lord, but the leaders tried to kill Jesus. Looking at these two responses, we must not stop at judging who is speaking rightly, but must examine how we ourselves are treating the word of the Lord.

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The teaching that continued even amid threats

The Lord, who had driven out those who were doing business in the temple, continued the work of teaching there. *"He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him" (Luke 19:47)*.

After the act of setting the temple right came the work of teaching the word daily. Merely stopping a wrong thing does not bring faith into people's hearts. For people to know the will of God and receive salvation, they had to hear the word of the Lord. Jesus did that work in the temple, and in that very place the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people were looking for a way to kill the Lord.

The Lord did not withdraw the word that people needed for the reason that there was opposition to His teaching. The record that He taught daily shows that His care did not stop at a single great event. Luke later wrote of those days as follows. *"In the daytime He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet. Then early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him" (Luke 21:37–38)*. In our life of faith, too, we must not wait only for the deep emotion of a special moment, but must value hearing and learning the word steadily. This is because even when we pass over a text as one we already know, in actual life we can forget that word and put our own will first.

The church's work of teaching the word, too, must not end with giving people a momentarily impressive experience. It must explain what the Savior has done so that people know it clearly, and help those who have heard to look at their own faith and lives in the light of the word. When the gospel we hear repeatedly feels tiresome, we must look back and ask whether

the word has grown old, or whether our hearts are wanting something else more. The grace that gave us life does not become knowledge that is no longer needed for the reason that we have heard it for a long time.

The two responses that parted ways in the same temple

The leaders tried to do away with Jesus, but could not find a way to act as they wished. Luke records the reason as follows. *"And were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him" (Luke 19:48)*.

Because the people were listening attentively to the word of the Lord, their plan could not be carried out immediately. Over the same word, on one side appeared a heart that wanted to hear, and on the other side a plan to kill the Lord, who was teaching, was going forward. The fact that one's religious position was high was not in itself evidence that one had a right heart before the word. Rather, the person who held on to his own position more than to the authority of the Lord could end up standing on the side that hindered the word of God.

As we read this scene, before pointing our fingers at them, we must look to see whether the same attitude is not in our own hearts as well. Do we not welcome the word when it agrees with our own claims, and then, when it exposes our wrongs, look only for the faults of the person speaking? Even after hearing a right exhortation, we may wish that the word would spread no further, in order to save face. If we leave such a heart as it is, we become people who actually push the word away even while being in a place where we hear the word up close.

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Nor does the fact that all the people were listening mean that a great number of people gathering is in itself the standard of truth. The word they were hearing was precious because it was the word of the Lord; it is not that the word of the Lord became true because there were many hearers. Today, too, we must not make people's popularity or the authority of an office the final ground of faith. We need the attitude of examining the word of the Lord recorded in the Scriptures and accepting the teaching that accords with that word.

The word of salvation we must listen to attentively

Listening attentively to the word of the Lord is not a matter of picking out and remembering only beautiful expressions. We must go on to know and believe who He is and what He has accomplished for us. The risen Jesus, while making clear to His disciples the meaning of the written word, spoke as follows. *"He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem'" (Luke 24:46–47).*

The Lord, who was teaching in Jerusalem, did not abandon the work of salvation in order to escape the plan to kill Him. People's evil plan was evil, but the Lord went the way of suffering and death and rose again according to His will to save sinners. Therefore, at the center of what we must listen to attentively is the salvation of Jesus Christ, who delivered us from sin. Even if we know much of the word and can explain it, if we do not believe in that Savior with our hearts, the knowledge we have heard cannot take the place of the remission of sins.

The suffering Christ received was not because of His own sins. When Jesus began His public ministry, He received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River and had all the sins of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all, and because He bore at that time even all the sins we commit throughout our lives, He received in our place the judgment we were to receive by bearing those sins and being hung on the Cross and shedding His blood and dying. And He rose again from death on the third day and became our Savior. The word that repentance for the remission of sins is preached in His name is precisely the word that tells us to believe in this baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection and receive the remission of sins, and because of that grace we can come boldly before God.

This word of salvation does not make us cling more strongly to our own will. It makes us admit that we ourselves cannot remove our sins, and believe the fact that the Lord Himself bore our sins. Because we know our own lack, we can listen all the more attentively, and because the agent of salvation is Jesus, we can rely on the grace of the Lord even when ups and downs appear in our conduct. Here is the way to rise up again following the word, without rationalizing our wrongs and yet without remaining in despair.

The blessing of a life that keeps the word it has heard

The Lord also taught what kind of life the blessing of hearing the word must lead to. *"He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'" (Luke 11:28).*

Hearing and keeping does not mean obtaining salvation by piling up good deeds. It is that, because we have truly accepted

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the word that saved us, we do not cast that word away but believe and follow it. If we change the ground of salvation into our own faithfulness, the deeds we have kept soon become something to boast of, and when we fall short, the ground for believing collapses along with them. But if we rely on the salvation the Lord has accomplished, we follow the word with thanksgiving, and when we are weak, we can ask for the Lord's help.

To keep in our lives the word we have heard, we must first accept its meaning accurately. While hearing an exhortation, rather than immediately looking first for words to apply to other people, we must examine the attitude we must correct and the way we must follow. In the place where we used to hide the truth to avoid loss, we must choose honesty, and in the place where we used to turn away from our neighbor because of our own gain, we must look for a way to care for him. Even if such choices do not come back to us as other people's recognition, we can walk on with the faith that the word of the Lord is right.

A community that hears the word together must help one another in such steps. We must not regard the questions of a learner as a nuisance, but must explain fully the parts he has misunderstood by connecting them with the ground of salvation. Also, the person who teaches the word must not make his own thoughts absolute, but must stand under the written word. If we remember the fact that the Lord taught daily in the temple, we cannot treat the work of caring for people as if it were finished because we said it once. The labor of teaching patiently and hearing together is needed.

In the same temple, a heart that tried to do away with the word and a heart that listened attentively were revealed. Today we must turn from the attitude of pushing the word away in order to keep our own position even while hearing it. Let us believe in the Lord, who suffered and rose again for sinners, and give

thanks for the grace that keeps letting us hear the word we need. Let us receive that word into our hearts and keep it, follow the Lord in today's choices as well, and preach the news of salvation to those who have not yet heard. The word of the Lord, who taught daily, is still being heard today by those who give ear. ✉

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CHAPTER

20

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You can download Rev. Paul C. Jong's Christian Books to Computer, Tablet or Smartphone.

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Who has the authority to remit sins?

< Luke 20:1–8 >

“Now it happened on one of those days, as He taught the people in the temple and preached the gospel, that the chief priests and the scribes, together with the elders, confronted Him and spoke to Him, saying, ‘Tell us, by what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?’ But He answered and said to them, ‘I also will ask you one thing, and answer Me: The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, “From heaven,” He will say, “Why then did you not believe him?” But if we say, “From men,” all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet.’ So they answered that they did not know where it was from. And Jesus said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’”

Two hearts that met face to face in the temple

When Jesus was preaching the gospel to the people in the temple, the leaders came near. It was a place where the same word was heard, but rather than the teaching of salvation, they first questioned where the authority to teach had come from. We, too, must examine what we are hearing when we come before the word. For a heart that wants to learn the way to be saved

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from sin and a heart that wants to keep only the way it has itself approved go on to entirely different paths even with the same Bible opened before them.

Let us read verse 2, which says that they "*spoke to Him, saying, 'Tell us, by what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?'" (Luke 20:2)*. These people regarded what Jesus was doing as something they had to permit. In their eyes, Jesus was One who had never studied under a renowned teacher and had no power to put forward, so they asked by what qualification He was teaching the people. But Jesus did not come to seek human recognition or authorization for His work as the Savior. Jesus is in His essence God, and since He is the One who became a man and came to this earth to save us, mankind, what we must know first is the fact of who He is and what work He accomplishes for us.

Even if a person's position is high, he cannot remove another person's sins. For since he himself also has sin, he has no ability to resolve the judgment of sin before God. True authority belongs to God alone, and the authority to remit sins also belongs to God alone. Yet Jesus, while healing the paralytic, said, *"But that ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins –ASV" (Luke 5:24)*. If Jesus exercised the authority that belongs to God alone, He is God who appeared as a man. If we, while seeking the Savior, examine only men's recognition and qualifications, we fail to recognize the very One who remits sins even with Him right before our eyes. We must realize from this scene that a position of knowing the word much and the faith that gives one's heart to the One who gave that word are not the same.

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Acknowledge the One who sent John

Jesus asked them where the baptism of John had come from. This is the word of verse 4. *"The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?" (Luke 20:4)*. The words "was it from heaven" mean, "Was it a work done because God sent him?" This question exposes the thought of placing God's work under men's permission. If John was a servant whom God sent, the word he preached and the work he did also had to be accepted as God's will. The leaders were asking about the authority of Jesus, but they first had to answer whether they had believed God's work that had already appeared before them.

John cried out, exposing people's sins, so that they would return to God, and he testified of Jesus Christ. God knew that sinners could not attain salvation through their own righteousness, so He sent the Savior who would take upon Himself all the sins of the world and remove them. Therefore, to acknowledge the work of John does not end with exalting his name. It must lead on to coming to Jesus, to whom he pointed, and accepting, as the word says, one's own sins and the salvation the Lord accomplished.

Look at the word Jesus spoke when He received baptism from John. *"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him" (Matthew 3:15)*. Jesus' receiving baptism from John was the event of having all the sins of the world passed on to His own body. Because the sins that you and I commit throughout our whole lives were also passed on to Him at that time, the Lord did not begin the way of salvation while leaving our sins behind.

Jesus, who bore that sin, received in our place the judgment we were to receive by shedding His blood and dying on the

Cross, and He rose again from death and completed salvation. Because He had sin passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, He received the judgment for that sin on the Cross; therefore, the baptism and the Cross are one work of salvation that cannot be separated from each other. This work, which Jesus Christ, who is God, accomplished Himself, is the gospel we are to believe. It is not that men's consent produces the remission of sins; rather, we receive the remission of sins by believing in the salvation the Savior accomplished.

The unbelief hidden behind the answer that they did not know

The leaders, on hearing Jesus' question, did not examine in the light of the word who John was. They calculated among themselves which answer would be disadvantageous to them. Let us read verse 5. *"They reasoned among themselves, saying, 'If we say, "From heaven," He will say, "Why then did you not believe him?"'" (Luke 20:5)*. If they answered that it was a work that had come from heaven, they had to admit their own unbelief, and if they said that it had come from men, they were afraid of the people, who regarded John as a prophet.

In the end, they answered that they did not know where it was from. This answer did not come from a heart that wanted to learn what it did not know; it was a word that came out at the end of a discussion meant to avoid the part they would have to correct if they acknowledged the truth. We, too, can keep the word at a distance because we hate to admit the fact that our own thoughts are wrong. What is needed at such a time is not a more plausible excuse, but humbling our hearts before the word that exposes sin.

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A person who acknowledges his own sins can go forward toward the Savior, but a person who spends all his heart on keeping his own righteousness comes to dispute even the word of salvation. The remission of sins is not something we obtain by receiving the verdict that we are decent people. It is to accept God's judgment that we have sin and to believe the gospel that Jesus bore that very sin. Even if admitting one's own fault seems like a matter of losing face, before the Savior it becomes a matter of opening one's heart to receive grace.

The appearance of the leaders who feared the eyes of the people also reflects our hearts today. If we think first of what the people close to us will say, people's reactions look bigger than the rightness or wrongness of the word. But the One who judges our sins and gives us life is God. Since no one else can believe in our place, nor wash away our sins in our place, each of us must accept in his own heart the salvation God accomplished.

Humble your heart before the word of the Savior

Let us read verse 8. *"Jesus said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things'" (Luke 20:8)*. It is not that Jesus did not answer because He had no authority. People who did not acknowledge even the work of John, whom God sent, were not willing to receive the word of salvation that Jesus made known, either. The attitude of defending themselves to the end was what kept them from hearing the truth.

Before this word, we cannot sit like people who are examining Jesus. If we have come to know that the authority to remit sins is with Him, we must no longer put our own judgment first, but place our hearts under the word of the Savior. This is not a word telling us to follow a man without thinking. It is an

exhortation to know the person and work of Jesus, of which the Bible testifies, and to accept as true the salvation He accomplished. Since the basis of salvation is in the Lord, who is outside of us, there is no reason to abandon that basis even when we see our own weakness.

To submit under the authority of God means this. When we yield our hearts as God has ordained and accept what He has done, we obtain salvation and become children of God, and we also come to stand as God's workers on this earth. If we do not submit, there is no way to receive the grace He bestows. Therefore, we who have received the remission of sins must, even after that, not put our own judgment first, but remain under the word of Jesus, who is God.

The question of authority that began in the temple now turns toward our hearts. Though you know that the authority to remit sins is with Jesus Christ, are you not putting off your answer because of people's evaluation? The reason we hear the word of salvation is not to keep our own righteousness but to obtain life. Let us believe in Jesus, who saved us, as God and Savior, and give our hearts honestly before Him. Then the lips that questioned authority are changed into lips that give thanks for the grace of the Savior. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The rejected Son became the chief cornerstone of salvation

< Luke 20:9–18 >

"Then He began to tell the people this parable: 'A certain man planted a vineyard, leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long time. Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that they might give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the vinedressers beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent another servant; and they beat him also, treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. And again he sent a third; and they wounded him also and cast him out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, "What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Probably they will respect him when they see him." But when the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, "This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours." So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others.' And when they heard it they said, 'Certainly not!' Then He looked at them and said, 'What then is this that is written: "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief

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cornerstone"? Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.'"

The vineyard the owner entrusted

The vinedressers received the opportunity to work in the vineyard, but before they knew it they were trying to make that vineyard their own. The fact that they had long done the work entrusted to them does not let them take the place of the owner. The reason Jesus speaks this parable is to expose the heart that enjoys what it has received from God and yet refuses God's will. We must examine whether, while saying that we serve the Lord, we also have the heart to accept the Lord's word.

Let us read verse 9. *"He began to tell the people this parable: 'A certain man planted a vineyard, leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long time'" (Luke 20:9)*. The one who made the vineyard is the owner, and the vinedressers are the people who were entrusted with that place and worked there. That the owner was far away for a long time does not mean that the ownership of the vineyard had changed. Even while the owner was not visible before their eyes, the work the vinedressers had to do lay within the relationship they had made with the owner.

God made man and gave him life, and He also gave the word of salvation to man, who had fallen into sin. If we forget the fact that our life and soul belong to God, even faith turns into a matter of gaining our own profit. For the work God entrusted to us in order to give people life can be used to build up our own name and power. To remember the owner of the vineyard is to treat every person as a soul whom God wants to give life, and to follow His will.

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The owner sent a servant to receive some of the fruit, but the vinedressers beat the servant and sent him back empty-handed. The next servant was also treated shamefully, and the third servant was also wounded and driven out, so this was not something that ended with a single mistake. The vinedressers refused each time the owner's will was conveyed to them again. Even when the opportunity to hear the word of God and turn one's heart is given, if the heart to keep one's own things comes first, one ends up throwing away that opportunity while getting angry at the one who preaches the word.

The vinedressers who cast out even the beloved son

After the servants had been rejected, the owner sent his son. This is the word of verse 13. *"The owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Probably they will respect him when they see him'" (Luke 20:13)*. The owner expected the respect due to his son, but the thoughts of the vinedressers were different. Even though they knew who the son was, far from respecting him, they tried to get rid of him because of the fact that he was the heir. When a person's heart is seized by greed, even if he knows the fact he ought to know, he cannot go forward to obedience.

Let us read verse 14. *"When the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours'" (Luke 20:14)*. What was missing from their discussion was the will of the owner who had entrusted the vineyard to them. Since they thought only about what they could gain, the son looked like an obstacle. In the end, the vinedressers cast the son out of the vineyard and killed him, and the hearts of the people who had

been doing the work entrusted to them were revealed in an act of opposing the owner.

With this parable, Jesus makes clear the hearts of the leaders who were rejecting Him. When the Son of God came, the people who should have heard His word and received salvation tried instead to kill Him. Even if one is in a position of serving God, if one is unwilling to let go of one's own authority and profit, one can reject the Son of God. Therefore, rather than finding reassurance in how long we have lived a life of faith, we must examine the heart with which we now accept what Jesus has done.

This warning is not material for finding and condemning other people's greed. For I, too, while speaking of the Lord's grace, can become stubborn before the word that tells me to correct my thoughts. The heart that wants to keep the righteousness it has itself established also pushes the Lord away. Since one cannot boast of one's own merit as the basis of salvation if one accepts the fact that Jesus has remitted all sins, the word of grace becomes uncomfortable to a person who values his own righteousness.

The rejected Son became the chief cornerstone of salvation

The vinedressers thought that if they got rid of the son, their own will would be accomplished, but the fact that the owner would return and judge them did not disappear. When Jesus spoke of that ending, the people who were listening said, *"Certainly not!" (Luke 20:16)*. But if they kept on rejecting the son while holding only the wish that they did not want judgment, there would be no basis to protect them when the owner returned.

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To reach salvation, they must rightly know and accept who the One they are trying to cast away is.

Let us read verse 17. *"He looked at them and said, 'What then is this that is written: "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone"?'" (Luke 20:17)*. The stone that was thrown away as useless became the stone indispensable for building the house. It is not that the work of salvation of Jesus became useless because people rejected Him. Rather, the One who causes us, who had become enemies of God because of sin, to come to God is that very Jesus Christ.

For us to come to God, the problem of sin must be solved. By efforts to appear righteous, we cannot remove the judgment for the sins we have already committed. So God, from the time man sinned, established the way to save man by passing man's sins on to a sacrificial offering and having that offering die in his place, and when the time was fulfilled, He sent His Son as that sacrificial offering. Since Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John, the sins each of us commits throughout our whole lives were also passed on to Him without exception. Jesus, who bore those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment for sins that we were to receive.

Since Jesus rose again from death and accomplished our salvation, we come to God relying not on our own merit but on His work. To believe that the Son whom the vinedressers rejected became the very chief cornerstone that joins us to God is the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus is not a decoration that covers over our shortcomings for appearance's sake; He is the Savior who actually removes sin and makes us stand as children of God. For this reason, the way of trying to be reconciled with God by one's own righteousness apart from Him cannot stand.

Workers who accept the owner's will

Jesus not only becomes the Savior but is also the One who judges those who reject that salvation. This is the word of verse 18. *"Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder" (Luke 20:18)*. A person who exalts his own thoughts above the truth and opposes Christ to the end cannot overcome that authority. To think that we can get rid of the Lord by our own judgment is no different from the thought of the vinedressers, who tried to kill the son and take possession of the inheritance.

Therefore, we must not deny even the remission of sins the Lord accomplished, with our own weakness as the reason. We must distinguish between our flesh, which commits sin, and the work of the Lord, who washed away sin. It is to turn from what we did wrong without dressing it up as right, while holding on by faith to the word of salvation that tells us He bore even those sins. A person who has accepted the Lord's righteousness can also lay his own life down before the word, and he can break free from the attitude of refusing God's work in order to keep his own righteousness.

The work of life the Lord has entrusted to us also begins from this faith. To preach the gospel so that people receive the remission of sins and come to God is the fruit that pleases the owner. If we hold on to people as if they were our own possession or make the results of our service our own boast, we come to forget the owner of the vineyard. When we serve with the heart of returning saved souls to God, we come to live not as vinedressers who rob the owner of what is his, but as workers who follow the owner's will.

What the vinedressers who were first entrusted with the vineyard needed was not more land but a heart that

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acknowledged the owner. What we need today, too, is not making our own share bigger but the faith that respects the Son. Accept Jesus Christ, who has joined us to God, as the chief cornerstone of your heart. When we give ourselves to the work of saving souls, giving thanks for the grace entrusted to us, we can live with a heart that shares the owner's joy instead of the heart that tried to make the vineyard our own. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Give to God the things that are God's

< Luke 20:19–26 >

"And the chief priests and the scribes that very hour sought to lay hands on Him, but they feared the people—for they knew He had spoken this parable against them. So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, that they might seize on His words, in order to deliver Him to the power and the authority of the governor. Then they asked Him, saying, 'Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God in truth: Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' But He perceived their craftiness, and said to them, 'Why do you test Me? Show Me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have?' They answered and said, 'Caesar's.' And He said to them, 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' But they could not catch Him in His words in the presence of the people. And they marveled at His answer and kept silent."

The question thrown while pretending to be righteous

The words of the people who asked Jesus about the matter of taxes were polite, but their purpose did not lie in learning the

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word. For the leaders, who had understood that the earlier parable of the vineyard pointed to them, were looking for a way to seize Jesus. When one realizes one's own fault, one may submit to the word, or one may try to get rid of the One who preaches that word. Today's text shows that what a person knows and with what heart he treats it can be different from each other.

Let us read verse 20. *"So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, that they might seize on His words, in order to deliver Him to the power and the authority of the governor" (Luke 20:20)*. In the words that they pretended to be righteous, the distance between the real heart and the outward appearance is revealed. While hiding their purpose of harming Jesus, they acted like people seeking right teaching. It is not that, because we outwardly say godly words, those words immediately become honest faith before God.

The spies first brought out words exalting Jesus. *"Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God in truth" (Luke 20:21)*. If they had really believed as their lips praised, they would have entrusted themselves to Jesus' answer. However, they were seeking grounds to accuse Jesus even in His truthful words. Thus, although they praised the truth with their lips, they did not obey it in their hearts. Seeing this appearance, we, too, must look back on whether we are actually accepting the word we have said is right.

The heart that wants to keep its own righteousness makes even the word a means of achieving its own purpose. Rather than being corrected itself by hearing the word, it wants to obtain words that support the conclusion it has already set. To a person who listens in that way, even the word of salvation becomes a matter of dispute, but to a person who acknowledges sin, the

same word makes clear the way to come to the Savior. The honesty needed before God is not skill in speaking so as to appear righteous, but a heart that acknowledges what the word says about oneself and salvation.

The answer of the Lord, who knows the craftiness

Let us read in verse 22 the question they put forward. *"Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" (Luke 20:22)*. If we look at this question by itself, it seems like a matter one needs to know in actual life. But Luke first makes clear that they had come to deliver Jesus to the authority of the governor. Even if the form of a question looks right, the purpose held inside is not necessarily right as well, and Jesus knew their craftiness.

A person may not easily distinguish between an honest question and a contrived question, but before the Lord, the purpose in one's heart cannot be hidden. Therefore, when we face the word, we must not spend our strength on hiding our own deceit, but honestly lay down the heart the Lord already knows. His exposing our faults is also a work of setting us before the word of salvation. Succeeding in hiding is not a blessing to us; coming to know sin and believe in the Savior is a blessing.

Jesus told them to show Him a denarius and asked whose image and inscription were on it. When they answered that they were Caesar's, the Lord taught from that answer what ought to be returned. The questioners tried to shut Jesus up inside the choice they had made, but Jesus exposed even the responsibility toward God, about which they had not asked. We must not, even after hearing the Lord's answer, take only the conclusion about taxes and leave behind the heart to be given to God.

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Give your heart to God, who has remitted sins

This is the word of verse 25. *"He said to them, 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's'" (Luke 20:25)*. Jesus did not let the matter of paying taxes become an excuse for abandoning faith toward God. Even while doing what we ought to carry out in the world, we must give to God what is to be returned to God. The circumstance of living under men's authority does not become a reason to deny God, who made our life.

To know the heart we must give to God, we must first know what God has done for us. God gave us life, and He sent Jesus Christ to save us, who had fallen into sin. A person who pretends to be righteous by himself easily thinks that he has no need to receive this grace, but before God, no one can solve the problem of sin by his own good deeds. We must honestly acknowledge sin and accept the way of salvation that God has prepared.

The way God has prepared is this. Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River. Since the sins of our whole lives are also included in all those sins of the world, the sins hidden behind outward appearances and the sins contrived out of a desire to be recognized by others are also included in the sins the Savior bore. Bearing the sins that had been passed on to Him in that way, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving judgment in our place, and by rising again from death He accomplished complete salvation. Even while a person creates the impression that he is righteous, sin remains, but the Savior has removed that sin itself.

The heart that believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit is the heart that accepts as true what the Lord has done. It is not because we have repaid the price of sin with offerings or service

that we receive God's grace. Since we do not need to pay again the punishment for sin that Jesus has already borne, we enjoy the remission of sins by relying on Him. The life of giving ourselves to God also comes from gratitude for having received this grace, and it must not turn into a matter of paying a price in order to buy salvation.

The spies pretended to be righteous before men, but what we need is to actually obtain the remission of sins before God. The difference between the two lies not in how godly one looks, but in whether one believes what Jesus has done. If we clearly know the fact that the One who makes us righteous is Jesus, there is no longer any reason to dress up the outward appearance of our faith in order to win from others the evaluation that we are righteous. Giving thanks for the righteousness God has given and living according to His word becomes the direction of our lives.

From lips that fell silent to a heart that believes

Let us read verse 26. *"They could not catch Him in His words in the presence of the people. And they marveled at His answer and kept silent" (Luke 20:26).* The people who had tried to make Jesus' word material for accusation could no longer catch Him in His words. Their silence shows the fact that they could not overcome the Lord's wisdom, but the place where we are to stop here is not the victory or defeat of the dispute. Our hearts, having heard that word, must return to God.

A person can evaluate Jesus' answer as excellent and yet remain as he is. Just as the spies had said from the beginning that Jesus' teaching was right, the response of faith is not fully accomplished merely by acknowledging that it is a right word. If we have heard the right word, we must examine ourselves in

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the light of that word and accept in our hearts the Savior, who gives the remission of sins. Then the Bible comes to us no longer as a tool for judging other people's words, but as the word that leads our lives.

A person who has given his heart to God neither puts off serving the gospel with daily responsibilities as an excuse, nor abandons daily responsibilities with serving the gospel as an excuse. He carries out honestly the responsibilities he must carry out, and he also uses the life and time he has received from God for the Lord's will. The reason we do not try to use everything that has come into our hands only for our own desires is that we, who have been saved, belong to God. Our working hard and serving the gospel, too, is not an effort to establish our own righteousness, but a response to the grace that gave us life.

The people who had hidden a snare behind polite praise fell silent before Jesus. Watching that scene, we must examine ourselves so that the praise of our lips and the faith of our hearts go together. Do not try to defend your own thoughts by using the Lord's word, but give your heart to that word. To us who have heard the word to return the things of Caesar, there remains the word to give also the things of God to God. Let us give to God, who saved us from sin, a heart of gratitude and a life lived by that grace. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The children of God who will not die again

< Luke 20:27–40 >

"Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: 'Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he dies without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. And the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her as wife, and he died childless. Then the third took her, and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had her as wife.' Jesus answered and said to them, 'The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him.' Then some of the scribes answered and said, 'Teacher, You have spoken well.' But after that they dared not question Him anymore."

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A question confined within the frame of death

The story the Sadducees brought to Jesus leads to death from beginning to end. It is the story that one woman married seven brothers in turn, but all of them died without children, and finally the woman died too. They thought that if the dead were to live again, the marital relationship could not be settled. So they asked, *"Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had her as wife" (Luke 20:33)*. The Sadducees were people who, while claiming to believe in God, maintained that once a person dies, that is the end. Rather than asking because they wanted to know about the resurrection, they were trying to defend their claim that there is no resurrection by putting forward the contradiction they had in mind.

Contained in that question is the thought that the life of this present world is repeated just as it is even after the resurrection. It is the premise that when a person dies, offspring must be raised up, and that the relationship between married people, too, must follow the present order. But one cannot measure the world where there is no more dying with only the present circumstances of living in a mortal body. If one stretches human experience out to its end while leaving out the power of the One who gives life, even the promise of God comes to sound only like an impossible story. The Lord did not answer by picking one of the seven brothers, but first set right the very thought that had been sustaining that question.

We, too, at times make the Lord's promise small on the basis of the weakness and death we see with our eyes. That the body grows weak and we part from those we love is certainly a sad thing, but that experience cannot set the limit of the life God will give. To believe in the resurrection is not to make light of death. It is to acknowledge that we have no power whatsoever in the

face of death, while accepting the word of the Lord, who raises the dead, as a more certain ground than that.

The life of the resurrection is not a repetition of the present life

Jesus distinguished between the lives of the children of this age and of those who take part in the resurrection. He said that now people marry and are given in marriage, but that for those who attain the resurrection from the dead, there is no such thing. He made the reason clear as follows: *"Nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36)*. Resurrection means living again. But the resurrection the Lord taught is not a matter of a mortal body being restored for a while and then growing weak again. Because they receive a life that cannot die anymore, the question of the Sadducees, built on the premise of death and offspring, cannot explain that world.

The word that they are equal to the angels means that for the children of the resurrection there is no more death, and that as children of God they come to enjoy a joy different from the marriage of this world. We are to believe the glory of life the Lord made clear, but we have no need to fill in with imagination the details of living that He did not make clear. The promise greater than our present experience of marriage is the fact that God does not leave His children under death forever. Therefore, the hope of the resurrection is not a figure of speech that soothes the heart, but faith in what God will accomplish in our bodies and lives.

Then how can we, who are sinners, take part in that life as children of God? We cannot answer this question by

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acknowledging that we have become worthy people on our own. Since sin must be dealt with in order for us to be delivered from death, the wages of sin, the promise of the resurrection leads us to the remission of sins that the Savior accomplished. With merely the wish to live long while apart from Jesus, we cannot obtain the righteousness to stand before God.

The resurrection of the Savior, who bore our sins

Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth to save the people who are under sin. When the Lord received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and the sins we commit throughout our whole lives are included in them without exception. The blood He shed on the Cross is the blood by which He received in our place the judgment for our sins that He had borne in that way. Therefore, the baptism of Jesus was the baptism by which He bore our sins, the punishment of the Cross was the punishment He received in our place, and the fact that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day became the ground of the hope that we, too, will live again. We receive the remission of sins not by our own merit but by believing in the salvation completed in this way, and this Jesus, who delivered us from sin and death, is the Savior on whom we are to rely.

The resurrection of Jesus is not something that happened to the Lord alone and ended there. The Scriptures testify, *"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20)*. Since the fact that there are firstfruits means that there is fruit to follow after them, if Christ has risen, we who belong to Christ will surely rise as well. Because the One who remitted our sins and

the One who will raise us again are the same Lord, the saved saints have no reason to let even the promise of life be shaken every time they see their own weakness.

Of course, we cannot deny the reality that the flesh dies. Even a person who believes in the gospel becomes sick, grows old, and finishes the life of the flesh, but that death cannot do away with the salvation God has given. What we need is not to make for ourselves a body strong enough not to die, but to believe the promise of the Lord, who remitted our sins and overcame death. If we set our hearts on the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord accomplished, whatever the condition of our bodies today, we can hold on to the hope that God gives His children life to the end.

Today, lived before the God of the living

Jesus, rather, brought to light the evidence of the resurrection from the very writings of Moses that the Sadducees had put forward. When Moses stood before the burning bush in the wilderness, God said, *"I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6)*. At that time Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had all already departed from this world, but God revealed Himself as their God in the present tense. This is because the ending of the earthly lives of the three men did not mean that the relationship between God and them had been cut off as well. So Jesus said, *"He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him" (Luke 20:38)*. For God to be the God of the living, He must bring His people to life, and He is not One who forgets His people in death.

The God who remembers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not One who merely preserves old names. Since He is the One who

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keeps the promises He made to them, we are also certain, through the faithfulness of God recorded in the Scriptures, of the resurrection we have not yet seen with our eyes. The hope of the saints does not come from a vague wish that there may be a good world. It comes from the fact that the Lord, who has already accomplished the remission of sins, has also spoken of what He will accomplish in the future.

If we believe this word, the heart with which we face today also changes. We do not make gaining a little more in the world our everything, but serve the Lord, who gave us eternal life, and come to preach the news of the remission of sins and the resurrection to other souls as well. Even if our labor does not stand out or our bodies are not what they used to be, there is no need to regard a life offered before the God of the living as something in vain. The hope of the resurrection does not make us abandon the responsibilities of the present, but makes us live the day entrusted to us, believing in the Lord, who holds us even beyond death.

Before the answer of Jesus, those who had been questioning could not ask any more, and some of the scribes acknowledged that the word was right. What we, too, need is not to stop at failing to find words to refute. We must lift our eyes from the question that listed the deaths of the seven brothers, and believe in the Savior, who remits sins and raises us again. Put the Lord's promise in the place where you used to think that death ends every relationship and all life. We who belong to Christ look forward to the day when we will live as the children of God who will not die again, and serve the living Lord today as well. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The Christ whom David called Lord

< Luke 20:41–44 >

“And He said to them, ‘How can they say that the Christ is the Son of David? Now David himself said in the Book of Psalms: “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” Therefore David calls Him “Lord”; how is He then his Son?’”

Thinking that stopped before a familiar title

Speaking a familiar name about Jesus and believing in Him are not the same. For one can exalt Him as One who gave good teachings, yet not accept Him as the Lord who remits sins and gives life. In the text, Jesus asked again about the title of the Christ that people knew. *“He said to them, ‘How can they say that the Christ is the Son of David?’” (Luke 20:41)*. To the people who, while speaking of the Son of David with their mouths, did not sufficiently consider who the Christ is, the Lord spoke so that they would think more deeply according to the Scriptures.

This question must not be read as a word denying the promise of the Scriptures that He is the Son of David. What Jesus is asking is whether people rightly know the authority of the Christ within the title familiar to them. If one confines Him to the range of an ordinary man merely on the basis of the fact that

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He is a descendant born of David, one cannot explain the very confession in which David called the Christ by an exalted name. Therefore, Jesus did not gather more of people's opinions, but presented the words of David himself recorded in the Psalms. To know the Christ, we must not take only one expression from the Scriptures and think of it by itself, but accept together the word that God has testified.

Our faith, too, must undergo this kind of examination. We cannot conclude that we are believing in Him rightly merely from the fact that we have called on the name of Jesus for a long time. If we seek Jesus only when we want to obtain the help we need, and put our own judgment first in the matter of sin, we are keeping His name close while not opening our hearts to the word of the Savior. Our knowledge of who Jesus is ultimately becomes evident in whose word we acknowledge as right. When our own thoughts and the salvation the Lord has accomplished appear different, we must examine which of the two we are making the ground of our faith.

The place of the Lord, who is higher than David

The word Jesus presented begins as follows: *"David himself said in the Book of Psalms: 'The LORD said to my Lord'" (Luke 20:42)*. Here David calls the Christ his Lord. We must see the fact that even David, who was a renowned king, is a person who, before the Christ, serves Him as Lord. This confession cannot be fully explained by saying only that an ancestor influenced his descendant. If David called the Christ Lord, our thinking, too, must go on to the point that we cannot place Him under our own standards and evaluate Him.

The word that follows is *"Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool" (Luke 20:42–43)*. The Christ is not One who obtains authority only when people temporarily make room for Him. He is the Lord who sits at the right hand of God and whose enemies come to be placed under His feet. Later, even before the people who were judging Him, Jesus said, *"Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God" (Luke 22:69)*. In the light of this word, what matters is not how much people acknowledge the Christ, but what God has said concerning Him. The authority of the Christ does not disappear because He is rejected by people, nor can people's opposition block the will of God to the end.

This fact is a great comfort to the sinner who hopes for salvation. If Jesus were merely a man bound under sin and death just like us, even if He had a heart that pitied us, He could not deliver us from sin. But He is the Christ whom even David confessed as Lord, the God who made us, who also came to us as the Savior. Therefore, we do not stop at picking out only the parts we like from the Lord's teaching and adding them to our lives. We believe the word that the Lord has accomplished the salvation most urgently needed by us sinners, and entrust our hearts to Him.

Believing in the authority of the Christ does not mean that we gain the right to lord it over other people. If we are people who belong to the Lord, we must rather learn His will in humbling Himself for sinners and accomplishing salvation. Using the Lord's name to exalt our own name amounts to subordinating to our own purposes the One whom David confessed as Lord. True faith begins with acknowledging the exaltedness of the Christ and leads on to the humility that follows His will.

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The remission of sins accomplished by the One we are to confess as Lord

Jesus asked again, *"Therefore David calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?" (Luke 20:44)*. The person who has heard this question can no longer merely repeat that He is the Son of David. He must accept the reason David confessed the Christ as his Lord, and must stand before Him according to the testimony of the Scriptures. We, too, when we call Jesus Lord, must believe the fact of salvation contained in that name. If we speak words that exalt Him with our mouths, yet do not believe the word that the Lord has remitted all our sins, our hearts are still putting our own thoughts ahead of the Lord's verdict.

The way by which the Christ saved sinners is clear. Jesus, who was born as the Son of David, is in His essence God, and He is the One who became a man and came to this earth to save us human beings. That Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John. Since the sins belonging to our whole lives were also entrusted to the Lord at that time, the blood He shed and the death He died on the Cross were precisely His receiving in our place the judgment for those very sins. Jesus rose again from that death and delivered us from sin and death. The object of our faith is not the figure of an admirable person made up in our own hearts, but Jesus Christ, who completed salvation through the gospel of the water and the Spirit in this way.

Therefore, even a person who knows the fact that his sins are great can come to the Lord. It is not that he feels relieved by speaking of his sins as small, but that he knows who the Savior is, who bore even those sins and was judged. The shame remaining in the heart or the shortcomings of the flesh cannot make the Lord's salvation incomplete again. We must not deny

the word of the Christ, who remitted our sins, even while honestly acknowledging our wrongs. Instead of exalting our own judgment above the Savior and insisting that we are still under sin, we must receive in our hearts the righteousness the Lord has accomplished.

This faith also gives a clear direction to our lives. Since the Lord, whom even David served, has received us as His own people, we cannot use our labor only to leave behind our own names. In dealing with our families and neighbors, too, we remember the grace we received from the Savior, and to those who do not yet know the remission of sins, we come to preach the salvation the Lord accomplished. Such a life of service is not an effort to obtain the Lord's place, but thanksgiving offered to the One who has already given us life. The more the desire to be exalted arises, the more we come to know, if we remember David's confession, that the place where we stand as the Lord's servants is by no means a small place.

The word that asks who Jesus is, is a question we cannot avoid even today. Do not be content with knowing a familiar title, but respond in faith to how the One who came by that name remitted your sins. Just as David called the Christ Lord, we, too, confess in our hearts Jesus, who delivered us from sin, as Lord. In accepting His word and living as those who belong to Him there is the peace of a sinner, and there is the assurance of salvation that cannot be obtained through people's recognition. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Do not cover greed with long prayers

< Luke 20:45–47 >

"Then, in the hearing of all the people, He said to His disciples, 'Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.'"

The warning the disciples must hear

Just because a person's appearance in prayer looks godly, we cannot say that even his heart is honest. For even if the word is familiar on his lips and he is in a position of receiving people's respect, inwardly he can be seeking his own gain. Jesus, while teaching in the temple, made this danger known to His disciples. Luke records that scene as follows: *"In the hearing of all the people, He said to His disciples" (Luke 20:45)*. This word was not a story telling them to look on at the faults of the scribes, but a warning that the disciples who follow Jesus had to hear and discern.

Think about the fact that He spoke to the disciples in a place where all the people were listening. The Lord prevented people from failing to recognize wrong because they were overwhelmed by the outward appearance they respected. At the

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same time, He taught the disciples themselves not to harbor the same heart. Here lies the reason we cannot say we have fully heard this word just by discovering and criticizing someone else's hypocrisy. Since the desire to be recognized by people is within us as well, if we apply the Lord's warning only to the faults of others, we end up failing to examine our own hearts.

This is all the more so when we have been entrusted with leading someone or teaching the word. The greater the task entrusted to us, the easier it is to think it only natural to be treated well, and we may even regard people's gratitude as our own right. But having been entrusted with the Lord's work does not mean that we have gained the qualification to order people around as we please. It means that we have received the responsibility to serve so that those people may know and believe in the Lord. Therefore, as much as the content of what we say, we must also examine whom we are exalting and whose benefit we are seeking through those words.

The heart that looks to the best places and the lives that are robbed

Jesus concretely revealed the appearance the disciples were to guard against. *"Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts" (Luke 20:46)*. The heart that goes about among people in long robes receiving greetings and the heart that tries to take the good seats at gatherings are connected as one. The problem is not solved by measuring the length of one's robe or changing one's seat. If the heart that wants to be recognized by people as a godly and high

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person remains as it is, one can use even plain clothes or a low seat as a means to display oneself.

Next, the Lord spoke of what was hidden behind the outward appearance. *"Who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation" (Luke 20:47)*. While devouring the property of widows, they were making long prayers. It is harming the lives of those who need help and then hiding oneself with godly words. The text does not explain the concrete method by which they took away the property, but it clearly shows how far that conduct is from the service that gives people life. Prayer offered outwardly cannot do away with that evil or turn it into a right thing.

He did not say that the length of prayer in itself is a sin. What Jesus exposed is the hypocrisy of praying to be seen by people while not coming honestly before God. The fact that the act of devouring the property of widows and long prayers exist in the same person makes that problem clear. Therefore, we must not judge faith only by the length of prayer or the fluency of words. If the words we offer to God and our actual heart toward our neighbors are divided, we must first acknowledge that false attitude before the Lord.

Nor can the word that they will receive greater condemnation be passed over lightly. For the fact that one has received a high evaluation from people cannot take the place of the Lord's judgment. On the contrary, if one has reassured people with a godly appearance and then harmed their lives, that hypocrisy does not pass by hidden. What is needed in the face of such a word is not the self-justification that one is less greedy than others. It is to stand as a sinner before the Lord, who knows even our inmost being, and to receive the grace of the Christ, who remits sins.

The heart that believes in the Savior instead of adorning oneself

A hypocrite tries to cover what would be shameful if revealed. But the way to receive salvation does not lie in piling up more deeds that could cover sin. The Lord, who knows our hearts, did not call only those who had first perfected a godly appearance, but came to save us, who could not but be judged because of sin. Since we cannot become righteous through long prayers and a good reputation, we must believe in what Jesus accomplished for sinners. Without this faith, even if we look fine before people, the problem of sin remains before God. The Scriptures say, *"They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3)*. We must not push away the righteousness of God while trying to keep our own righteousness, but accept the righteousness the Savior has accomplished.

That righteousness the Lord accomplished is this. Jesus bore all the sins of the world once and for all by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, and not only the sins exposed before people but even the sins of the heart that we want to hide all our lives passed on to Him through that baptism. The Lord, who had sins passed on to Him in that way, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and rose again from death and became the perfect Savior. Therefore, the ground of the remission of sins does not depend on how admirable we appear to others. It lies in believing in our hearts in Jesus, who remitted our sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Since, for a person who believes in this grace, the ground of salvation does not collapse from his own deeds even when he

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acknowledges his wrongs, he has no need to hide his sins in order to save face. Yet that does not mean we may think that, since we have already received the remission of sins, it is all right to cause loss to others. The Lord's grace is not an excuse that justifies greed, but the ground for honestly acknowledging that greed and turning from the path of harming our neighbors. We must be able to seek the benefit of a person with the love we have received from the Savior, instead of sacrificing him to hide our own shortcomings.

Serving hands that give up the seat of one who is served

The Lord also clearly taught what kind of people the disciples were to become. *"He who is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11)*. If we follow this word, the person entrusted with a task does not set his heart on securing a good place, but comes to care for those with him so that they live by faith. He does not make a person in difficult circumstances an object for displaying his own labor, but comes to look into the help that is actually needed. The reason we do not change our attitude depending on who notices is that the Lord, who receives our service, is always watching.

Just because the person we help is weaker, it does not mean that we may handle his life carelessly. If we have heard of someone's circumstances, we must first consider their weight, and when handling the money or work entrusted to us, too, we must not put our own gain first. The Lord, who gave us salvation, uses us as instruments of service, but He did not call us to lord it over others and satisfy our own cravings. If we value the benefit that a soul will gain in the Lord more than the praise we

will receive from people, we can bear even the labor of an unseen place with joy.

If the tears of widows are hidden behind long prayers, nothing can be set right by polishing the outward form of those prayers more beautifully. Do not try to cover greed with long prayers, but acknowledge your craving before the Lord and treat people according to the will of the Savior, who remitted sins. Let us keep in our hearts the warning Jesus gave to His disciples, and turn the eyes that sought the place of being served toward the neighbors who need help. When our words, believing in the salvation the Lord accomplished, lead to honest service, we can follow the Lord, freed also from the hypocrisy that separated prayer from life. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

A life of labor in the Lord is not in vain

< Luke 20:34–38 >

“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him.’”

The life to look to at the end of our labor

Even while serving the Lord day by day, when our bodies grow weary and the visible fruit is little, we come to think how much of what we are doing now will remain. People’s memory does not last long, and there is also an end to the time and strength we can use. If we regard only the life on this earth as everything, it can feel better to secure first the gain that will come back to ourselves than to labor for others. But the life the Lord promised to the saints is not a life that ends together with the last day of the flesh. When we look to that promise, we can see today’s labor with new eyes.

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Concerning the children of God who take part in the resurrection, Jesus said, *"Nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36)*. Since the promise that they cannot die anymore means that the death which now limits us cannot take that life away again, it gives a far greater hope than merely saying that one lives long. Therefore, the future the saints hope for is not a matter of going back for a while to the time when they were healthy. It is to take part fully in the eternal life God gives to His children.

If we keep this hope in our hearts, the standard by which we evaluate today's labor also changes. We do not regard the time spent preaching the word and the heart that cared for souls as having all vanished just because results do not appear quickly. The life that belongs to the Lord is longer than death, and the Lord, who receives our lives, also lives forever. Because the Lord's promise remains in the place where people's praise has ceased, the saints gain the reason to take up unseen labor again. The hope of the resurrection is not a word that gives vague comfort to a weary person, but a certain promise that makes us decide for whom we will live.

The future of those who belong to Christ

The reason we hope for the life of the resurrection is not that we have the power to overcome death by ourselves. It is because we belong to the Savior, who first remitted our sins and rose again from death. The Scriptures make clear the order of the resurrection as follows: *"But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:23)*. The resurrection of Christ precedes the

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resurrection of the saints, and when the Lord comes, those who belong to Him will rise. Those who are Christ's are the people who have received the remission of sins and been born again in this world. Therefore, in order to be certain of our future, we must first clearly know what salvation Christ has accomplished for us.

Jesus, who came when the time arrived as God had promised, had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John. Those sins also include all the sins of our whole lives, which we commit while we live. The Lord's shedding His blood and dying on the Cross was His receiving in our place the judgment for the sins He had taken upon Himself through baptism in that way, and the Lord rose again from death and delivered us, who were bound by sin and death. We receive the remission of sins by believing in Jesus, who accomplished salvation through this gospel of the water and the Spirit. The assurance that we are people who belong to the Lord is based not on the amount of our labor but on this fact of salvation.

When we see our own weakness, in that even after being saved we repeat the same wrongs or fail to carry out the work entrusted to us, the glory of the resurrection can feel too far away. But the One who promised the future life is not One who saved us without knowing our weakness. Since He bore the sins of our whole lives and was judged even though He knew them, the Lord's salvation does not suddenly become small because of the shortcomings revealed today. The saints believe in the Savior, who remitted all their sins, even while honestly acknowledging their wrongs. In that faith we can go forward again to the place entrusted to us, without abandoning the Lord's work on the pretext of our present shortcomings.

If we reverse this order, service becomes a fearful burden. If we think that we can take part in the life of the resurrection only by working more, even letting our weary bodies rest becomes a cause of anxiety, and we come to compare ourselves with the labor of others. But the reason a person who has received the remission of sins serves the Lord is not to buy life. It is to give thanks for the life already given and to share the gospel of that life with other souls. Because salvation is settled by grace, we can escape from the competition of building up our own righteousness and carry out the work entrusted to us by faith.

The glory of the kingdom to be enjoyed with the Lord

In the hope of the resurrection there is also the glory of the kingdom to be enjoyed with the Lord. The Scriptures say, *"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6)*. Over those who take part in the first resurrection the second death cannot exercise power, and they reign with Christ for a thousand years. The grace by which the Lord saved sinners is not something that ends with merely letting us escape punishment. It is the promise that He will give His people even the glory of being with the Lord, and the promise that He will repay in that kingdom the labor and suffering we have undergone for the Lord on this earth. In the parable of the minas, the Lord said to the faithful servant, *"Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities" (Luke 19:17)*.

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We must not turn this promise into a craving to occupy a high place in the present world. Having the hope of reigning with the Lord does not mean that we may now put our brothers and sisters beneath us and order them around. Rather, because the glory the Lord will give is certain, today we need not contend to gain people's recognition and good treatment. We can lay down the impatience of trying to secure our own future by ourselves, and devote our strength to caring for the souls the Savior has entrusted to us. A person who believes in what he will receive from the Lord in the future is not ashamed of serving in a low place now.

Just because He promised a kingdom of a thousand years, it does not mean that we can calculate the date of its beginning. If our hearts are taken up with finding out the date, we easily miss the life the Lord promised and the work He has entrusted to us today. What the saints need is to hold firmly to the promise the Lord made and to live this day He has granted us in a way befitting those who have been saved. The faith that waits for glory does not make us abandon our present responsibilities, but gives us the hope to carry out those responsibilities.

Today before the Lord, who lives forever

Speaking of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Jesus taught, *"He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him" (Luke 20:38)*. Even though the earthly lives of God's people have ended, God is their God. That is why the Scriptures call the death of the saints sleep, and say, *"If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 4:14)*. This fact shows that the life of the saints is not decided by how long

it remains in people's memory. Since what matters is that we belong to the One who gave us life, even a life spent serving the Lord in an unnoticed place does not become meaningless together with death. Even when this world ends, we do not end.

That is why the Scriptures, after teaching the resurrection, exhort, "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58)*. Between the word to stand steadfast and the word to abound in the work of the Lord lies the certain hope of the resurrection. Because they know the fact that their labor is not in vain, the saints do not judge today's service only by the size of the work or people's response. The labor of making the word of salvation known to one soul, and of helping those who work with us to stand by faith, is a precious thing before the Lord.

What we can do may not be the same every day. There is work to carry out when we have strength and work to take on when our bodies are weak, but at any time we can rely on the Lord and offer our hearts. We must not regard ourselves as useless because we have been given a small portion, nor look down on others because we do a lot of work. When we work helping one another as people who have received life from the same Savior, our labor becomes the joy of taking part together in the Lord's will of loving souls.

When you look back on the day's work in weariness, do not count only the visible results. If we look to the Lord, who promised a life that does not die again, even the fact that there is an end to people's memory and the strength of the flesh does not become a reason for despair. There is a day when we will be with Christ, who gave us life, and the life offered for Him is not in vain. With this hope, let us offer our hearts even to the small

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work entrusted to us today, and keep walking, giving thanks to the Lord, who gave us the life of the resurrection. ✉

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CHAPTER

21

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

All that the widow had, contained in two mites

< Luke 21:1–4 >

“And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So He said, ‘Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.’”

Different eyes looking at the same treasury

Even among offerings that went into the same treasury, what portion each one was to the person who gave it can differ from one to another. We easily compare first the amount seen before our eyes, but Jesus saw even the circumstances of the giver and the meaning of that offering. Luke records, *“He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites” (Luke 21:1–2)*. In the place where the offerings of the rich were going in, the two mites the poor widow gave did not escape the Lord’s eyes either. That small giving was not erased before the Lord just because it was placed side by side with the large possessions of others.

When we read this scene, we are led to look back on what we hold precious as we live. There are times when we feel that our service is valuable if we can accomplish much work or put

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forward much, and think that we are of no help at all if we have little. But the Lord's judgment is not bound by such comparisons of ours. Before the Lord, who saw the widow's two mites, what a person gave and in what circumstances matters as much as how much one can give. Therefore, we cannot draw back on our own for the reason that we have little, or belittle the labor of others.

Even so, we must not divide the text to mean that every giving is right as long as one is poor, and every offering is wrong as long as one is rich. Jesus did not set the abundance or scarcity of possessions as the qualification for salvation. What He made clear in the text is the fact that this widow put in all her livelihood, and that, seeing this, He said she had put in more than all. Only when we read along with what the Lord saw can we get free from simple blame directed at the rich or the poor and examine our own hearts.

A great giving contained in a little money

Before His disciples, Jesus spoke as follows: *"He said, 'Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all'" (Luke 21:3)*. This is a judgment one cannot easily make if one counts only the money held in hand. The Lord did not say that the widow put in more coins than the rich; He made known the fact that she gave all she had. The reason we must remember that, even at the moment we think we have done much, the much and little that the Lord sees may be different, is that the meaning of the giving that the Savior sees is more important than people's praise.

Some think that they can serve the Lord only after they have something to spare. But if we keep raising the standard of what counts as having something to spare, the heart to give to God can

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always be pushed back. On the contrary, a person who sets his heart on God even while having little looks for the service he can do now within his own portion. Rather than demanding that we copy the amounts others give, the statement that the widow gave all her livelihood leads us to examine ourselves, so that we do not think of serving God with our hearts as merely getting rid of what is left over.

We can examine the same point in our time and labor as well. We need not regard the small work entrusted to us as meaningless just because someone else does more work. Even if we cannot set aside much time because of the condition of our bodies or the circumstances of our lives, there is a portion we can bear with all our heart for one soul, giving thanks to the Lord. Nor must we look lightly on a person who does small work for the reason that we have been entrusted with great work. Since the Lord knows the circumstances of those who serve together with us, just as He knew the widow's circumstances, we must not judge one another's hearts only by the results shown outwardly.

There is no need to imagine the widow's later life from the fact that she gave two mites. The text does not record that her wealth increased after that day or that she received great honor from others. By the word the Lord spoke alone we can know how precious that giving was, and if we attach to it a story that she received back more material things, the meaning of the giving changes. We must not look in this word for a method of gaining worldly profit, but learn the value of a life given before God.

Before the Lord, who saw all her livelihood

The reason the Lord spoke concerning the widow appears clearly in the next verse. *"All these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had" (Luke 21:4)*. The rich gave out of their abundance, and the widow gave out of her poverty all the livelihood that she had. The circumstances in which plenty remains even if that money is lost and the circumstances in which it is the whole of one's livelihood are not the same, and the Lord, knowing that difference, acknowledged the widow's giving. Therefore, we cannot use that word to demand that a person in hardship be forced to put forward his livelihood.

Knowing the preciousness of giving and forcing the same amount or the same proportion on others are different things. If we demand only offerings without looking after the livelihood of others, we end up rather turning away from the fact that the Lord saw the widow's circumstances. A community that serves God must not try to enlarge itself by using the giving of people in hardship, but must look together at the circumstances and the heart of such a person. It is right that we, too, treasure the soul the Lord looked upon as precious, and help one another according to the grace we have received.

Above all, our offerings cannot be the price that remits sin. Even if a person gives all he has, he cannot resolve by himself the judgment for his own sins; therefore, in order to stand before God, he needs the Savior. Jesus did not come to extract more from sinners; He gave up His own body to give us life. Only when we know the salvation the Lord accomplished first does our giving, too, get free from a transaction that soothes anxiety and become thanksgiving. Before calculating what and how

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much to put forward in order to be acknowledged by God, we must believe in the grace of salvation He has already bestowed.

What the Lord gave up was greater than all that we could give. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus bore all the sins of the world once and for all, and the Lord, who had even the sins of our whole lives passed on to Him, bore those sins and was judged in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross. And He rose again from death and gave us the complete remission of sins. The One we must believe in is Jesus, who accomplished this salvation through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Because we receive salvation not by money or merit that comes from us but by the grace the Lord has bestowed, the life we give in thanksgiving must also be rooted in that grace.

The heart that turns toward where the treasure is

In another place, Jesus said, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:34)*. The question of where we set our hearts is not separate from what we actually treasure. A person who treasures the life received from the Savior remembers that grace even when thinking about how to use his possessions and time. Rather than setting his heart on showing a greater giving than others, he comes to look for a way to use what has been entrusted to him so that souls may hear and believe in salvation.

We must not discriminate by shaming a person who gives little or exalting a person who gives much. Also, we must not take anyone's giving for granted, but receive with thanks the heart that serves the gospel together with us. Labor borne honestly before the Lord, who knows each person's circumstances, is not something to be treated lightly even if it

looks small in people's eyes. If we remember the word of the Lord, who saw the widow's two mites, we can get free from the comparison that envies others or boasts of ourselves, and give our own portion with joy.

Before the treasury, the two mites must have looked as though they would be buried under the large offerings of the rich, but the Lord saw all that the widow had, contained in them. Today, let us, too, not regard even the grace we have received as small for the reason that we have little. Believing in the Savior, who gave up His own body to remit sin, let us give the life entrusted to us with thanksgiving. Before the Lord, who truly knows our giving, we can respond with our hearts to the grace received from the Lord, without needing to match the size of what others give. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Hold on to the word of the Lord rather than the temple that will fall

< Luke 21:5–9 >

"Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, 'These things which you see—the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down.' So they asked Him, saying, 'Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?' And He said: 'Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am He," and, "The time has drawn near." Therefore do not go after them. But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately.'"

The word He gave before the beautiful stones

When people spoke about the beautiful stones and donations of the temple, Jesus spoke of the end of what they were looking at. That temple had been extensively renovated and expanded by Herod over many years to win the favor of the Jews. Here, "beautiful stones" refers to the splendid stones used to adorn the

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temple, while "donations" refers to the gifts that people had dedicated to God. To that extent, this temple was the pride and self-respect of the people of Israel. Luke begins that conversation as follows: *"As some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said" (Luke 21:5)*. When people's attention gathered on the visible temple, Jesus led their gaze before the word of God.

The word the Lord went on to speak was entirely different from their admiration. *"'These things which you see—the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down'" (Luke 21:6)*. Something does not escape falling just because it looks solid now, and neither the name of the temple nor its beautiful adornment can hold back the day the Lord spoke of. Therefore, rather than how great and how old a visible thing is, we must first hear what God says about it. For if we rely only on the security we confirm with our eyes, we end up entrusting our lives to what will fall.

We need to look at this word in the light of our faith. When many people gather and there is a form that has long been kept, we may think that we are safe before God just by being within it. But since the number of people or the form does not remit sins, it cannot take the place of the Savior's word. The Lord does not have us focus our attention on making the outward appearance we rely on even bigger; He has us find in His word the basis of salvation that will not be shaken whatever disappears.

Because there was a great gap between the temple they had been looking at and the Lord's word, the people asked, *"Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?" (Luke 21:7)*. Taking up that question, the Lord spoke not only of what would happen when the temple fell but also of what would happen at the end of this world. We, too, when we hear of unsettling things, want

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to know first when they will be, but Jesus did not begin by teaching how to calculate dates. The more we hear about what is to come, the more we need to discern whom we should believe and follow; therefore, the Lord's answer begins with a warning to beware of being deceived.

The deception that puts forward the name of Jesus

Jesus spoke as follows: *"He said: 'Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am He," and, "The time has drawn near." Therefore do not go after them'" (Luke 21:8)*. Here, those who deceive are not described as people who do not know the name of Jesus at all. Rather, they put that name forward, exalt themselves, and claim that the time has drawn near. Therefore, we cannot believe everything someone says just because of the fact that he calls on the name of Jesus. We must examine whether it leads us to Christ, or whether it uses fear to make us go after the person himself.

In unsettling times, words full of confidence sound louder. When there appear those who lead people away, saying that since the time is near there is a separate place of refuge, and that if you go there you will live, a fearful person wants to hold on to those words. But a claim does not become the same as the Lord's word just because it calms a fearful heart for a moment. Jesus warned in advance not to go after such people. There is no special refuge where one becomes safe only by following those who deceive; until the day the Lord comes, we simply live and eat here and preach the gospel. If, while saying that we wait for the Lord, we cannot overcome fear and hold on to any word at all, we fall into the contradiction of following the very words the Lord forbade.

Then on what basis should we know the true Savior? We cannot take as the basis the claims or the astonishing appearance of a person who exalts himself as a savior. Since the salvation we need is to be delivered from sin and its judgment, we must know the remission of sins that Jesus Christ actually accomplished. A person who believes in the Lord rightly does not go around looking for a new savior. He accepts, according to the word of the Scriptures, what Jesus, who is God, did for sinners, and does not exchange that salvation for the words of men.

That work has already been finished. By receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and in them are included all the sins we commit throughout our whole lives. Because He bore the sins that were passed on to Him in this way, the Lord had to shed His blood and die on the Cross, and that was His receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive. Jesus rose again from death and gave sinners complete salvation, and we receive the remission of sins by believing in the Lord, who saved us through this gospel of the water and the Spirit. Since there is thus One who has already solved the problem of sin, there is no need to follow another person as if there were a separate way of salvation in him.

If this gospel is not clear in our hearts, the object of our faith easily changes whenever we are afraid. For if we think that our sins have not yet been resolved, a special place, person, or method can take hold of our hearts. On the contrary, if we believe the fact that Jesus bore all sins and finished even their judgment, there is no reason to change our Savior even when the changes of the world grow great. We must distinguish between words that use the name of Jesus and words that testify of what

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He accomplished, and stand in the assurance the Savior has given.

Hear of commotions, but do not be dragged along by fear

After warning against deception, the Lord said, *"When you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately" (Luke 21:9)*. We must hear together the word that there will be wars and commotions and the word that the end will not come immediately. If we hold on only to rumors of disaster, fear rules our hearts; and if we hold on only to the word that it is not yet the end, we easily grow careless as if nothing would happen. Jesus, while telling of the things that would come, said that the end would not come right away; thus He held His disciples so that they would not lose heart and be pushed about because of that news.

The word not to be terrified does not mean to look lightly on the suffering of the world. Nor does it mean that we may ignore the pain of those going through hardship or bear no responsibility at all. It is an exhortation to believe the facts the Lord spoke and, even in shaken circumstances, not to forget the work He has entrusted to us. We can faithfully bear the work we must do today, look after neighbors who need help, and preach the word of salvation to souls who do not know the remission of sins. The faith that waits for the Lord is not an excuse to abandon daily life, but becomes the strength to live that daily life rightly.

Even what we must know is not blurred for the reason that we do not know when that day is. The Lord has already taught clearly what kind of people we must not go after and whose word

we must rely on when we hear of commotions. Therefore, rather than gathering all sorts of rumors and making up our own dates, reading the written word and accepting it with our hearts must come first. We must not believe the words of people who go against the Lord's word, but we must believe all the written word of God; and the more our faith in the Savior grows, the more we come to give thanks for the salvation the Lord has given and look for ways to preach it to our neighbors, rather than reacting to new fears.

Like the people who boasted of the beautiful appearance of the temple, we can have our hearts captivated by the security before our eyes, and when that security is shaken, we can immediately try to lean on someone else's confidence. But the Lord, by telling in advance what would fall and warning us not to go after those who deceive, set us before the word we can truly rely on. Lift up the eyes that were gazing at the stones of the temple, and look to the Savior, who has remitted sin. If we hold on to the word of the Lord, even in the midst of a world in commotion, we can bear in faith the life the Lord has entrusted to us today. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Even in the midst of persecution, the mouth of the witness is not shut

< Luke 21:10–19 >

"Then He said to them, 'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls.'"

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Why He told of suffering in advance

While telling His disciples what would happen in the future, Jesus did not hide the fearful reality. He told them not only of wars and disasters but also that the disciples themselves would be persecuted because of the name of Jesus. We who hear this word easily think first of the size of the suffering, but we must also see why the Lord tells of it beforehand. It is not that He means to tell them to endure suffering without any help; it is so that when the disciples face those things, they will remember the Lord's word and rely on the Savior, who is with them.

The Lord spoke as follows: *"Then He said to them, 'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven'" (Luke 21:10–11)*. Strife between nations, famines that come from drought, and the diseases called pestilences reveal how limited human strength is. When we hear news of the world being shaken, we may feel as if the life of faith, too, were over, but Jesus knew these things in advance and gave the word needed by the disciples who would live in the midst of them. We must not despair, looking only at what will happen, but look to the One who, knowing those things, still holds His people.

Moreover, the Lord said that before all these things the disciples would be delivered up to the synagogues and prisons and brought before kings and rulers. What would happen before the signs from heaven and the great disasters is that the born-again saints would be persecuted because of the Lord's name. Since the reason the disciples are persecuted is that they believe in and preach the name of Jesus, we cannot judge, merely from the fact that we have suffered, that we have been forsaken by God. If we expect that there will be no hardship on the way of

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following the Lord, our faith is shaken when it comes; but if we remember the word the Lord spoke beforehand, we can find His will even in suffering.

The words and wisdom He will give in the place where we are brought

People will seize the disciples to shut their mouths, but Jesus said, *"It will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony" (Luke 21:13)*. It means that being dragged away will instead become an opportunity to testify of Jesus. Even before kings and rulers, whom the disciples could not have gone to on their own, they will come to speak of who the Lord is. Since the purpose of those who persecute and the will the Lord will accomplish are not the same, we cannot regard the moment we are restrained by people as the very moment the gospel has ended.

When we think about what to say in that place, our own skill in speaking may be our first worry. But Jesus, telling them to settle it in their hearts not to meditate beforehand on what they would answer, promised, *"I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist" (Luke 21:15)*. It means not to ponder beforehand what we will say when that day comes, or whether we will be able to endure that pain. The strength that will hold the disciples does not come from the difference of whether one ordinarily speaks well or poorly; since the Lord will give even a person slow of speech the words and wisdom needed at that time, we must believe that promise. We cannot gain boldness by continually imagining the fearful scenes of the future and measuring only our own ability.

The Lord does not mean to have us stop learning the Scriptures in ordinary times; He is dealing with the heart that is

afraid, pondering beforehand what to answer in the place of persecution. We must not think that power will arise only when hardship actually comes, while neglecting to hear and believe the word today. We must accept with our hearts the salvation He has made known to us and live by it, but we must not try to bear by our own strength even suffering that has not yet come. With our flesh we can do nothing, but even if we cannot, the Holy Spirit does.

The Holy Spirit dwells in the saints who have received the remission of sins and makes them testify of the truth of the Savior. Therefore, before thinking about the strength to endure persecution, we must make clear what the salvation we believe in is. When Jesus received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and all the sins of our whole lives are included in them. Because He bore those sins, the Lord was judged in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and He rose again from death and completed salvation. In the heart of a person who has received the remission of sins by believing in this gospel the Holy Spirit dwells, and that Spirit gives the words to be spoken before the judge on that day and gives the strength to endure. The person who believes in the Savior, who remitted sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, is the witness who belongs to the Lord.

What we preach is not a boast of how well we overcome suffering, but the fact that Jesus, who gave life to sinners, is the true Savior. The wisdom the Holy Spirit gives, too, does not have its purpose in exalting us by defeating people with words; it is so that through the persecuted witness, those who hear may come to know the Lord's salvation. If we remember this purpose, we can trust the Lord, who will help us at the right time, rather

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than forcing ourselves to produce a courage that is not yet within us.

He knows even the pain received from those close to us

Jesus said that suffering would not come only from unfamiliar men of power. *"You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death" (Luke 21:16)*. Even if we can bear what we suffer from strangers, betrayal suffered from parents, brothers, and friends gives great pain to the heart. The fact that those closest to us do not take our side can deeply discourage us, but since the Lord knew even that pain and spoke of it beforehand, we must not think, just because such a thing happens, that even the Lord, who cares for us, has left.

We cannot take this word to mean that we should regard in advance as enemies the family members who do not yet believe in the gospel. Rather, before that day comes, we must preach the gospel now so that our friends, and if possible even our parents, may know the same salvation, and pray for the salvation of our families. Rather than shutting our mouths for fear of how the other person will react, we must be able to calmly make known the remission of sins the Lord accomplished. Love toward our family does not lie in acknowledging that their judgment is always right, but in preaching the truth, hoping that they, too, will believe in the true Savior and obtain life.

Also, we must not make the word that we may be hated because of our faith an excuse for our own wrongs. If we have caused our neighbors pain with harsh words and irresponsible actions, we must not attribute their reaction to the gospel, but

honestly admit that wrong. The reason for persecution that the text speaks of is the name of Jesus, not the result of treating others carelessly. Because the saints believe in the grace of the Savior, they have no need to hide their faults; at the same time, when faced with the demand to deny that grace, they must stand according to the word of the Lord. Honesty and the boldness of faith must be together.

The Lord's hold on us that even death cannot sever

After saying that some would be put to death, the Lord said, *"Not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls" (Luke 21:18–19)*. Since He said before that they would be put to death, we cannot read the promise that not a hair of their head will be lost as a guarantee that the body will suffer no harm at all. God said, *"Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you" (Isaiah 49:15)*. We must accept the promise that the Lord will not forget His people but will hold them to the end, together with the word that they will possess their souls. People may harm the body of a witness, but they cannot do away with, as they please, the life the Savior has given.

Patience, too, is not a price paid to buy the remission of sins. Because we believe in the Lord, who has remitted our sins, we endure, waiting for the day we will receive as a gift the eternal kingdom the Lord will give, just as we received the remission of sins as a gift. If we boast that we will overcome all suffering by our resolve alone, we may despair the moment we grow weak; but if we believe the promise that the Holy Spirit gives strength, we can ask the Lord for help even in our weakness. Since the

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Lord has said that He will do this, we simply say yes. Do not regard yourself as a forsaken person for the reason that you are still afraid; set your heart on the Savior, who knows your fear.

When we look only at the scenes of suffering, it feels as though the mouth of the witness would be shut, but Jesus promised that He would have us testify in that very place and give the wisdom needed. Neither the betrayal of those close to us nor the power of the world can bring the Lord's hold on us to an end. Let us believe today in the salvation the Lord accomplished and preach that grace to the souls entrusted to us. Lay down the worry of trying to bear by your own strength everything that will come, and stand firm in the word of the Savior, who will care for His witnesses to the end. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The reason we can lift up our heads on the day of fear

< Luke 21:20–28 >

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”

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Do not stay in the surrounded city

The word that one must leave the place where one has long lived is hard to accept easily. For the more a place holds one's familiar home and life, the more it feels as though one would be safe only by staying in it. But Jesus said, *"When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near" (Luke 21:20)*. What was needed at that time was not self-assurance that the city would not fall, but hearing the word of the Lord, who had warned in advance. Even if it is a place we have loved and relied on, if the Lord says to flee, we must follow that word.

Jesus said specifically, *"Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her" (Luke 21:21)*. He told those in Judea, those inside the city, and those in the country what each of them was to do. To go into the city after hearing the warning, saying that one will look at the situation further, is to refuse the way the Lord has given. The Lord did not merely convey fearful news; He taught beforehand so that those who would face that event could act according to the word.

Here, we must not confuse the word to flee to the mountains with the earlier word not to go after the deception of false people. Following the warning the Lord has set and someone drawing people to himself by borrowing the name of Jesus are different things. We must not regard the very thought of avoiding danger as a lack of faith, but examine on what basis we judge. A person who believes the word of God does not dress up recklessness as boldness, but humbly follows the way the Lord has made known.

Do not take the written vengeance lightly

Jesus said, *"These are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled" (Luke 21:22)*, and went on to say, *"They will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24)*. Dying by the sword and being led away captive into other nations is not merely a matter of the beautiful appearance of the city being damaged; it is a great tribulation in which the lives of the people living there collapse. The Lord, mentioning even the suffering that would come upon those who were pregnant and those who were nursing, made clear the seriousness of that day.

As we read this warning, we must not harbor a heart that watches suffering people as a spectacle. Jesus spoke of the tribulation in detail not because He took their pain lightly, but so that they would know what was coming and hear the word. Rather than using the word of judgment only as a tool to threaten others, we must first see how seriously we ourselves are receiving that word. God's warning is not an empty word that we can hear and pass over, thinking it will be all right, nor can human wishes do away with that word.

The fall of Jerusalem that the Lord spoke of actually came after Jesus died on the Cross, rose again from death, and ascended. The city fell, and the people died by the sword or were taken captive and scattered throughout the whole world. At the time He spoke this word, it was a prophecy hard to believe, but it came to pass exactly as the word the Lord had prophesied. Therefore, we cannot push away the Lord's coming again, of which He spoke next, for the reason that it is not yet visible to our eyes. The fact that the One who fulfilled the word He had

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already spoken has also made known what He will do in the future holds up the faith of the saints.

However, we must not mix the tribulation that would come upon Jerusalem and the Lord's glorious coming into one scene without any distinction. The text, after He speaks of the city being surrounded, speaks of the times of the Gentiles and the signs in heaven, and goes on to the scene of the Son of Man coming. Though we cannot fix the time of all those details, we can clearly believe the fact that the Lord, who spoke of judgment and salvation, governs history. Our hope lies not in the ability to calculate all the events, but in His faithfulness.

The fear revealed under the shaking heavens

Following the turmoil on earth, Jesus spoke of the signs in heaven. There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and the nations will be in distress because of the roaring of the sea and the waves. The Lord told of how people would be at that time: *"Men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Luke 21:26)*. The order the Lord has held in place is thrown into disarray, not only on this earth but even in the world of the stars. As the world they ordinarily regarded as a matter of course and as secure is shaken, people feel a fear hard to bear merely from thinking of what is to come. It is revealed that the power and order on which mankind relied cannot be an eternal refuge.

Before such a word, we may spend our minds only on imagining in what way the heavens will be shaken. But faith does not grow stronger by our producing an explanation more detailed than the word the Lord has revealed. What the saints

need is to know whom to rely on even when the order of the world is shaken. Since one cannot solve the problem of sin and death by one's own wealth, knowledge, and experience alone, one cannot make them the final guarantee. Only the Lord, who made all things and saved sinners, holds our lives to the end.

That does not mean that the saints become special people who feel no fear at all. We, too, are weak in body and are startled in the face of sudden events, but we know where to take that fear. Since the Lord is not One who made His promise without knowing that the world would be shaken, the Lord's promise does not collapse just because those things appear. Rather, we must turn our hearts to the One who spoke and look to the salvation He will accomplish for His people. The text leads us to that very hope.

Look to the One who redeemed us

After the fearful scene, Jesus said, *"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:27)*. The shaking of the world is not the final conclusion. The Son of Man, who comes with power and great glory, that is, Jesus Christ, is the Master of that history. People become afraid while looking for a power that will protect them, but the saints know who it is that will come again. The very Jesus who saved us from sin is coming to take His people.

If we do not know the salvation Jesus accomplished, His coming, too, feels only like a fearful judgment. But when 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)*, He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and bore the sins of our whole lives, too,

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without leaving any out. Because He bore those sins, Jesus received the judgment for sin in our place, shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and He rose again from death and became the perfect Savior. We believe in the Lord, who accomplished the remission of sins through this gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore, the basis on which we wait for the Lord is not the claim that we had no wrong to be judged for, but the faith that the Savior bore even those wrongs and was judged.

The Lord said to His disciples, *"When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near" (Luke 21:28)*. The word that redemption is near gives the hope that the day is near when the Lord, who accomplished the remission of sins, will fully reveal the salvation of His people. Since it is a day of despair for the people of the world but a day of hope for us who are saved, to lift up our heads is to look to the Lord and long for Him. We must not forget the grace we have already received and try to establish our own righteousness again; while enjoying on this earth what God has given, we must long in our hearts for the Lord's coming. Lifting up our heads is not a posture of showing our strength to the world, but the faith that looks to the Lord, who will save us.

Just as the Lord's warning had to be followed over the desire to stay in the familiar city, we, too, must hold on to the Savior's promise rather than the security of a world that is shaken. What we must do until the Lord comes is not to pass the time sunk in fear, but to give thanks for the salvation we have received and preach it to souls who do not yet know that grace. Even on the day you come to hang your head because you have no strength to protect yourself, look to the Savior, who remitted sin. Jesus did not show His people only the end of fear; He gave them the hope of redemption for which to lift up their heads and wait. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The kingdom of God that the budding of the fig tree makes known

< Luke 21:29–33 >

“Then He spoke to them a parable: ‘Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.’”

The season we recognize by seeing the buds

When new buds come out on the trees, we naturally know that summer has drawn near. Even though the heat of midsummer has not yet come, we see the change before our eyes and think of the next season. Jesus took up this familiar matter to teach how the disciples were to accept the word they had heard before. *“Then He spoke to them a parable: ‘Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near’” (Luke 21:29–30)*. The Lord did not demand calculations that are hard

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to understand, but led them out of the dullness of a heart that sees yet does not consider the meaning.

A person who knows that summer is near does not regard the season that has not yet come as nonexistent. Nor, however, does he fix all the days of summer by seeing a single bud. He knows the coming season and prepares to live in keeping with it. The point of Jesus' speaking this parable, too, lies in telling us to remember that word when the things the Lord made known happen, and to know that the kingdom of God is near. We must not be held only by the things before our eyes and forget the will of the Lord that He is going to accomplish.

Luke also recorded together the word that told them to look not only at the fig tree but at all the trees. We must not, while gathering our attention on just one word in the parable, miss the whole teaching that tells us to see the buds and know the time. Since the tribulation and the shaking that Jesus spoke of before are not something the saints should pass over thoughtlessly either, even though we live in this world, we must, with faith, watch how the world is going and remember that the Lord will come. The interest of a person who hears the word must not stop at collecting astonishing events, but must lead on to the will of the Lord, who made those things known.

The faith that knows the coming kingdom

The Lord explained the parable of the trees as follows: *"So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near" (Luke 21:31)*. Here, what we must know is near is not merely the hardship of the world, but the kingdom of God. If we despair, looking only at the news of tribulation, we miss the hope Jesus spoke of. Since the Lord,

even while the world is in turmoil, has the things He will accomplish for His people, the saints must look to that promise behind the fearful phenomena.

The word about the fig tree can be read as a word spoken concerning Israel. Earlier, the Lord said that Jerusalem would be trampled by Gentiles and that its people would be scattered, and according to that word, Israel lived scattered for a long time without a nation. When we see that the nation that was trampled in that way has been established again and has risen up as if budding, we come to know that the time of the Lord's coming has drawn near, just as we know that summer is near when the fig tree buds. The rise and fall of nations is not fixed forever by human power alone, and the history God has spoken of proceeds according to His will. Therefore, when we read the word directed toward Israel, too, we must not look only at the powers of men, but must remember together the warning the Lord gave and His will of salvation.

However, for the reason that we examine history, we cannot attach a Bible verse to each and every event now happening and draw a conclusion. We must distinguish between the things the Lord made known and the explanations we have made up by imagination. If we assert that we know the details that have not yet appeared, our conviction becomes bound to our own interpretation rather than to the word. What the saints need is to believe the promise that the kingdom of God will surely come, and to live today as the people of that kingdom. If we accept the will the Lord has revealed, we can wait in faith without forcibly filling in what we do not know.

Jesus went on to say, *"Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place" (Luke 21:32)*. Reading this word, a person must not arbitrarily set the length of a generation and calculate the date of the Lord's

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coming. What the Lord clearly declared is the fact that all the things He spoke of will come to pass, and to confine that declaration within a human timetable is a different matter. We must stand with the heart that says we will believe the promise because the One who spoke it is true, rather than with the attitude that we will believe only if we know everything. Because we believe, we speak; because we believe, we prepare; and because we believe, we preach the gospel.

That faith is different from an attitude of unconditionally stopping all thought. It is reading the words before and after together, and learning what the Lord taught, from the falling of the temple to the glorious coming of the Son of Man. The bigger the events before our eyes look, the easier it is to miss the whole of the word, but the saints must hear the warning and the comfort together. A person who has learned in this way, instead of feeling at ease only when everything comes about as he wants, obtains peace from the fact that God surely accomplishes His will.

The word of salvation, more certain than the world that passes away

To our eyes, heaven and earth look as if they will remain the longest. But Jesus said, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Luke 21:33)*. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the word of the Lord does not pass away. Therefore, we cannot take the Lord's promise lightly by citing the fact that the visible world is firm now, and conversely, neither can we doubt even that promise because of the fact that the world is being shaken. Even though our deeds cannot fully keep up with this word, since it is the written word of God, we

have only to accept it in our hearts and simply believe it. The basis of faith lies not in changing circumstances, but in the Savior, who spoke it.

This certainty does not apply only to prophecies about the future. The gospel that Jesus has remitted our sins also does not change according to the feelings a person has or the evaluation of the age. When our hearts are at peace, salvation seems certain, and yet when we see our own faults, it is easy to think that we are under sin again. But if we make the changes of our hearts our standard, even the work the Lord has accomplished comes to seem to change every day. The saints, while looking honestly at their own condition, must make the fact the Lord has accomplished their standard concerning the remission of sins.

That fact is recorded in the Bible as follows. John the Baptist, seeing Jesus, testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. When Jesus received baptism from John, the Lord had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and the sins we commit throughout our whole lives are also contained in them without exception. Because He bore that sin, the Lord received the judgment in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rose again from death and accomplished perfect salvation. We believe in Jesus, who has remitted sins through this gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is to accept with our hearts the remission of sins the Savior accomplished, without setting only our own sins apart and leaving them out of the word that He bore all the sins of the world.

A person who believes the word of salvation in this way can also wait with hope for the Lord, who will come again. For the One who received the judgment for sins in our place does not come in order to abandon His people. If the Lord's salvation collapsed for the reason that our flesh is weak, the waiting would

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always be anxious, but because that salvation is based on the work of the Lord, the saints can hope boldly. The reason we are sure of the kingdom we will receive in the future, too, is not that we have adorned our present lives without blemish, but that we believe in the life the Savior promised.

Now that promise must extend even to today's choices. If we use up all our hearts in order to hold on only to what will pass away, then even while saying that we believe the word that will not pass away, we put off the life that follows that word. We must faithfully bear the life entrusted to us while preaching the gospel of the remission of sins, and help those who believe with us to set their hearts on the Lord. Saying that we wait for the second coming is not a declaration that we abandon the work we have to do, but a confession that clearly decides for whom we will live until the Lord comes.

Just as we think of summer when we see the buds of the trees, we must think of His kingdom as we see the things the Lord made known. Do not let your heart be taken only by what collapses and what changes, but put your faith in the word of the Lord, which will remain to the end. Heaven and earth cannot be the final guarantee of our lives, but the Savior, who remitted sins and said that He would come again, is faithful. Just as a fig tree that has budded makes known that summer is near, the word the Lord spoke makes known to us that the kingdom of God is near. Following that promise, let us serve the gospel today as well, and wait in hope for the kingdom the Lord will accomplish. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Do not let your heart be taken by the cares of this life

< Luke 21:34–36 >

“‘But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.’”

The heart that grows dull in a busy life

There are times when, though we say we wait for the Lord, after we finish the day we find that we have thought of nothing but the worries of making a living. We were busy bearing the work we had to do, but the word of the Lord, who saved us, has in fact grown distant from our hearts. Jesus, after He had finished speaking all the serious words concerning the last day, warned the disciples in conclusion not to fall into exactly this state. *“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly” (Luke 21:34)*. We must look carefully at the fact that He placed the cares of this life side by side with carousing and drunkenness.

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We easily agree with the word that we must be careful of carousing and getting drunk, but we tend to regard the cares of this life as something a responsible person must naturally bear. Of course, the responsibility of working for food, clothing, and shelter and caring for one's family cannot be neglected. What the Lord warned against was not that responsibility itself, but the state in which worry fills the heart and pushes out the work of hearing and believing the word of God. Because this word was spoken not to the people of the world but to the born-again righteous, the disciples, whose hearts of faith could grow dull even while their bodies moved busily, had to examine their inner selves.

When the heart grows dull, only the things that are urgent right now look important. Even the promise that the Lord will come again is pushed back as something to think about later, and it becomes hard to take an interest even in the matter of other souls receiving the remission of sins. When we are struggling to make a living, it is hard even to bear our own circumstances, so there is no room to think of others, and when that state becomes familiar, we do not even clearly sense what we are losing; that is why Jesus told us to take heed to ourselves. It means that we are to look back honestly, before the word, on our own hearts, which no one else can keep awake in our place.

This warning must not be used as a word to blame a person who is in difficult circumstances. The fact itself that one's livelihood is poor is not evidence that one has no faith. Rather, if we are saints who hear the word of the Lord together, we must look after the circumstances of a person crushed by cares and help him to stand in faith. The warning to examine our own hearts does not give us the authority to judge our neighbors, but makes us realize that we are all weak people who can easily lose sight of the Lord.

Remember the day that cannot be avoided

Jesus said that, to a person whose heart is dull, that Day would come unexpectedly, like a snare. He went on to say, *"For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth" (Luke 21:35).* Since it is not only some particular people who will meet that Day, we are not prepared merely by examining other people's faith. Whether we are pouring all our hearts into the affairs of the world or are waiting for the Lord, the day the Lord has set will surely come. Therefore, that promise is directly related to our lives now.

If we think that we will attend to our faith after our living circumstances are all sorted out, that time may keep being pushed back. For life on this earth is such that even when one worry is resolved, another worry arises. The Lord did not tell us to find a day with no problems and then begin a life of faith, but told us to keep our hearts in the midst of our present lives and prepare to stand before Him. When we accept the promise the Lord made as a more certain fact than our own plans, what we must do first today also changes.

That preparation is not a matter of piling up many outwardly pious appearances. Since what a person who will stand before the Lord needs first is the solution of the problem of sin, we must believe in the remission of sins the Savior has bestowed. It is not that we can stand before God by merely reducing our cares while keeping our sins as they are. Only when we know how Jesus saved us and believe it with our hearts does His coming become a day to wait for, not a day we want to run away from. The beginning of being watchful lies not in making our own lives perfect, but in believing in the true Savior.

The Lord solved our sins as follows. By Jesus' receiving baptism from John, the Lord had all the sins of the world passed

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on to Him once and for all, and since that work includes even the sins of our whole lives, the faults that are revealed today, too, are not outside its scope. Jesus, who bore sins in this way, received the judgment in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross because of those sins, and rose again from death and accomplished salvation. We believe in the One who has remitted sins through this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and stand before the Lord. Salvation is not forcibly suppressing an anxious heart; faith is accepting the grace of the Savior, who has dealt with sin.

Do not work only to make a living

Even after we receive the remission of sins, the need to eat, to be clothed, and to have a dwelling does not disappear. Since our Lord is not One who does not know this need, the saints must not call it faith while avoiding the responsibilities of living. Only, we must not make food, clothing, and shelter the whole of life and push the Lord into the background. Jesus taught, *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. It is a word that tells us to live believing that God knows our needs, and seeking His will first.

Even the same work takes on a different meaning depending on what it is done for. If we work only to make a living, that labor ends with getting through one day after another; but if we say that we do this work not only to make a living but also to serve the gospel, the same labor becomes precious work for the Lord. The saints can work honestly to bear their living, and in the midst of it serve other souls with the strength and the possessions they are given. Whether the effort is small or great,

it is rewarding because it is done for the Lord, and even if the work entrusted to us looks small, if through it we can help the gospel and care for our neighbors, it becomes precious service before the Lord.

Even if the Lord were to come tomorrow, today we will eat and drink, take care of our food, clothing, and shelter, and live steadily. The faith that waits for the Lord is not throwing away daily life, but keeping watch over what our hearts are directed toward in the midst of that daily life. If the cares of this life occupy the heart, we cannot even think of preaching the gospel; but a person who believes that the Lord knows his needs can, while living the same day, turn toward other souls the eyes that were bound only to his own problems.

Preparing in prayer to stand before the Son of Man

Lastly, the Lord said, *"Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36)*. To watch does not mean to do away with bodily sleep. It means that the heart that believes the Lord's promise, thinks of the things He will accomplish, and bears the life He has now entrusted to us must be awake. Prayer, too, is the act of offering that heart to the Lord. It is acknowledging that we cannot overcome cares by our own strength alone, and asking Him to keep us so that we do not fall into the cares of this life but believe in and serve the Lord.

What we are to ask for is not only that our circumstances improve. We must ask Him to keep us from becoming intoxicated with the world when our circumstances are good,

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and to keep us from being crushed by worry and forgetting the grace of the Savior when things are hard. And we must wait with the heart of a bride who will receive the Lord. When the Lord said that He was coming quickly, the Apostle John answered, *"Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20)*. The person who, while enjoying on this earth what God has given, longs with his heart for the Lord's coming is the person who is watchful. When we offer our hearts to the Lord in this way, we can look to the will of the Savior, who is greater than our daily problems, without turning away from those problems.

The fact that there are many matters of living today, too, may not change. But whether the day was filled only with worry, or whether we believed in and relied on the Lord while bearing those matters, can change. The Lord, knowing our circumstances, warned us so that our hearts would not grow dull. Let us rely on the Savior, who has remitted sins, and keep the heart that waits for the Lord. Let us not let the worry of making a living become the last word of our lives, and let us walk in prayer today as well, hoping for the day we will stand before the Son of Man. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The people who came to hear the word that will not pass away

< Luke 21:37–38 >

“And in the daytime He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet. Then early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him.”

The Lord’s teaching that continued day after day

After the words about the great tribulation and the coming of the Son of Man, Luke briefly records a day of Jesus. *“And in the daytime He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet” (Luke 21:37)*. In the daytime the Lord taught in the temple, and at night He went out to the mountain called Olivet and rested. Even after He had spoken the solemn words concerning the days to come, the work of teaching the word to people continued. In this short record we can see how the Lord, who knows the end of the world, dealt with the people of that time.

Jesus did not stop the teaching of today just because He had said that great things would happen in the future. For the people still had to hear the word, and had to know the way to be saved

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from sin. We, too, when we think of the last day, may feel as if the daily life before our eyes has no meaning at all, but the day the Lord spent was not like that. Since the work of meeting people in the temple and speaking to them was not a work separate from the salvation He would accomplish, the Lord led people through the word to set their hearts on God.

Also, the text clearly says that the Lord rested at night. Here, too, we can see the reason why the word He spoke earlier, telling us to watch, must not be turned into a command not to sleep. Jesus carried out His work amid teaching by day and resting by night. The watchfulness of the saints, too, lies not in driving the body endlessly so as to look more pious than others, but in believing the word of the Lord, bearing the work entrusted to us, and rightly caring for our own lives before the Lord so that we can do that work again.

We sometimes miss the importance of the days that go on, while waiting only for special moments. We think that faith will grow only if there is something that moves us greatly, but the Lord taught every day, and the people were able to hear that word. If hearing the same word again feels tedious, we must examine whether it is because we already know it all, or because our hearts are elsewhere. Since the word of the Savior keeps shining on our thoughts and our lives, it does not become a word we no longer need to hear merely because it is familiar.

The people who sought the word early in the morning

Luke records the response of the people to the Lord's teaching as follows: *"Then early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him" (Luke 21:38)*. The

purpose for which they went to the temple early was to hear the word. When we read this together with the scene of people marveling as they looked at the stones and the donations of the temple, we think all the more about what a person really needs. More important than looking at the beauty of the building was hearing the word of the Savior, who was teaching inside it. For within that word is the way to obtain life.

The time of early morning itself is not a condition of salvation. It cannot be read to mean that one becomes a more righteous person because one came early, and that a person who came late does not receive grace. What is important is the fact that the people came to the temple in order to hear that word. From this scene we must learn a heart directed toward the word. When we regard being able to hear the Lord's teaching as a precious opportunity, we make a place to set our hearts on the word even in the midst of a busy life.

Even sitting in the same place, the hearts that hear can differ from one another. A person who looks for words that agree with his own thoughts tends to close his heart when the word of the Lord corrects his judgment. On the other hand, a person who knows his own shortcomings and wants to learn thinks, even in a word that is uncomfortable to hear, about why the Lord spoke that way. The text does not explain all the inner thoughts of the people who came to the temple, but we who hear the word today can examine our own hearts. We must see whether we are waiting only for the story we want to hear, or are trying to accept the word the Savior spoke.

Nor can we leave the matter of hearing the word only to the faith of other people. Those who believe with us can exhort and explain, but accepting the Lord's salvation with one's own heart is necessary for each person. The fact that one has been in the church a long time, or the fact that one has heard the contents of

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the Bible many times, cannot take the place of faith. We must learn from the word who Jesus is and what He has done for us, and rely on Him as the Savior. The steps taken to hear the word must lead to faith in the heart.

Set your heart on the word that will not pass away

Just before this, Jesus said, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Luke 21:33)*. The word to be heard by coming to the temple is not a word that pleases people for a moment, but the word of the Lord, which will not pass away even if heaven and earth disappear. When we believe that fact, our very attitude in hearing changes. Rather than first weighing whether the Lord's word suits our mood, we come to learn what we are to believe and which way we are to go. The value of the word lies not in the emotion of the moment, but in the faithfulness of the One who spoke that word.

In particular, the word concerning the remission of sins must not be heard carelessly. If we know Jesus only as One who gives good teachings and do not know how He remitted our sins, we have not yet accepted in our hearts the salvation we need most. Since we cannot make a sinless life by ourselves and come before God, we must know the work the Lord accomplished for sinners. The problem of sin is not solved merely by knowing our own shortcomings in more detail; we must believe in the Savior, who bore even those shortcomings.

This is what that Jesus, who taught in the temple, did for our sins. By receiving baptism from John, the Lord had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and, having borne even the sins of our whole lives, He bore those sins and received the judgment in our place, shedding His blood and dying on the

Cross. And He rose again from death and gave us perfect salvation. The One we must believe in through the word is Jesus, who has remitted sins through this gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we accept with our hearts this grace the Savior has bestowed, we get out of the place where we were trying to achieve the remission of sins by our own deeds, and come to rely on the righteousness of the Lord.

We must not keep only the memory of having heard this gospel while in fact leaving our hearts continually under sin. We must believe the fact that even the faults revealed today are included in the sin of the world that the Lord bore. Since acknowledging a wrong and denying the Lord's salvation are different things, we hold fast to the word that has remitted all our sins, without hiding our weakness. When we set our hearts on the gospel in this way, the word becomes not knowledge we heard long ago, but the truth that now enlightens our conscience and leads our lives.

A day that responds to the word we have heard

Concerning the response of a person who hears the word, Jesus said, *"But He answered and said to them, 'My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it'" (Luke 8:21)*. Hearing does not end with having come to know the Lord's will, but must lead on to living according to that word. This does not mean that we are to pile up deeds in order to become family with Jesus; it means that a person who believes in the Savior and belongs to the Lord does not push His word aside like someone else's story. Because he truly treasures the grace he has received, he comes to follow the Lord's will in his life as well.

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After hearing the word, we can look back on our attitude in dealing with people and on our heart in bearing the work entrusted to us. It is examining whether, while saying we thank the Lord, who remitted sins, we are putting forward only our own boasting, and whether, while saying we believe in God's care, we are bearing all our cares alone. If we have seen a wrong, we must not remain in discouragement, but correct it according to the word of the Lord. The saints hear the word not in order to show a perfect image of themselves, but in order to entrust their weak selves to the Savior and learn from Him.

Before the Lord, who taught day after day, the people came from early in the morning. To us, too, today has been given, in which we can hear the word. Do not close your heart because the word is familiar, but give ear to what Jesus, who delivered you from sin, teaches. Like the steps of the people who sought the word, our hearts, too, must be directed toward the Savior. When we believe the grace we have heard and bear the work entrusted to us today, even an ordinary day that repeats itself becomes precious time walking with the Lord. ✉

Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

What we must do until the end comes

< Luke 21:5–13 >

"Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, 'These things which you see—the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down.' So they asked Him, saying, 'Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?' And He said: 'Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am He," and, "The time has drawn near." Therefore do not go after them. But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately.' Then He said to them, 'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony.'"

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The mission during the time when the end does not come immediately

When people hear that a great event is about to come, they tend to stop the work they are doing and look only to the future. Then, when nothing happens right away, they forget even their initial tension. But the purpose for which the Lord spoke about the end does not lie in making us waver between two extremes. The Lord, while making known the things that will come to pass, taught us how we are to spend the time given to us today. If the world becomes like this, what must we do? For the saints, the time of waiting for the end is time in which we can preach the gospel of salvation.

Jesus said, *"But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately" (Luke 21:9)*. We cannot judge that everything has come to an end right away just because we hear of wars and commotions. It takes much time for the powers that oppose God to make their own world, and much time is also needed for us to preach the gospel. Since the Lord distinguished between the things that will happen first and the end, we, too, must not wind up our lives or let go of our responsibilities upon hearing a single rumor. Quitting our work, pushed by fear, and discerning the times by faith are different from each other.

We sometimes think that we can preach the gospel only when circumstances become favorable for preaching. We put it off, saying that we will serve more diligently when our lives become stable and we have room in body and mind. But in the world there are always things that make our hearts anxious, and if we wait only for the day when every problem disappears, we may miss the opportunity entrusted to us. That the Lord told us not to be terrified even amid wars and commotions does not mean that

we are to live without any thought; it means that we are to believe the word of the Lord before the movements of the world, and look to the work we are to bear now.

That does not mean, however, that the saints must ignore their own circumstances and forcibly take on even the work they cannot do. A weary person needs rest, a sick person needs care, and a person in difficulty needs help. What we must look at is the direction of the heart rather than the amount of strength. If we bear the portion we can while telling the Lord our limits, even a small labor becomes precious service for the gospel. Not putting off even the heart to serve the Lord is the way to receive by faith the time given today.

We must make it known to the full

The Lord said, *"Then He said to them, 'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom'" (Luke 21:10)*, and spoke in turn of wars, earthquakes, famines, diseases, and signs from heaven. When such things happen, we can neither stop the wars nor turn back the current of the world. When we come to think of it, we are truly powerless people, and the only thing we can do is to preach the gospel. But that very work the Lord has entrusted to us. The Lord does not leave the people of the world to be judged without even having heard what Jesus did, but has it fully made known, so that it becomes clear whether they did not believe even after hearing the gospel.

That is why the risen Lord commanded, *"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*

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28:19–20). The promise that He will be with us to the end of the age stands in the same place as the command to preach to the end. Whether the world falls apart or not, what we must do is the same then and now: to preach the gospel until the day the Lord comes.

Then what must we preach? Gathering people by frightening them, on the grounds that we are preaching about the end, cannot be the spread of the gospel. The fact that there is a judgment must be preached solemnly, but the way for sinners to be saved from that judgment must also be made clear. Since a person's sins do not disappear by knowing the dangers of the future in advance, and even if he has found a place to escape disaster, that does not solve even his sins before God, we need the Savior, who bore sins. When Jesus received baptism from John, He had the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and bore on His own body even the sins of our whole lives. The Lord's shedding His blood and dying on the Cross was the very act of bearing that sin and receiving the judgment in our place. Since Jesus, who rose again from death, is the living Savior, who completed the remission of sins, we preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit and urge people to believe in Him.

A person who hears this gospel receives the remission of sins if only he realizes and accepts that Jesus has taken away all his sins. We cannot change the other person's heart, but when we preach the word to him as if plowing the field of his heart and sowing seed, the Holy Spirit gives realization and faith to that heart. Therefore, when we preach the gospel, there is no reason to exalt our own righteousness and look down on the person who hears. We, too, were under sin, but because the Savior has remitted all our sins, we preach that grace; and we must preach step by step so that the person who hears comes to know how the work of bearing sins through the baptism is connected with

the death on the Cross, and why he must believe in the risen Savior. We must not cut short even the meaning of salvation on the grounds that the times are urgent.

Do not look for a place of refuge, but stay where you are

The Lord said, *"Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them" (Luke 21:8)*. There appear people who lead others away, saying that the time has drawn near and that they will live if they go to some place, but the Lord tells us not to go after them. There is no special place of refuge where one becomes safe only by following those who deceive. Until the day the Lord comes, we eat, live, and work here, and only preach the gospel until then. The way of the person who waits for the Lord is not to go off in search of the place those who deceive point to, but to keep the place entrusted to him.

In that place there will also be difficulties. The Lord said, *"But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake" (Luke 21:12)*, and said that this would turn out as an occasion for testimony. Even if it happens that we suffer difficulties for the reason that we preached the gospel, the Lord makes us testify of the name of the Savior in that place as well. This is the reason we cannot judge that the Lord's work has ended merely by the fact that the spread of the gospel has become difficult. Just because one road is blocked, it is not that the will the Lord entrusted to us has disappeared as well.

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That does not mean, however, that we need to go out deliberately looking for danger, nor can we boast of our own faith by having received much persecution. What we are to ask for is not suffering itself, but the wisdom and the strength to testify of the Lord. Since there are those who explain the gospel directly and those who pray for that work and take on the labor that is needed, if, rather than comparing one another's portions, we together regard as precious the matter of one soul coming to know the grace of the Savior, each one's labor comes to be directed toward the same purpose. Even a person whose heart was wholly taken by the news of the world can, in this way, examine the Lord's will again and keep his own place.

There are times when, hearing that a great event is coming, we want to stop the work we are doing. But the Lord has entrusted to us the time before the end comes, and He makes even a difficult place an opportunity for testimony. If the world becomes like this, what must we do? If today is still given to us, the news of salvation to be preached also remains. Let us not let go of our work on the grounds that we are waiting for the end, but, relying on Jesus, who has remitted all our sins, let us preach the gospel in full and stand before the Lord. ✉

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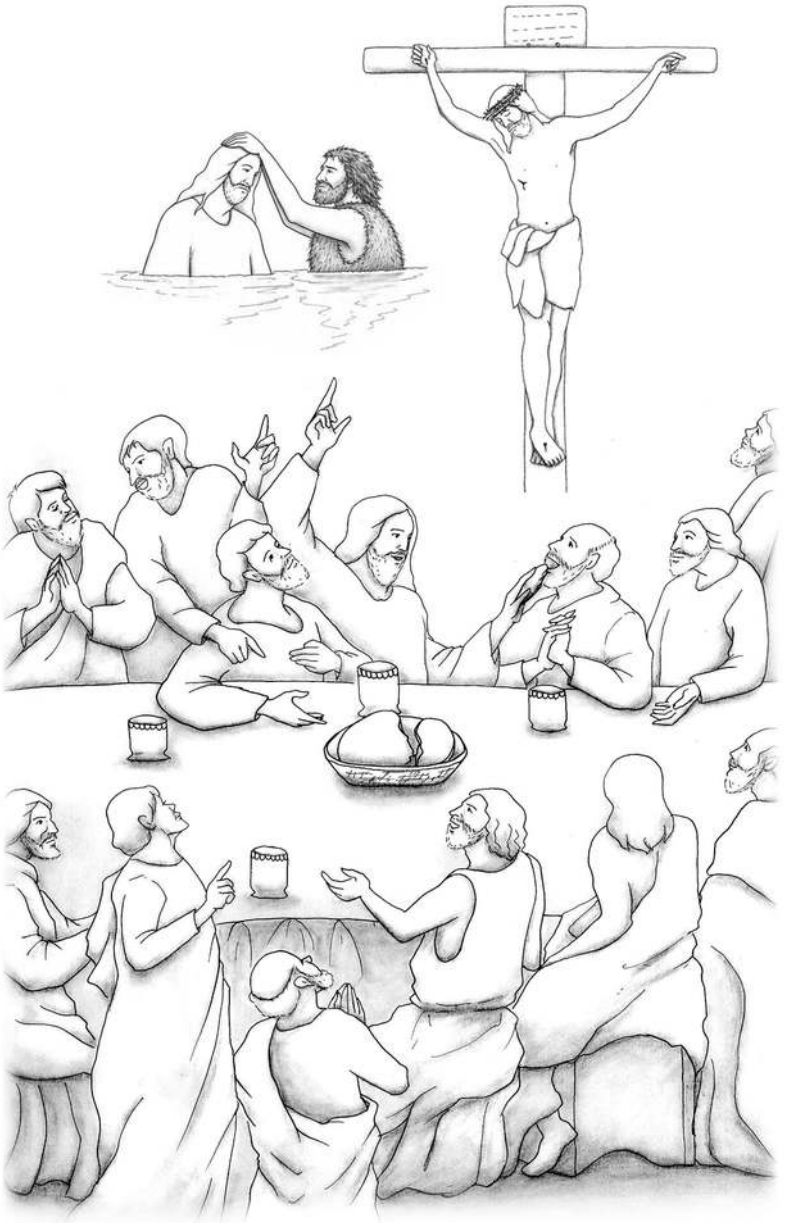

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The heart that sought to kill the Savior with the Passover at hand

< Luke 22:1–2 >

“Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people.”

With the feast that remembers salvation at hand

At the time for remembering the grace of the salvation they had received, there were people who were looking for a way to kill the Savior. Luke begins this chapter by saying, *“The Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover” (Luke 22:1),* and then immediately shows the plan of the chief priests and the scribes. The mere fact that the feast was drawing near did not bring people’s hearts near to God. Whom they were receiving mattered no less than what they were keeping. The fact that one can oppose the Savior whom God sent, even while in a position of serving God, is revealed in this short text.

Since the Passover was a feast remembering the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt, they had to remember the grace by which God had saved His people. Yet at that very time, even though Jesus, who bore the sins of people, was among them, the

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leaders were not willing to accept the Lord's word. They thought of the history of salvation they had known and the Savior who had come before their eyes as separate things. If one speaks of past grace while rejecting the Lord's will now, it cannot be said that that memory has led to faith in the heart.

Luke makes their action known as follows: *"The chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people" (Luke 22:2)*. What they studied was not whether the word of Jesus was true, but how to kill Jesus. Having already set their will to kill Him, they were looking for a plan to carry it out. When a person has first fixed his conclusion, even if he hears a word that goes against his own judgment, he is not willing to learn; rather, he thinks that if he just gets rid of the person who preaches that word, the discomfort will disappear as well. This text makes us, too, look back on our own hearts toward the word.

The fact that one has much knowledge and has been entrusted with an office does not keep one from such a wrong. The chief priests and the scribes knew the Scriptures and the feasts, but they opposed Jesus because of the heart that sought to keep the position they held. Therefore, we must not regard our own judgment as always right merely for the reason that we have spent a long time in the church. Even when the Lord's word clashes with our own thoughts, we must have the heart to learn from Him. Faith is revealed not in using the word to protect what one has, but in correcting one's own thoughts before the word.

The text says that they feared the people. Even while trying to kill Jesus, they were watching the reaction of the people; thus it is revealed what fear had hold of their hearts. Rather than asking before God whether that deed was right, they first calculated how people would see it. If one fears only the eyes of men, one looks for a plan so as not to be found out; but if one

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fears God, one stops one's own will and gives ear to the word that corrects one's wrong.

The will of salvation that lies beyond men's plotting

Jesus is not One who walked into danger without knowing what people were plotting. In the same chapter, the Lord said, *"Truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" (Luke 22:22)*. People tried to hand Jesus over into their own hands, but the Lord went forward on the way of salvation that had already been determined. We must see these two facts together. It is not that people's wicked plan overcame the Lord, nor that, because the Lord accomplishes salvation, their wickedness became righteous.

The One who gave Himself to save us is Jesus. Those who sought to kill Jesus do not become the ones who merited our salvation. The Lord, even while knowing with what heart they treated Him, accomplished the work the Father had entrusted to Him. Therefore, if we see the Cross only as an unfortunate death that came about at the end of people's strife, we miss its meaning. The Savior knew what salvation sinners needed, and for that salvation He gave His own body in person.

Luke goes on to record, *"Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed" (Luke 22:7)*. In the light of the word that the time to kill the Passover lamb had come, we must think about what the Lord went that way for. Since the word Passover has the meaning of passing over, this feast caused people to remember the salvation of God, who did not judge those who were to be judged but passed over them; and now the

Lord was about to give His own body in order to accomplish that salvation completely. The way for a sinner to pass through judgment and obtain salvation does not lie in hiding his sins by his own strength. Because the judgment for sin must be resolved, a Savior who would bear sin in his place is needed, and before the people who remembered the salvation of the Passover stood that very Savior.

The way the Lord went began at the Jordan River. Since Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John, and bore even the sins we would commit throughout our whole lives, the death on the Cross was the judgment of redemption that He received bearing those sins. Jesus shed His blood and died in our place, and by rising again from death He completely accomplished the remission of sins. What did not change even amid people's wicked plans was the Lord's will to deliver sinners. We must believe in this Savior revealed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and turn from the heart that sought a way to live by hiding its own sins.

The word that the Lord bore all the sin of the world means that He did not leave out even the dark sins of our hearts. Not only the actions revealed outwardly, but also the heart that hated others and tried to protect its own gain cannot be hidden before the Lord. Since the Lord, who knows sin, came to remit even those sins, we must honestly acknowledge our own wrongs, yet we must not keep relying on ourselves, who cannot remove sin. The grace of salvation does not make us take our own wrongs lightly, but makes us come to the Savior without hiding anything.

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Faith before God rather than the eyes of men

Jesus also taught us whom we should fear. *"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)*. Just because one avoids all the reactions of men, one's responsibility before God does not disappear as well. Just as the chief priests and the scribes tried to accomplish their plan while avoiding the people, we, too, easily think that it is all right if other people do not know. But since our hearts and actions are before God, keeping up a visible reputation cannot take the place of genuine faith.

To fear God does not mean to doubt the grace of salvation and keep waiting only for punishment. It is to believe the fact that God, who judges sin, sent His Son and had Him receive that judgment in our place. When we believe that grace, we get free from the attitude of trying to deceive God and come to respect His word. Rather than fearing that we will lose face when we acknowledge a wrong, we come to guard against holding on to the wrong and going against the word. Faith in the Savior and honesty before God go together in this way.

In our life of faith, too, if the gaze of others comes first, we may show devotion when people are watching but put off the Lord's will when they are not watching. Also, when we hear an exhortation, we may worry first that our reputation will be hurt, rather than examining whether what is said is right. At such times, instead of making more plans, we must change the direction of our hearts. Believing the word of the Lord, who remitted all sins, and turning from our wrongs comes before the labor of trying to show people a blameless appearance.

The people who sought to kill the Savior with the feast of salvation at hand did not give their own hearts even while

speaking of grace. We must not push the same wrong aside as their affair only, but examine with what heart we treat the Lord. Look for the way to stand rightly before God rather than a way to escape the eyes of men. Believing in Jesus, who gave His own body in our place, and opening our hearts before His word without hiding anything is truly the way to remember the grace of salvation. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Do not exchange the Savior for your own gain

< Luke 22:3–6 >

“Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. So he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude.”

Judas, who was among the twelve

It is easy to think that a person who closely followed Jesus would treasure Him more than anyone. But Luke, introducing the man who would sell the Lord, records, *“Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve” (Luke 22:3)*. Judas was not a man who had seen Jesus briefly from the outside, but a man who was among the twelve. Since the fact that he had lived at the Lord’s side was not evidence that he had given even his heart, we must examine not only where we belong but whom we believe in.

Luke clearly says that Satan entered Judas. We cannot look lightly on the work of darkness that causes one to oppose the Lord as merely a matter of personality. Nor, however, can we read it as meaning that Judas has no responsibility because he moved without any will of his own. For the very next word

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makes clear that Judas went to the chief priests, conferred with them, and consented to their proposal. Only when we see together the work of Satan and the wicked way Judas chose can we read the text rightly.

As we read this scene, rather than trying to judge whether Satan is in another person's heart, we must look back on our own faith. Luke is not speaking of an ordinary mistake or weakness; he is recording the betrayal of trying to hand over the Savior. Therefore, we must not immediately label a saint who has a different opinion or has done wrong as being like Judas. Since the text reveals the heart that abandons Jesus for its own gain even while knowing Him closely, we must honestly examine as what kind of One we are treating the Savior.

Conferring on how to hand Jesus over

Judas did not stop at thought but actually moved. *"So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. So he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude" (Luke 22:4–6)*. The chief priests were seeking a way to kill Jesus, and Judas came to seek an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them. People who had been in different positions joined their wills for the same wicked purpose. Since the joy of having obtained what the heart wanted and what pleases God can differ, the word that they were glad is not evidence that the deed was right, either.

That the promise to give money and Judas's act of consenting to it appear together in the text shows that the relationship of following the Savior had changed into a transaction for his own profit. What he would get by handing Jesus over came before

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whom he believed Jesus to be. We cannot lay the responsibility on money itself as a thing. Riches can be used for needful things, but if the heart treasures them more than the Savior, they become the reason for the choice of forsaking the Lord.

It is also important that Judas looked for a time when the multitude was absent. He waited for a gap when people were not there, intending to carry out what he had already consented to. The wicked will, once accepted in the heart, made him look for an opportunity to accomplish it. Therefore, when a wrong craving is revealed in us, we must not feel safe for the reason that we have not yet acted, but must first lay down before the word the heart that harbors that craving. A will that is hidden and nurtured, instead of disappearing with time, can lead the choices of our lives.

Let us not take lightly the fact that one can, even while saying one follows Jesus, make Him a means for one's own purpose. When gaining praise, influence, or profit in life becomes the center of the heart, discontent grows when the Lord's will differs from one's expectations. But the Lord is not One who exists to fulfill the purposes we have set; He is the Savior who delivers us from sin and leads us on the way of life. Only when we rightly believe who He is can we rightly treat the grace we have received and the work entrusted to us.

The One who accomplished salvation and the man who betrayed Him

Later Jesus said, *"Truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" (Luke 22:22)*. Because the Lord is God, He knew full well that Judas would sell Him before long, and He was not being dragged

away without knowing who would sell Him. But the fact that He knew of it does not make Judas's betrayal legitimate. Since the Lord spoke together the word that He goes the determined way and the word that there is woe to the man who sells Him, we must not erase either one and change the Lord's salvation or man's responsibility.

Since Judas's going to people and conferring on a plan to hand Jesus over was something he chose, he cannot be regarded as having taken upon himself the sacrifice needed for the work of salvation. The One who sacrificed Himself to save sinners is not Judas but Jesus. Judas tried to get what would come back to him, but Jesus bore in their place the judgment that sinners had to receive. Even though outwardly they were within the same event, the meaning of what the two did differs in this way.

To know the meaning of Jesus' giving His own body in this way, we must know the fact that, even before Judas handed Jesus over, the Lord was already bearing our sins. The reason Jesus received baptism from John was to have all the sins of the world passed on to His own body, and even the sins of our whole lives were all passed on to Him at that time. Because He bore those sins, He was hung on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and received the judgment in our place. And He rose again from death and became the Savior who completed the remission of sins. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that we believe in is not a story that exalts man's betrayal, but the word that makes clear the salvation of Jesus, who gave Himself for sinners.

When we know this grace of salvation, we cannot see Jesus as an object that can be exchanged for our own profit. It is not that we were saved because we had a righteousness worth offering to the Lord; it is because the Lord bore all our sins. A person who has obtained the remission of sins thinks of the life he has already received before calculating what more he can get

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from the Lord. That thanksgiving is the beginning of the heart that serves the Lord. A saint is not a person who moves the Savior by piling up his own merit, but a person who responds in faith to the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

Therefore, even when we see our own shortcomings, we must not leave the Savior and try to solve the problem by our own methods. The Lord knows even our covetousness and falsehood, and He bore those sins as well. Acknowledging sin can be fearful and shameful, but that is no reason to avoid the One who gave us salvation. Rather than the momentary profit gained by hiding a wrong, accepting the word that has remitted all sins is truly the way to live. A person who believes in grace does not look for an excuse to continue in wrong, but seeks the strength to turn from that wrong.

The heart dwells where one's treasure is

The Lord said, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:34)*. The opportunity Judas was looking for revealed where his heart had gone. We, too, can know the direction of our own hearts if we examine what we usually strive to get and what opportunity we wait for. We must look back on whether we give thanks for what the Lord has given and try to use it for the gospel, or whether we try to exalt only ourselves in the Lord's name. This examination is not a standard for condemning others, but a matter of setting ourselves before the word.

Since saints, too, have the responsibility to make a living and must do their work faithfully, we cannot call every labor of trying to obtain what is needed for life greed. The problem lies in whether, for the sake of that gain, one tries to reject the Savior

and abandon the truth. A person who believes in the Lord, even while telling Him the needs of life, does not regard even the salvation he has received as trivial for the reason that what he gains is little. For the remission of sins the Lord has bestowed is greater than the profit that comes into one's hands today, and it is eternal.

The mere fact that he was among the twelve did not mean that Judas's heart belonged to the Lord. Since what we need today, too, is not the boast of having been near but the faith that treasures the Savior, receive into your hearts Jesus, who bore our sins in our place and gave us life. The person who holds on to that grace as the most precious thing does not exchange the Savior for his own gain, but turns from the heart that used the Lord in wondering what he might gain, and comes to serve with thanksgiving for the life he has received. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Go forward according to the word of the Lord, who knows all things

< Luke 22:7–13 >

"Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat.' So they said to Him, 'Where do You want us to prepare?' And He said to them, 'Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he enters. Then you shall say to the master of the house, "The Teacher says to you, 'Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'" Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready.' So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover."

The Passover preparation the Lord entrusted

While there was a man seeking an opportunity to hand Jesus over, the Lord had His disciples prepare the Passover He would keep with them. After recording, *"Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed" (Luke 22:7)*, Luke goes on to say, *"He sent Peter and John, saying,*

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'Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat'" (Luke 22:8). Peter and John had to set out for the preparation the Lord had entrusted to them. Outwardly it was a matter of arranging a place to eat, but that place was the place where the Lord would teach His disciples the meaning of His body and blood. When we read this preparation, too, we must see together the Lord's will that lies behind it.

Since Peter and John did not yet know the place to prepare, they asked the Lord where He wanted them to go and prepare the Passover. They did not decide on a suitable place themselves and then inform the Lord; they asked for the place the Lord wanted. This example makes us think about whose will we must follow first when we carry out the work entrusted to us. We, too, while saying that we do the Lord's work, need the heart that learns His will from the word rather than first fixing our own thoughts.

The fact of asking itself does not mean that there is no faith. The disciples did not ask in order to refuse the Lord's command, but asked because they wanted to know how they should prepare. Hearing the needed teaching, rather than hurrying while pretending to know what one does not know, is the way to do the entrusted work rightly. Even when we do not understand the meaning of the Scriptures well or lack the wisdom to carry out a task, we can learn the word and seek help rather than reaching a conclusion on our own. The Lord heard the disciples' question and told them concretely what they were to do.

He knew even the man they had not yet met

The Lord spoke of what the two disciples would encounter in the city. *"He said to them, 'Behold, when you have entered*

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the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he enters. Then you shall say to the master of the house, "The Teacher says to you, 'Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'" Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready'" (Luke 22:10–12). They were to meet a man carrying a pitcher of water, follow him into the house he entered, and convey the Lord's word to the master of the house. Then, He said, he would show them a large, furnished upper room, and they were to make ready there. The Lord already knew what the disciples had not yet seen.

Since the text does not tell us the names of that man and the master of the house, we have no need to imagine who they might have been and make that the center of this event. What is important is the fact that the disciples met him just as the Lord had said and prepared the Passover. Jesus is not One who judges only what is seen before His eyes; because He is truly God, He knows all things. Though He walked with His disciples in a human body, there was not one thing the Lord did not know.

We do not know the future. Even if we know what we must do today, we cannot know everything about whom we will meet and what problems will arise while we do it. So there are times when, even after preparing well, we are flustered on meeting something we had not thought of. But the Lord, who saved us, knows our limits and knows even the circumstances we have not yet seen. When we acknowledge the fact that the One who knows all things and we, who cannot know all things, are not the same, we get free from the attitude of holding only to our own wisdom and come to seek help.

The faith that the Lord knows all things is different from the certainty that one's own plan will always be fulfilled as it is. The way we want may be blocked, or we may see a result different

from what we thought. Even then, we must examine the word again without changing the Lord's will to fit our own expectations. What the disciples needed was not the ability to know the future as much as the Lord does, but the heart that believes the One who spoke and does the work entrusted to them. Since nothing comes of our striving to change the word of God, what we are to do is nothing but to believe, and that faith is revealed in laying down the demand that we can move only if we know all the results in advance.

The two disciples who went forward according to the word they had heard

Luke briefly records the result of the preparation: *"They went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover" (Luke 22:13)*. The disciples found it just as the Lord had said, and prepared the Passover there. The matter came about not because their own prediction was right, but because the Lord's word was fulfilled just as it was. The center of this record lies not in praising the outstanding ability of the disciples, but in revealing who the Savior is, who fulfills exactly what He has spoken.

If the disciples had not gone forward, they would not have encountered at that place what came about according to the word. When they acted according to the word they had heard, they came to know what the thing the Lord had taught was actually like. We, too, cannot learn the way of faith if we only acknowledge the word as right and always follow a different judgment in life. As we keep in our hearts what the Lord has taught and carry out the work entrusted to us, we come to know

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the grace that reveals our lack and helps us. The walk of faith is not leaving the Lord's word outside our lives.

At this time our experience must not become a standard higher than the word. We cannot say that every choice was right merely because a good result came to us, nor can we say that the Lord's promise was wrong merely because we met difficulty. What the disciples confirmed in this text was not their own wish but what the Lord had actually spoken. Today we, too, must not call every thought that comes to mind the Lord's promise, but set our faith on the written word. Then, even if our circumstances change, the object of our faith does not change.

The preparation of the two disciples was not a greatly visible teaching or the working of a miracle, but it was labor indispensable for arranging the Passover place the Lord desired. In the community, too, some work is revealed before people and some is carried out quietly. Rather than comparing their size with one another, we must look to the will the Lord has entrusted. Even a small preparation that helps people hear the gospel becomes precious service when carried out with a heart that treasures that word.

The grace of the body and blood He would give at that place

Jesus, who sat down at the prepared place, later spoke as follows: "*And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me'" (Luke 22:19)*. The purpose for which the Lord desired to eat the Passover with His disciples did not stop at merely sharing a meal once. So that the disciples would learn through the word about the Lord's body that He

would give for them, Jesus made clear in the prepared upper room for whom His death that would soon come was.

Our salvation, too, is not something a sinner completed by finding the way himself; it is that Jesus, knowing all our sins, accomplished in person the work of removing those sins. The Lord received baptism on His own body and had all our sins passed on to Him; with that baptism He received from John, He bore all the sins of the world once and for all. On the Cross, He gave up that body which had borne even the sins of our whole lives, shed His blood and died, and received in our place the judgment for sin that we had to receive. To believe in Jesus, who rose again from death, through this gospel of the water and the Spirit is to accept as it is the word of the One who accomplished salvation.

The Lord, who knew even the place where the disciples would meet the man, cannot have left our sins behind without knowing them. We do not know all of what faults we will reveal again, but the Lord knew even those sins when He bore the sin of the world. That is why, even when we discover weakness today, we do not try to remove sin by our own strength as if salvation were needed again from the beginning. We correct our wrongs, but we place the basis of the remission of sins on what the Lord has already accomplished. Only when we believe that word does our conscience, not bound only to the good or bad of our own deeds, obtain peace in the Savior.

We must not strive to become like the Lord, who knows all things; rather, we must acknowledge that we do not know the future and believe the word of the One who completed salvation. Just as Peter and John asked where to prepare and went forward according to the word they heard, let us, too, believe the word of the Lord, who knows all things, and carry out today's portion. Since the Passover place the Lord had them arrange was the

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place where grace for sinners would be conveyed, we hope that our labor, as those who have received that grace, will also be used so that other souls may hear the Savior's word. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Believe in the body and blood given for you

< Luke 22:14–23 >

“When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, ‘With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, ‘Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. But behold, the hand of My betrayer is with Me on the table. And truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!’ Then they began to question among themselves, which of them it was who would do this thing.”

The meal He desired before His suffering

Jesus sat down with the apostles, knowing that He would soon suffer. At the place where death had drawn near, what did the Lord want to leave with His disciples? Luke conveys the

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Lord's heart as follows: *"He said to them, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer'" (Luke 22:15)*. What the Lord earnestly desired was not only to have a meal with His disciples, but that they would know and believe in the body and blood of the Savior, which He was giving for them. The word of the Lord, who was facing His suffering, turns the hearts of the disciples toward the salvation for them rather than toward the fear they would go through.

The Lord went on to say, *"I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16)*. The Passover was a feast that made the people remember the grace by which God had delivered His people out of judgment, and the Lord looked even to the kingdom where that salvation would be fully accomplished. The meaning of the table the disciples were facing now did not end with that night; it led on to the grace they would enjoy together with the Lord, with no more pain or judgment, in the kingdom of God, which they would enter after receiving the remission of sins. Therefore, we must not stop at grieving only over the Lord's death, but must see what He gives us through that death.

Luke first records the word of the Lord as He took the cup. *"Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes'" (Luke 22:17–18)*. The Lord gave thanks, had the disciples divide it among themselves, and spoke again of the kingdom of God. It was not that He who would establish that kingdom did not know the suffering before His eyes; rather, He knew the will of salvation that He would bestow through the suffering. What the disciples needed now was not to declare how well they would protect the Lord, but to believe in what the Lord would accomplish for them.

He gave us the body in which He bore sin

Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and broke it and gave it to them, speaking as follows. *"And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me'" (Luke 22:19)*. The disciples, as they received the bread, had to think of the Lord's body, which He was giving for them. The Lord did not accomplish salvation for us only by word, without any labor; He came in the flesh Himself and took upon His own body the work of saving sinners. Therefore, to commemorate the Lord's body is to receive by faith the sacrifice and labor He actually rendered.

The word that Jesus gave His body for us cannot be separated from what He bore in that body. By receiving baptism from John, the Lord bore all the sins of the world on His own body once and for all, and included in them are not only the sins revealed up to now, but even all the sins we will commit throughout our whole lives. Because Jesus, who has no sin, bore the sin of sinners on His own body, the body He gives up is directly related to the problem of our sins. If we leave out that fact, we cannot fully know why that body is a body for us.

The more we know our own faults, the more we look for something with which to cover those faults before God. We may think that the problem of sin would be solved if we labored more and disciplined ourselves more strictly, but the remission of sins is not the result of the labor we have piled up with our bodies. It is the grace we obtain because Jesus bore our sins and gave up His own body. Only when we believe in what the Savior Himself did can we escape from the heart that tried to become righteous by its own strength and gratefully accept the righteousness the Lord has given.

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That is why we cannot regard the act alone of receiving the bread in the Lord's Supper as the same thing as salvation. Receiving it with the mouth and believing in the heart what the Lord did must be distinguished. The saint who receives the bread is not confessing that he has the ability to remove sin himself; he is remembering that the Savior gave up His body for the saint himself. Let us not bury even its meaning in familiarity just because it has become a familiar rite. The more we think of the labor the Lord Himself bore for our sins, the more our thanksgiving and faith are renewed.

The blood that established the new covenant

After eating supper, the Lord spoke concerning the cup as follows: *"Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you'" (Luke 22:20)*. The body given for us and the blood shed for us are not two separate salvations. The Lord, who bore sin by receiving baptism from John, went to the Cross bearing that very sin. Because Jesus received in our place the judgment that sinners had to receive, shedding His blood and dying, He delivered us from the judgment of sin by giving up His own life.

Therefore, when we think of the new covenant established with His blood, we must see the price of sin that the Lord actually paid. Unlike a person who has promised to do well from now on, the Lord died just as He had said, rose again from death, and completely accomplished salvation. To believe together in the baptism by which He bore sin, the Cross on which He received the judgment for that sin, and the Savior who rose again is to place our faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. What we need is not to add our own righteousness to this

salvation, but the faith that receives as it is the grace the Lord has accomplished.

If we know this grace, even when our faults are exposed today, we do not try to pay the price of sin again, as if the Lord's blood had been insufficient. We must honestly acknowledge and correct what we have done wrong, but there is no need to make a new way to obtain the remission of sins. For that sin, too, is included in the sin of the world that the Lord bore, and He received that judgment, too, in our place. We can refrain from excusing our own conduct and at the same time not deny the Savior's salvation, and holding these two together is the right heart of a saint who has received the remission of sins.

The fact that the Lord gave His body and blood for us also changes the heart of service. Instead of laboring to be recognized by others or working to demand a reward from God, we come to serve out of gratitude for the grace we have already received. Even though our strength is limited, the ground of our thanksgiving does not diminish. For the love of the Savior, who gave up His own body, does not change. The saint who engraves the word of the Lord's Supper on his heart thinks of the grace the Lord first bestowed and wants to preach that salvation to other souls as well.

The hands on the same table and the hearts that differ

At the very place where He spoke of grace, the Lord also revealed the betrayal. *"But behold, the hand of My betrayer is with Me on the table. And truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" (Luke 22:21–22)*. The fact that the hand of the one who would

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betray Jesus was on the same table shows that merely sitting at that place does not prove the faith of the heart. The Lord was not unaware of that hand, yet He did not stop on the appointed way of salvation, because, having borne the sin of the world through His baptism, He had to be nailed to the Cross, and that was the Father's will. He spoke of both His will to save sinners by His own sacrifice and the responsibility of the one who betrayed Him.

The disciples asked one another which of them would do that thing. Luke records that question, but this scene was not given so that we would single out and suspect other people. We must first look back at whether we are receiving in our own hearts the word the Lord spoke at that table. It is to examine whether we are clinging only to our own interests even while knowing the fact that the Savior gave His body and blood. More important than the fact that an opportunity to hear grace is close at hand is the heart that actually believes in that grace.

Let us think again of the Passover table that Jesus earnestly desired. Since the Lord, before His suffering, made clear that His body and blood were for us, we must not leave that word merely as a sad story or a repeated rite. Receive in your heart the salvation bestowed by the Savior, who bore all sins through His baptism and received that judgment in your place. When we believe in the grace of the body and blood the Lord gave for us, the word of that table becomes, today as well, the clear ground of our remission of sins and of our thanksgiving. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Who can strengthen the brethren?

< Luke 22:24–34 >

“Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called “benefactors.” But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves. But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’ And the Lord 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.’ But he said to Him, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.’ Then He said, ‘I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.’”

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The disciples who disputed over who was the greatest

Beside the Lord, who had said that He would give up His own body and blood, the disciples weighed one another's greatness. Luke records as follows: "*Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called "benefactors." But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves'" (Luke 22:24–26)*. The Lord was speaking of His sacrifice for them, yet the disciples were disputing over who was higher. Jesus did not leave that dispute as it was, but taught how the life the disciples were to follow differed from the power of the world. We see in this scene that even while being at the Lord's side, one can have in one's heart the craving to be higher than others.

The Lord spoke of the appearance of those in power who exercise lordship over people while being called benefactors. It is the way of standing over others by putting forward what one has bestowed, and of trying to move those who have received it according to one's own will. Because the disciples were not to follow such a way, the Lord said that the greatest must be as the younger and he who governs as he who serves. That is, being in the lead is not the right to entrust work only to others, but the responsibility to bear the needed labor first and to care for people. The Lord's teaching does not merely change the name of the great one; it changes what he is to do.

We, too, at times treat people according to how long we have believed or how much work we have been entrusted with. We may be hurt when our labor is not recognized, and may become

uncomfortable when someone who came later than we did offers an opinion. But what a person who has believed for a long time must learn more is not the way to press people down, but the heart that helps, as the Lord does. Even teaching the word must not be for putting the other person under oneself, but for helping that person believe in the Lord more clearly. The more one is in the lead, the more one must think of for whom the Lord established him.

The Savior who served us first

When the Lord explained service, He placed Himself before the disciples. *"Who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves" (Luke 22:27)*. Ordinary people regard as great the one who sits and is served, but the Lord was among them as the One who serves in person. He not only urged a humble attitude upon the disciples, but made them see what work He Himself was doing. If we are to learn service, we must first know Jesus, who labored for us.

The work by which Jesus served us was not a matter of making our lives a little more comfortable while leaving sin as it was; it was the work of delivering us from the sin and judgment we could not escape by ourselves. The Lord's service began at the Jordan River, where, by receiving baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all and bore on His own body even the sins of our whole lives. Bearing those sins, He was hung on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and received the judgment in our place. And He rose again from death and completely accomplished the remission of sins; therefore, to believe that the King of kings Himself did the

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labor of saving us from sin is the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Because the Lord, who has no sin, lowered Himself in this way for sinners, we, too, can lay down the heart that was looking for grounds to exalt ourselves. For our salvation was not obtained because we were better than others. If we believe the fact that everyone has obtained the remission of sins by the grace of the Savior, then no matter whose weakness we see, we cannot look down on him, boasting of our own righteousness. We admonish wrongdoing with the word, but we come to help that person stand again in faith. Service for others comes out of the heart that knows the Lord served us first, and a person in whose heart the Holy Spirit dwells has the desire to serve, in whatever way he may serve.

Moreover, the Lord's service does not remain only as an event of the past; the living Jesus even now helps the saints by the Holy Spirit and teaches the right way by the word. Our strength and love are easily exhausted, but we can ask the Lord for help and again look after the people entrusted to us. Rather than waiting until abundance arises within ourselves, we think of the grace we have received and bear the work we can do now. Service that believes in the Lord is not a place to show one's own strength, but a place to rely on the Savior's help.

The promise to entrust the kingdom

Jesus said, *"You are those who have continued with Me in My trials" (Luke 22:28)*, and promised, *"I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29–30)*. Since the

trials here mean hardships, the Lord was not unaware of the disciples who had gone through hardship and loneliness together with Him in following His will. Even while correcting their dispute, He did not wipe away the labor they had shared with Him, but spoke of the grace of His kingdom. The Lord did not tell them to take high positions on this earth, but made them wait for the glory He would bestow in His kingdom.

This promise becomes hope for the one who serves. For the Lord knows even the labor that is not revealed to people and the hardships one has gone through in following the Lord's will. But we must not turn that promise into a demand that the Lord must repay us as much as we have done. For the relationship between the Lord and us is not one of calculating wages but a relationship of love, and we are people who have received much from the Lord and cannot put forward our own merit and demand a reward from Him. Since we have already received the remission of sins and life, we serve the Lord out of gratitude for the grace we have received, and His promise of a reward, as the Lord's grace given in addition, renews the heart that serves in love.

If we insist that we must be treated better than others by putting forward our own labor, we are returning to the first dispute, so we must examine our faith to see whether the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts. The Lord remembers our labor, but He does not give us the right to lord it over other saints by that labor. Since true glory is not something one seizes but something the Savior gives, a person who believes in the Lord's kingdom can bear lowly work now without being discouraged. We are not bound only to people's recognition, but wait with thanksgiving for what the Lord has promised.

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When you have returned, strengthen your brethren

The Lord prayed for Peter even while knowing that he would fall in the future. *"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 sought to shake the disciples, what was needed was not assurance in their own strength. Peter said that he was ready to go with the Lord both to prison and to death, but Jesus said that he would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed. The Lord knew Peter's weakness more clearly than Peter knew his own heart.

Yet the Lord did not end His word at foretelling Peter's failure. By praying for him that his faith should not fail, and by telling him to strengthen his brethren when he had returned, He still entrusted the work of serving to Peter, who would come to know how weak his own strength was. It does not mean that the person who strengthens his brethren must be a person who has never once been shaken. A person who knows the grace by which the Savior held him can, by that grace, help others, too, rely on the Lord.

We, too, cannot endure long if we trust only our own will in the place of service. Even if we began with a good heart, when we grow weary or meet something fearful, our limits are revealed. What is needed then is not to declare even more loudly, as if we would never fail, but to ask the Lord for help for ourselves and for our brethren. A person who has known his own lack and asked the Lord for help can, in the face of the difficulties of other saints, too, pray together with them rather than judge hastily. Learning from the way the Lord prayed for

Peter, we, too, must pray for one another's faith and also for the gospel.

To the disciples who asked who was greater, the Lord taught the life of serving, and to Peter, who had been confident of himself, He entrusted the work of strengthening his brethren after he returned. Who can strengthen the brethren? Not the person who has never fallen, but the person who entrusts himself to Jesus, who remits sins and cares for weak faith, and who knows that grace. When such a person first reaches out his hand and prays together, the place where there was a dispute to be higher is changed into a place of learning the service that builds up the brethren. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The way of salvation cannot be protected with two swords

< Luke 22:35–38 >

“And He said to them, ‘When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?’ So they said, ‘Nothing.’ Then He said to them, ‘But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: “And He was numbered with the transgressors.” For the things concerning Me have an end.’ So they said, ‘Lord, look, here are two swords.’ And He said to them, ‘It is enough.’”

Remember the way on which nothing was lacking

Before Jesus spoke a new word to His disciples, He made them look back on the way they had already traveled. *“And He said to them, ‘When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?’ So they said, ‘Nothing’” (Luke 22:35)*. The disciples answered that they had lacked nothing when the Lord sent them out. It was not a way they had managed because they had ample provisions in their own hands;

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they had received the care needed to do the work the Lord had entrusted to them. The disciples, who would face hardship in the future, first had to remember who it was that had sent them out and cared for them.

The Lord made them know that He was not One who had only given commands and left the disciples to themselves. The reason they could look back on the past and answer that they had lacked nothing was that they had actually received the Lord's care. We, too, when facing a hard matter, easily count only what we do not yet have, but before that, we need to think of how the Lord has guided us until now. If we remember the grace of the way we have traveled, we can escape from the worry that we must bear the days ahead by our own strength alone and again ask the Lord for help.

However, remembering the care of the past does not mean that every circumstance will continue the same in the future as well. After asking whether they had lacked anything in the past, the Lord told them that now they were to prepare differently. The Lord's faithfulness does not change, but the circumstances the disciples would meet and the work they would take on could change; therefore, insisting only on the way one did things before cannot be called faith. Faith is giving ear to the Lord, who speaks now, rather than to the outward form of past experience.

Be equipped with the word even at the cost of sacrifice

Jesus spoke as follows: *"He said to them, 'But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one'" (Luke 22:36)*. Since the time when the Lord would be arrested

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and suffer had drawn near, the disciples, too, could not expect only the same circumstances as before. The Lord did not let the disciples think that they could hold out according to their own thoughts without any preparation. The word to obtain a sword even by selling one's garment makes the disciples realize that they must not take lightly what was about to come upon them, but must make the preparation that was truly necessary.

This word must not be accepted as a command to protect the Lord's will with a sword. What the disciples truly needed was to have the Lord's word in their hearts by faith, even at the cost of sacrifice. If one clings only to one's own expectations even while the Lord is telling which way He will go, one cannot understand that way no matter what one holds in one's hand. Laying down one's own thoughts and believing in what the Lord will accomplish comes first. Without the preparation of believing the word, even zeal can become an action that tries to block the Lord's will.

Having the word does not mean only memorizing many sentences of the Bible. It is truly accepting the Lord's will when, in the midst of hardship, one's own judgment and the Lord's word look different. We need a heart that does not change the truth for our own convenience even when something is uncomfortable or brings us loss. That faith is not obtained by paying a price with much wealth. It is to treasure the word the Savior has given and to put it ahead of one's own stubbornness and craving.

Since what matters is not the fact that one has given up much but whom one seeks to follow through that, one cannot boast unconditionally of what one has given up while speaking of sacrifice. The saint does not try to be recognized by God by the size of his resolve, but believes in the Lord's salvation and obeys His will. The necessary preparation and actual labor, too, must

come out of that faith. If one puts on only the outward form while missing the heart the Lord requires, one can lose the way at the truly important moment even after making much preparation.

The Savior who would be numbered with the transgressors

The Lord went on to reveal what would be fulfilled in Him. *"I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: 'And He was numbered with the transgressors.' For the things concerning Me have an end" (Luke 22:37)*. This word means that people would regard Jesus as one of the transgressors. It does not mean that Jesus actually committed sin; it means that the Lord, who has no sin, would be treated like a criminal. The disciples had to keep in mind the fact that what was written had to be fulfilled in Him, so that they would not think the Lord had been defeated when they saw such a sight.

If we do not believe this word, we come to think that loyalty is only to stop it when the Lord is despised. But the Lord was not going the way of glory that the disciples had decided on by their own judgment. He went the way of salvation that the Father had appointed in order to deliver sinners. If we judge only by the sight of Him being led away by people like a transgressor, we cannot know what He would accomplish for us. The key to understanding that sight lies in the word the Lord spoke first.

As it was written, Jesus received baptism from John and had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and because He thus bore the sin of the world, He had to be crucified. The Lord, who bore even the sins of our whole lives, was hung on the Cross bearing those sins, shed His blood and died, and received the judgment in our place. He did not die because of

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any sin of His own; He gave Himself up to deliver us from the punishment of sin. And He rose again from death and completely accomplished the remission of sins. Because we believe in this Savior revealed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we see on the way the Lord lowered Himself not failure but the accomplishment of salvation for us.

Before that salvation, there is no merit that a person can add. It is not that salvation was accomplished because the disciples protected the Lord, nor that the remission of sins is completed only when our resolve is added. The Lord bore all sins and Himself received even that judgment; therefore, we must believe that word. This is the reason we must place our faith in the grace already accomplished rather than boast more loudly of our own strength each time our weakness is revealed. To be equipped with the word is, above all, to know clearly on whom our salvation depends.

The sword held in the hand and the word to be received in the heart

Having heard the Lord's word, the disciples spoke as follows: *"They said, 'Lord, look, here are two swords.' And He said to them, 'It is enough'" (Luke 22:38)*. The Lord said that it was enough in reply to their words, but this must not be read as meaning that the will of salvation could be accomplished with two swords. The Lord, who knows all about the disciples' character, weakness, and even stubbornness, did not take issue with each of those things, but spoke of what would soon be fulfilled in Him; and seeing a person who believes in his heart the word of the Old and New Testaments, He says even today that it is enough. What we must hold on to from this conversation

is not the number of swords held in the hand, but believing and following the way the Lord has spoken of.

Later, when one of the disciples struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear, the Lord said, *"Jesus answered and said, 'Permit even this.' And He touched his ear and healed him" (Luke 22:51)*. The fact that the Lord healed the severed ear shows that He did not try to protect His way by the power of the sword. The Lord healed the wound a disciple had inflicted, and salvation was accomplished by the Lord giving up His own body. Even an action we think is for the Lord can go against His will if we do not understand His word.

Today, let us, too, examine what we believe before counting the strength or means we have, and while faithfully preparing what we can do, let us not think that we can replace the Savior with it. What holds us when hardship comes is the salvation the Lord has already accomplished and His unchanging word, and since there is life and blessing in that word itself, when we believe, it actually becomes ours. The Lord is pleased not with our boasting of what we have, but with the heart that believes and follows the word.

The Lord, who in the past cared for the disciples so that they lacked nothing, also told them in advance what they would undergo in the future. Let us, too, remember the grace of the way we have traveled and prepare the way ahead with the word. Do not consider visible preparation alone to be sufficient, like the disciples who showed their two swords, but believe deeply in the will of the Savior, who lowered Himself like a transgressor for sinners. The faith that accepts the way of salvation the Lord has appointed is the most precious preparation we must have in the face of hardship. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Pray to Jesus so that you may not face a great trial to come

< Luke 22:39–46 >

“Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. When He came to the place, He said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’ And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.’ Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. Then He said to them, ‘Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.’”

“Pray that you may not enter into temptation”

Our Lord says to us, *“Pray that you may not enter into temptation” (Luke 22:40)*. This temptation refers to going through hardship. The Lord said, *“Watch and pray, lest you*

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enter into temptation" (Matthew 26:41), and He also says, *"Blessed is the man who endures temptation" (James 1:12).*

Our Lord also said, *"You are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28–30).* This means that our Lord said He would reward His people who went through hardship together with Him.

Dear fellow believers, a trial that has already been suffered has been suffered. Anyone can suddenly fall ill or meet with a hard thing. That is why we must pray for the servants of God, and you and I, too, must pray for one another, for ourselves and for our brothers and sisters. We can go through hardship at any time. That is why our Lord told us to pray that we may not enter into temptation.

A life of asking God for help in all things

You and I, too, can go through hardship at any time. If we do not deal with the hard things we will face by praying to God for help, there are a great many things in which we will go through hardship. That is why the Lord told us to pray so that it would not happen that we go through something too hard, fall into temptation, and become unable to live our life of faith. In fact, our living seems simple, but in order to do one thing, we can live only by preparing hundreds and thousands of things.

Even in our family life, we can live only by preparing everything. Likewise, if we do not make provision, there are many things in which we will go through hardship. That is why the Lord tells us to pray to Him for help in all those things, and

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to prepare in advance so that we do not fall into hard things. So we must pray to the Lord. We must ask for help. The person who asks God for help in all things is the one living a right life of faith. This is precisely what a believer is, what a person of faith is, and what the life of the righteous is. This means that we must become people who ask for what we ourselves need, who ask for the sake of the kingdom of God, and who pray for what our brothers and sisters need—people who ask for help.

Dear fellow believers, think about it quietly. This means that you must think about what things will happen in the future, what things you must prepare for in your life, and what you need, and ask for help in those areas. Only when we ask the Lord for help does God help us, and we can live by the Lord's help. We do not know when we will meet with what. For example, for the brothers who drive a car, it may seem like nothing, but if they do not pray, they can go through something serious in an instant. Only when we always ask the Lord for help in all things can we be protected. The brothers and sisters who work at their jobs also always have many difficulties. We must lay such difficult matters before the Lord and ask for help. We must become people who pray in every area, asking God to solve things and to bestow grace. Whether in pastoring or in doing business, we must pray to the Lord for help, and we must live asking for help in every matter of life. That is why our Lord told us to watch and pray that we may not enter into temptation. This means that we are to ask the Lord for help and live in grace.

Living by trusting in one's own strength is arrogance

Dear fellow believers, you know well that even for us to do a single thing is never a simple matter. When we do some work, it looks simple at a glance, but in order to do that work, how much preparation must we make and how much help must we ask for—and nothing must go wrong—before we can do that work? So we must become people who ask the Lord for help while looking back on ourselves and also looking at what the church needs. Pray also for the workers who have gone out to preach the gospel, and first of all, pray for yourselves. And pray for those who are close to you. Do not try to live by your own strength without asking for help for your brothers and sisters and for the servants of God. You must ask for help and live step by step like that, by faith in the Lord.

When we think of a servant going through hardship, our hearts ache, and that is not someone else's affair but the story of you and me, and the Lord's work. Our church must truly pray for ourselves, for our brothers and sisters, and for the servants. Dear fellow believers, do you live praying? Are you perhaps living by trusting in your own strength, trusting in your own schemes, and trusting in your own wisdom? That is arrogance. All the ability we have to do anything, our Lord has given us. We must become people who know how to pray, knowing that our Lord has given even this, and knowing that our Lord will give what we need. Because our lives always have many difficulties, we must live praying always without ceasing, always watching and praying, asking for help in that way. Casting away our own thoughts and not living only for ourselves, we must always watch and pray that we may not enter into temptation.

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The Lord who prayed in Gethsemane

Our Lord bore all the sin of the world by receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, and now the time for Him to bear the cross had drawn near. When the Lord went up to the Garden of Gethsemane and prayed at night, the disciples slept, because they were so sleepy that they could not hold out at all. Jesus knew that hardship would come upon the disciples, too. Once Jesus bore the cross, the disciples would go through great hardship. So He told them to pray that they might not enter into temptation, that they might not fall into too much hardship. Our Lord, too, prayed earnestly before God the Father. *"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42)*. While He was praying so earnestly to God the Father, it says, *"His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44)*. Jesus, who obeyed the Father's will in this way, bore all the sins of the world, which had been passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and received the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross. Since Jesus rose again from death and saved us from sin, we believe in this Lord and entrust to Him even the difficulties of life, asking for help.

Dear fellow believers, this means that we must pray so that we do not go through hardship because of the dangerous elements in our lives. Are there not difficult areas in life? There are dangerous elements. This means that we must pray about such areas well in advance. Our Lord told us to pray well in advance, saying, "Lord, keep me, protect me, and do not let me go through too severe a hardship."

Ask for help well in advance

By all means, let us not think of praying, or of our living, as something simple. I hope that you will not think of your life of faith too simply, so simply as to know only that you have no sin. We have our lives to live. We need God's help. Only when God helps us can we live our life of faith, live our life in society, and live the life ahead of us. Our lives seem simple, but they are not simple. We must live always asking for God's help. Dear fellow believers, there truly are many things to pray for. Our Lord said, *"Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation" (Luke 22:46)*. This means that we are to ask for help well in advance.

The Apostle James says that the one who endures temptation for the Lord is blessed, that the person who endures and bears hardship for the Lord's sake and follows the Lord is blessed. Pray for yourselves. Pray for the gospel and for souls. And pray for the servants of God. I hope that you will become people who pray for souls, for yourselves, and for the church. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

The prayer of entrusting oneself to the Father's will

< Luke 22:39–46 >

"Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. When He came to the place, He said to them, 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation.' And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.' Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. Then He said to them, 'Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.'"

The Lord who went to the Father as His suffering lay ahead

When the Cross had drawn near, Jesus went out to the Mount of Olives. The Lord did not move about as usual, not knowing what was about to come; rather, knowing His suffering, He went to pray before the Father. The disciples also followed the Lord, but merely being in the same place did not mean they were ready

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to bear the temptation; therefore, just as the word says, *"When He came to the place, He said to them, 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation'" (Luke 22:40)*, the Lord first commanded them to pray.

Until a little while before, the disciples had been disputing over who was the greatest, and Peter had said that he would follow the Lord even to death. But a heart that thinks much of its own zeal and the faith that actually overcomes temptation are not the same. The Lord did not draw out any more pledges from the disciples, but told them to ask God for help. Since prayer is clinging to the Lord, asking for help, the more one regards one's own strength as sufficient, the more prayer is pushed aside; but the person who knows his own weakness finds the reason to pray before the word of the Lord.

We, too, can neglect examining our hearts for the reason that we know the word and have lived a life of faith for a long time. The fact that there is no great hardship yet is no guarantee that we will be able to stand on our own in the future, either. The Lord did not expose the disciples' weakness in order to abandon them; rather, He taught them whom they were to rely on in the face of temptation. Therefore, we who hear the word telling us to pray must not try to prove our own strength, but must lay our hearts before the Lord, asking Him to hold us.

The prayer that seeks the Father's will rather than one's own

Jesus withdrew from the disciples about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed. Since the Lord, who made the whole world, came in the flesh and actually went through suffering, we must not read this prayer, offered with the Cross before Him, as

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a mere formality without any pain. The Lord, while not hiding the weight of His suffering, prayed, *"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42)*, and entrusted Himself to the Father's will.

The cup the Lord spoke of was the suffering of the Cross that He was now to receive. If we read only the plea to take the cup away, cut off from the rest, we cannot know the whole of the Lord's heart. The Lord did not, like us, unreasonably insist on being spared no matter what; while He asked that it might pass if at all possible, He asked that it be done not according to His own will but according to the Father's will. Because He was the Son, He could even have gone against the Father's will, but He did not go against it and obeyed. In this prayer there are together the sincerity that tells of His pain and the faith with which He entrusts Himself to the Father.

Here lay the Lord's anguish. Because He had already received baptism from John in the Jordan River and borne the sin of mankind, He now had to be hung on the Cross. Since He had had even the sins each of us would commit throughout our whole lives passed on to Him through that baptism, without leaving out a single one, the Lord's death does not end as the death of a good man who suffered an injustice. The sinless Lord received the judgment for our sins in our place and paid the price of sin in full by shedding His blood and dying, and He rose again from death and saved us from sin and death. Because He accomplished it all in this way and rose again, all things now call Him Lord and worship Him, and this was the Father's will.

When we think of the Lord, who has given us life in this way through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we come to know that in prayer we cannot insist only on our own will. Since the Lord Himself accomplished even the way of salvation, can we

hold on to the life after salvation by our own judgment alone? We should tell Him what we want without hiding it, but we must not try to dictate to the Lord even the way in which it is to be fulfilled. To think first of what pleases God, to accept the Father's will revealed through the word, and to ask for the strength and wisdom we need—this is the prayer that relies on the Lord.

He received strength and went forward on the path of obedience

When the Lord sought the Father's will, an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened Him. Yet what follows the word that He received help is not a record that the suffering disappeared, but the record that says, *"Being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44)*. Here we learn that we must not judge God's help solely by the one standard of whether circumstances change as we want.

Luke conveys the Lord's earnestness through the sweat that was like drops of blood falling to the ground. In this word we must see how deeply the Lord bore suffering in order to save us. Prayer is lifting up one's heart to God, and the Lord did not pray with His mouth only, but prayed giving His whole heart. The work of removing sin was not something that passed by painlessly with a single word; because the Lord took our sins upon Himself and received the judgment in His body, we who believe have been able to escape condemnation.

The Father helped the Son, and the Lord, having come to the conclusion that it was right for things to be done according to the Father's will, went forward to accomplish the work of

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salvation entrusted to Him. This fact corrects our hearts that say prayer was in vain for the reason that the hardship did not go away right away. At times we look only for a way to avoid the problem, but the Lord gives us the strength to bear that matter according to the word. However, we must not take this word and force a suffering brother to endure and bear it unconditionally. We must look into that person's hardship together with him, seek the help that is actually needed, and share his burden at his side so that he can walk according to the Lord's will.

He woke again the disciples who had fallen asleep in sorrow

Having finished praying, Jesus returned to the disciples. Since Luke records that they had fallen asleep from sorrow, we must look at their condition that the text speaks of. The Lord did not leave the weak disciples as they were and go away; rather, He woke them again with the word, *"He said to them, 'Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation'" (Luke 22:46)*.

When sorrow is deep, the heart grows heavy and it becomes hard to bear even the things one must do. At such a time, the word telling us to pray is not a demand to become stronger by our own strength, but a call to entrust ourselves, who have no strength to rise, to the Lord and to ask Him for help. The Lord's waking the disciples from their sleep, too, was not a matter of putting them to shame, but of leading them to rely on God in the face of the temptation that was soon to come.

Therefore, when we are discouraged, we must not think that we can pray only after we have sorted out our hearts completely. We can tell Him our fear and sorrow just as they are, and ask

Him not to let us lose hold of the word. When a brother or sister is worn out, too, we must not remain at finding fault with his weakness, but must ask the Lord for help together with him. It is because we know that the Lord, who received the cup of suffering for us, holds our faith even now.

The Lord sought the Father's will rather than His own will, and went to the end on the way of saving us. Let us, too, who believe in that grace, lay today's hardship before the Lord, turn from the stubbornness that asks only for our own will to be done, and ask for the strength to follow the word and the heart to care for our brothers. Since the Lord, who woke the disciples on the Mount of Olives, wakes us today as well, the prayer of entrusting ourselves to the Father's will holds us up as we stand in the face of temptation. ✉

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Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

He goes on accomplishing salvation even at the moment He is seized

< Luke 22:47–53 >

“And while He was still speaking, behold, a multitude; and he who was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus said to him, ‘Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?’ When those around Him saw what was going to happen, they said to Him, ‘Lord, shall we strike with the sword?’ And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus answered and said, ‘Permit even this.’ And He touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders who had come to Him, ‘Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.’”

A betrayal that cannot be hidden with a kiss

While Jesus was telling the disciples to pray, a multitude appeared. Since Luke records, *“While He was still speaking, behold, a multitude; and he who was called Judas, one of the*

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twelve, went before them" (Luke 22:47), it was not only strangers who approached the disciples. A man who had heard the word together with them and lived together with them had now become the one leading the multitude that came to seize the Lord. This record shows that a history of staying at the Lord's side and a heart that believes in the Lord do not automatically become the same.

Judas drew near and tried to kiss Him, but the Lord knew the meaning contained in that action. Even if in others' eyes it was an action expressing intimacy, before the Lord it could not be a cover to hide betrayal; therefore Jesus called him by name, saying, *"Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48)*, and told him what he was actually doing. This question makes us cast away the thought that the Lord was seized because He was deceived, and makes us examine the heart behind the outward appearance.

We, too, must not judge our own faith by familiar expressions of faith alone. The fact that we can speak of the gospel and know the affairs of the church does not mean that we have accepted that gospel in our hearts. We must examine whether we believe in Jesus as the Lord who saved us, or whether we are regarding Him as a means of gaining our own benefit. As we read the story of Judas, rather than spending our hearts on suspecting others, we must first look back honestly on our own hearts as we stand before the Lord.

However, we must not judge right away that a brother is like Judas on seeing his mistake or an opinion different from our own. The text speaks of an actual betrayal, in which a man had resolved to sell the Lord and brought the people along. Therefore, we must not try to gain a pretext for rejecting a weak brother, but must examine our own attitude toward the Savior before the word. When we have a heart that believes in and gives thanks

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for the salvation the Lord has accomplished, we come to value our relationship with the Lord more than the appearance we show before people.

He stopped the zeal that wields the sword

Those around the Lord, seeing what was about to happen, asked whether they should strike with the sword. Luke goes on to relate, *"One of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus answered and said, 'Permit even this.' And He touched his ear and healed him" (Luke 22:50–51)*. Even if they had the thought of wanting to protect the Lord, that zeal did not in itself amount to an action that followed the Lord's will. The Lord stopped the way that would make the wound greater, and healed the injured man.

Even though the servant belonged to the side that had come to seize Him, the Lord did not turn away from his wound. Since the One who can touch a severed ear and heal it is truly God, we can know from this event that the Lord's power had not disappeared. Jesus was not dragged away because He was powerless; He gave Himself up in order to accomplish salvation. The disciple's sword was not the power needed to accomplish that salvation, and the Lord healed even the wound that sword had left.

We must listen to this word also when we put anger first while claiming to do the Lord's work. Hearing words that oppose the gospel does not make it right to harm or insult the other person. If we think that the truth wins only when a person is crushed, before we know it we come to rely on our own strength rather than on the Lord. We should answer wrong words

with the word, but we must not go down the path of hating and wounding the very person who needs to hear the gospel.

Knowing how to stop when the Lord says to stop is also faith. If we push through to the end a thing we have already begun, for the reason that it came from our own zeal, we end up establishing our own will under the words that it is for the Lord. The person who hears the word, corrects his own conduct, and makes the necessary amends is not a person who regards the Lord as weak, but a person who acknowledges that the Lord's will and power are greater than his own judgment.

The people who came to seize the Savior as if seizing a robber

Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders who had come to seize Him, *"Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs?" (Luke 22:52)*. The Lord was not a robber who hid himself and harmed people; He taught the word openly in the temple every day. Yet they came with swords and clubs and treated the Lord like a dangerous criminal. Their action was not evidence that Jesus had sin; rather, it revealed their own unrighteous hearts in dealing with the Lord.

A person does not actually become a sinner just because people treat him like a sinner. Even though in the text the men holding weapons seem to hold the power, that power cannot determine the truth. Jesus, while clearly exposing their action, did not step back from the way of salvation. If we are to read this scene rightly, we must also see the Lord's will that lies beyond the people's rough actions.

The reason the sinless Lord was seized like this is that He bore our sins in our place. Through the baptism He received

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from John, all the sins of the world were passed on to the Lord once and for all, and even all the sins we would commit from the time we are born until we die were passed on to Him at that time; therefore, the Lord went forward to the Cross to receive the judgment for those sins. The blood He shed and the death He died on the Cross are the very sacrifice by which He paid the price of those sins in our place. The Lord rose again from death and overcame sin and death, and He has given the remission of sins and new life to us who believe in this completed gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Therefore, the Lord's arrest cannot be read as an event in which the will of salvation collapsed. Jesus was going the way He Himself had determined in order to save sinners. The Savior we believe in is not One who lost His power at a hard moment, but One who used His power for our salvation. When we know that grace, we come to realize that we are following not One who must be protected with a sword, but One who gave His own body and protected us.

The power of darkness cannot stop salvation

With the word, *"When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53)*, the Lord made plain without concealment what kind of hour that was. The people who had not laid hands on Him when He was with them in the temple had now come to seize Him; yet even in that hour when the multitude before His eyes was using force, the Lord made clear the nature of the matter and knew the way by which He would accomplish salvation.

The statement that the power of darkness was at work does not mean that the Lord regarded that evil as right; therefore, betrayal and violence are still evil, and the responsibility of those who acted so does not disappear either. But even when they were trying to do away with the Lord as they pleased, God's salvation was not frustrated. The Lord, while giving Himself up into their evil hands, accomplished to the end the work of saving sinners.

We who believe in this Lord cannot conclude that the Lord's word has lost its power just because circumstances have grown dark. If we follow only the power visible before our eyes right now, we easily hide a betraying heart or resist with hot temper; but when we look to the Lord's salvation, we find the place to stand according to the word. Let us believe honestly before the Savior, who knows even the heart behind the kiss, and lay down the zeal that adds wounds. Relying on Jesus, who went on accomplishing the will of salvation even in a dark hour, let us keep to the way of preaching the gospel. ✉

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Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, who prayed beforehand for the disciple who fell

< Luke 22:54–62 >

“Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest’s house. But Peter followed at a distance. Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, ‘This man was also with Him.’ But he denied Him, saying, ‘Woman, I do not know Him.’ And after a little while another saw him and said, ‘You also are of them.’ But Peter said, ‘Man, I am not!’ Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, ‘Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.’ But Peter said, ‘Man, I do not know what you are saying!’ Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So Peter went out and wept bitterly.”

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The disciple who had boasted says that he does not know the Lord

When Jesus was arrested and taken into the high priest's house, Peter followed at a distance. Only a little while before, he had been the disciple who had said that he was ready to go with the Lord both to prison and to death. But at the place where the Lord was actually being led away, his heart was not the same as the words he had boasted. He sat with the people by the fire kindled in the midst of the courtyard, and Luke records, *"A certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, 'This man was also with Him.' But he denied Him, saying, 'Woman, I do not know Him'" (Luke 22:56–57)*.

Peter's answer was a clear denial. Even though he knew the fact that he had been with Jesus, he said that he did not know Him. The text does not dress him up as a strong disciple, but records as it is how he collapsed in the face of a threat. Through this word we come to see how different the heart that trusts in its own resolve is from the faith that actually relies on the Lord.

We cannot take the single act of Peter's following at a distance by itself and make it the cause of all problems of faith. For standing at a close distance does not mean that one's heart, too, is close to the Lord. What matters is the fact that, when faced with words that exposed him, he denied his relationship with the Lord. Once the heart that wanted to protect his own life came first, what he had said, that he would follow to the end, did not become the strength that held him.

We, too, can speak of great resolutions as much as we like when we are at ease. But when loss is right before our eyes and we become afraid of people's eyes, what we rely on is revealed. If we know this fact, rather than easily blaming Peter, we must

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look back on our own boasting. We come to acknowledge that only when the Lord helps us, who are weak, can we keep our faith even in the small matters of today.

The weakness revealed in the face of repeated denial

A little while later, when another person saw Peter and said that he, too, was of the same group, Peter again answered that he was not. But just as the word says, *"After about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, 'Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.' But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are saying!' Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed" (Luke 22:59–60),* even after the first denial he could not stop. This sight shows how the fear of the heart drives a person.

The rooster crowed even before Peter finished speaking. It was the moment when what the Lord had said beforehand was revealed exactly as it was. Peter thought that he knew himself well, but the Lord, since there was nothing He did not know about what his character was like and whether or not his heart was sincere, had warned him in advance that with the resolve he was relying on he could not overcome the trial. It became clear in this place that the word the Lord had spoken was true rather than the boast he had made before people.

Nevertheless, we cannot say that Peter denied Him unavoidably because the Lord had foretold it. The Lord's knowing does not change Peter's wrong into a good deed, nor does it remove the responsibility for his answer. Since he clearly denied the Lord, he had to acknowledge that fact. At the same

time, we must remember that his failure was not something the Lord had failed to know, either.

Our wrongs, too, do not disappear by making excuses. We can give the reason that our circumstances were difficult and that we were afraid, but with that we cannot make a lie into the truth. The person who acknowledges what he is before the Lord can seek the help of the word. Rather than hardening our hearts further in order to hide our wrongs, we need to go honestly before the Lord, who knows us.

The word that came alive again together with the Lord's gaze

After the fact that the rooster crowed, Luke records, *"The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' So Peter went out and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:61–62).* The Lord, who was under arrest, looked at His disciple, and at that moment Peter remembered the word of the Lord. Rather than imagining and adding a facial expression that the text does not speak of, we must examine how that gaze and the remembrance of the word are connected.

What came to Peter's mind was not his own boast but the word of the Lord. When what he was, having said that he did not know the Lord, was exposed before that word, he went outside and wept bitterly. These tears are not evidence showing how strong a person he was, but the sight of a person who had trusted himself more than the word of the Lord painfully realizing his own weakness and wrong.

When we realize our wrongs, too, the word does not remain merely as knowledge that reminds us of past things, but exposes

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the heart we wanted to hide and makes us look again to the One we are to rely on. Therefore, we must not avoid the word just because our own wrongs come into view in the light of it. We must stand honestly before the Lord, acknowledge what we were wrongly believing in, and turn our hearts to the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

It is not that the tears Peter shed paid the price of sin in his place. The basis of the remission of sins lies in Jesus, who gave Himself for sinners. When the Lord received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, including the sin Peter committed on this night and even the sins we would commit throughout our lives. Bearing the sins He had thus taken upon Himself, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death and delivered us from sin and death. What we are to rely on is not our own weeping or resolve, but the Lord, who has completed salvation with this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Believing in this grace does not mean that we can take our wrongs lightly. Rather, because we know that the Lord suffered because of our sins, we acknowledge our wrongs, turn from them, and try to set right the harm we have done. Only, we do not try to buy salvation again with that labor. We live correcting our conduct within the faith that believes in Jesus, who has already borne all our sins.

The prayer He offered beforehand for the disciple who failed

The story of this night ends with Peter's weeping, but if we read together the word the Lord had spoken earlier, we can know

more clearly His will toward His disciple. The Lord did not only foretell Peter's failure, but also said, *"But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:32)*. That fact turns toward the Lord the heart that looks only at its own failure and is discouraged.

The Lord said that, when he had returned, he should strengthen his brethren. If the basis on which He would use Peter had lain in a character that never once wavered, no way would have remained after the failure of this night. But the Lord knew His weak disciple and prayed for him so that Peter's faith would not fail. The person who knows that grace cannot exalt himself as being better even when he sees the weakness of another brother.

Therefore, even if we have experienced failure, we must not remain hiding our faith or giving up everything, but must acknowledge our wrongs before the word and look again to Jesus, who saved us. Also, when we meet a weak brother, we must not try to dig up his failure and take his place, but must help him so that he can believe the word and stand. The person who knows the limits of his own strength and relies on the grace of the Lord can be used in the work of strengthening his brethren.

Peter's tears do not demand that we make greater boasts. They make us set our hearts on the Lord, who, though He knew our weakness, accomplished the work of salvation to the end. Let us turn from the place where we trusted ourselves, believe the word of Jesus, and carry out with the Lord's help the work entrusted to us today. The very place where boasting collapsed is the place where those who have received grace learn the service of holding one another up. ✉

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Sermon 11 by Paul C. Jong

He gave us life with the body that was mocked

< Luke 22:63–65 >

“Now the men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him. And having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, ‘Prophesy! Who is the one who struck You?’ And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him.”

The men who held Him beat the Savior

After Peter went outside and wept bitterly, Luke turns our eyes to Jesus, who was under arrest. The men who held the Lord did not stop at doing the task entrusted to them, but, just as the word says, *“The men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him” (Luke 22:63)*, they mocked and beat Jesus. In the conduct of those who thought they could treat an arrested man as they pleased, the heart of a sinner is revealed. But the One who stood before them was not One who deserved to be despised by people, but the Lord, who had made them and had come to save sinners.

When we read the Gospels, we are apt to pass over this short sentence too quickly. But the mocking and the beating were sufferings actually inflicted on the Lord, and Jesus, who came in a human body, went through that shame in His body. If the work of accomplishing salvation had been merely a way of teaching the word and receiving people’s respect, we could not

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understand this scene. The Lord gave Himself to give life to sinners, and on that way He received even the insults people inflicted.

When we think of this fact, we, too, come to look back on our attitude in dealing with the powerless. Just because the other person cannot defend his own situation does not mean that we may speak rashly and insult him. Nor does a wrong act become lighter because many people laugh together. If we read the sight of the men who beat the Lord only as a story of evil men of the distant past, we may miss the heart that presses down other people with the little power we have.

Looking at the insult the Lord suffered, we must know how deeply sin is seated in people. Being in a position of outwardly keeping order does not mean that one's heart, too, is righteous. Anyone who does not set himself before the word of God can use the authority given to him to harm people. Therefore, the saved saints must examine their hearts and words so as not to treat rashly those weaker than themselves.

The unbelief contained in the words that put the prophet to the test

The people, as the record says, *"Having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, 'Prophesy! Who is the one who struck You?'" (Luke 22:64)*, blindfolded Jesus and then demanded that He say who had struck Him. Their question was not a question that sought to know the truth. It was a word of mockery, saying that if Jesus was a prophet, He must show His power in the way they had determined. Rather than standing in the place of hearing the Lord's word, they set themselves in the place of testing and evaluating the Lord.

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The fact that Jesus is truly the One who makes known the will of God is not decided by His answering people's mockery and guessing a name. The Lord had taught how sinners are saved, and was accomplishing in His body the salvation He had spoken of. But they, refusing to believe the word He had already let them hear, demanded that He do what they wanted. In this way, unbelief does not arise only because there is no evidence; it is also revealed in placing the Lord under one's own standards with the heart closed to hearing.

We, too, sometimes put the Lord to the test, saying that we will believe if what we want comes to pass. If a difficulty does not disappear right away, we think as if the Lord were not there, and we try not to accept any word that differs from our own thoughts. But faith is not a power that makes the Lord move according to our will. It is knowing through the word who the Lord is and what He has accomplished for us, and accepting His testimony.

Therefore, when questions arise, we must examine the word honestly and seek help. Asking about what we do not understand is different from mocking the Lord and forcing our own conditions on Him. The Lord, since He knows our ignorance, teaches us through the word, but we must come with a heart to hear that teaching. While we look only for miracles that fit people's demands, we are apt to miss the grace of salvation already given before us.

Fulfilling the promise for sinners with the body that was insulted

Before He was arrested, while eating the Passover with His disciples, Jesus made it clear that His body was the body He was

giving for them, just as the word says: *"And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me'" (Luke 22:19)*. Now, when we look at the Lord being beaten by people, we come to know that this word was not an abstract expression of love. The Lord was actually going the way to save sinners by giving His body.

In order to know rightly why the Lord's body is the body given for us, we must first know the baptism He received in the Jordan River. Since, by receiving baptism from John, the Lord had all the sins of the world passed on to that body of His once and for all, and bore in that body even all the sins each of us would commit throughout our lives, He was hung on the Cross bearing sin in His body and received in our place the judgment we were to receive. With the blood the Lord shed and His death, the price of sin was paid, and the Lord rose again from death and became our eternal Savior. We receive the remission of sins by believing in Jesus, who removed all sins with this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The people who mocked the Lord did not know what was happening before their eyes. They thought they were beating the arrested Jesus as they pleased, but Jesus, who knows all things and can do all things, allowed Himself to be despised and beaten in that way only for a little while in order to save us. This does not mean that their evil conduct became a good deed. It means that even amid the shame and suffering inflicted by sinners, the Lord fulfilled the promise of salvation to the end, and Jesus, who was brought low in this way, is truly God.

The saint who knows this salvation does not stop at feeling sorry for a moment while thinking of the Lord's suffering. Believing that the Lord went that way because of his sins, he is set free from the heart that tried to resolve by its own

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righteousness the sins the Lord bore. Also, when he preaches the gospel to another person, he does not merely tell him to live a good life. He preaches the Savior, who took sins upon Himself through His baptism and received the judgment on the Cross in our place, and so helps that person, too, to believe in the grace of the Lord.

Reviling words cannot change the truth of the Lord

Luke briefly adds, *"Many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him" (Luke 22:65)*. Even without setting down all their words in detail, how evil their attitude was is sufficiently revealed. The fact that Jesus is the true Savior did not change because they repeatedly insulted Him; rather, that mockery shows what the sinners whom the Lord came to save are like.

The greater and rougher people's evaluation is, the more easily our hearts are captured by their words. When we see many people sneering, we may come to feel ashamed even of the word we believe. But more important than what people say about the Lord is what the Lord has actually accomplished. Since Jesus, whom the world mocked, removed our sins and rose again, we have no reason to be ashamed of the faith that believes in Him.

This does not mean that we must confront those who mock with equally rough words. Because we know that that person, too, needs the Lord's salvation, we must speak the truth clearly and yet lay down the heart that wants to repay with insult. Nor must we hold up this text to a suffering person and force him to endure unjust treatment in silence. We, who believe in the suffering the Lord bore in order to save us, must rather protect the weak and care for their difficulties together with them.

Jesus did not set His purpose on having His power acknowledged by people, but accomplished the work of giving life to sinners. Let us, too, not leave the truth of the Lord to be judged by people's mockery. Believing in the grace of the body and blood given for us, let us serve the Lord with a heart that hears and obeys the word. The grace that gave us life with that mocked body causes us to turn from words that press others down and to preach the gospel that gives people life. ✉

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Sermon 12 by Paul C. Jong

The Son of God, who will sit at the right hand of power

< Luke 22:66–71 >

“As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, tell us.’ But He said to them, ‘If I tell you, you will by no means believe. And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go. Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.’ Then they all said, ‘Are You then the Son of God?’ So He said to them, ‘You rightly say that I am.’ And they said, ‘What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.’”

The question of those who are unwilling to believe

When day broke, the elders of the people, the chief priests, and the scribes gathered and led Jesus into the council. Just as the word says, *“‘If You are the Christ, tell us.’ But He said to them, ‘If I tell you, you will by no means believe. And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go’” (Luke 22:67–68)*, they demanded that Jesus tell them if He was the Christ. Outwardly it sounds like a question confirming who He is, but Jesus’ answer reveals that they were not asking with a heart to hear the word and believe. The Lord knew not only the outward form of the question but even the heart of the one asking.

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Jesus made it clear that it was not because they had failed to hear an answer that they did not believe. Though they had already seen the Lord's word and the works He did, they were unwilling to accept Him. The word that they would not answer even if the Lord asked them shows that their question was not a conversation examining the truth together. They set Jesus under their own judgment and tried to get the conclusion they wanted.

We, too, can harbor such a heart when we read the Bible. Rather than hearing what the word teaches, we look only for words that support the thoughts we have already settled on. If we shut our hearts, saying that we will not listen unless it is the answer we want, we cannot go forward in faith even if we come into contact with the word a great deal. Therefore, the person who asks about the truth must also have a heart to be corrected when his own thinking is wrong.

This word does not mean that a person who has a question must not ask. The person who asks in order to know what he does not know strives to hear and understand the word, but the people in the text were asking even while they had shut their hearts to hearing the answer. We must not try to stand in the place of examining the Lord, but must come before the word acknowledging that the Lord is the One who teaches and saves us.

The arrested Son of Man will sit at the right hand of power

The people arrested Jesus and set Him before themselves, but the Lord spoke of the place where He would be in the future, saying, *"Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God" (Luke 22:69)*. The present appearance they

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saw did not tell everything about Jesus. After the suffering the Lord was to receive, there was the glory of sitting at the right hand of the power of God. This word reveals the fact that people's interrogation and insults cannot determine the Lord's way.

Jesus did not change His word in order to avoid the threat before His eyes. Nor did He hide that He is the Son of God in order to be acknowledged innocent by people. Since the Lord knew who He was and where He was going, He made the truth known even in the place of His arrest. Though He appeared to be judged by those seated in the council, He is the Lord, who has the power of God.

We, too, must not judge the truth of the Lord by visible circumstances alone. The names people exalt and the power of the world may seem to last long, but they cannot give salvation. Jesus is the Savior, who suffered, rose again from death, and sat down at the right hand of God. Therefore, the One in whom we must put our faith is not the people who held power at that time, but Jesus, who has eternal power.

The fact that the Lord has been exalted does not become grounds for the saints to lord it over other people. We are not people who set ourselves in the Lord's place, but people who are ruled by Him. If we believe in the power of the Lord, we do not change the truth in order to build up our own honor, and even in fearful circumstances we come to seek help leaning on the word. The faith that the Lord is alive gives us the strength to carry out the work entrusted to us today.

The Son of God came to save sinners

Hearing the word that the Son of Man would sit at the right hand of power, the people asked Jesus whether He was the Son of God, and Luke records that question and answer as follows: *"They all said, 'Are You then the Son of God?' So He said to them, 'You rightly say that I am'" (Luke 22:70)*. Jesus did not explain Himself in a lowered way as one of many teachers, but clearly testified that He is the Son of God. Depending on whether we accept this testimony, who the Jesus we believe in is also becomes clear.

Christ means the Anointed One, and Jesus came to accomplish the work of salvation God had promised. The Lord is the Savior, who clearly teaches the will of God, Himself becomes the sacrificial offering for sinners, and rules His own people. If He had been One who came merely to move people with fine words, He could not have delivered us, who were under the judgment of sin. Jesus is truly God, and because that Son of God came in a human body and actually bore our sins, salvation was accomplished.

That work was done in the Jordan River. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and since the sins each of us would commit throughout our lives are also included in all those sins, it is not that only a part was transferred while our sins remained. Bearing those sins, the Lord was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died, and so received in our place the judgment we were to receive. And He rose again from death and overcame sin and death, and has given the remission of sins and eternal life to us who believe in this completed gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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Therefore, in saying that we believe in Jesus as the Son of God, there must also be the faith that accepts this salvation the Lord has accomplished. If we only exalt His name while trying to remove our own sins by our own efforts, we are not fully relying on what the Lord has done. We believe in the Savior, who took our sins upon Himself and received all the judgment. Because we believe in the work the Lord has completed, we can come before God as those who have received the remission of sins.

The person who believes in the Lord does not try to keep this grace to himself alone, but comes to want to let the person who is still afraid because of sin know who bore that sin. The testimony that Jesus is the Son of God and our Savior leads in this way to the spread of the gospel today. We preach that grace not because we have sufficient ability to persuade people, but because the work of the One who gave us life is true.

Hearts that differ even after hearing the same testimony

The people gathered in the council, when they heard Jesus' answer, spoke as follows: "*They said, 'What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth'" (Luke 22:71)*. They did not bow down and believe before the Lord's testimony; rather, saying that they had heard it themselves from His own mouth, they hardened their own judgment. The word that made known who the Son of God is became for them an opportunity to accept the Lord, but they used that word to oppose the Lord.

Even after hearing the same word, people can respond in entirely different ways according to the direction of their hearts.

The person who tries to keep his own standard to the end may reject the word for the reason that it goes against his thinking. On the other hand, the person who acknowledges that he needs salvation hears who the Lord is and what He has accomplished, and comes to believe. This difference lies not in how much information one has piled up but in whether one receives that word in one's heart.

As we read this text, we must not pass by only pointing out the wrong of the people who were in the council at that time. Since the testimony of Jesus has been given to us today as well, we must look back on how we are receiving that word. We must not lower the Lord to fit people's evaluations or alter salvation to suit our own will, but must believe just as the Lord has made it known. The Son of God, who suffered for us and sat down at the right hand of power, is our Savior.

Since before Him we stand not as judges but as those who have received grace, we must believe in Jesus, who removed all our sins, and live having our hearts corrected by the word. Let us value the faith that truly accepts the Lord's testimony more than being exalted in the eyes of the world. Since we have received by faith the very testimony the council heard, let us become those who are not ashamed of the Son of God, who sat down at the right hand of power, and who clearly preach Him to our neighbors. ✉

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CHAPTER

23

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You can download Rev. Paul C. Jong's Christian Books to Computer, Tablet or Smartphone.

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The false accusation against the sinless King

< Luke 23:1–7 >

"Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, 'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.' Then Pilate asked Him, saying, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' He answered him and said, 'It is as you say.' So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, 'I find no fault in this Man.' But they were the more fierce, saying, 'He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.' When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time."

Jesus, who made clear before the council that He is the Son of God, is now led away before Pilate. The accusers claimed that Jesus was perverting the people, forbidding them to pay taxes, and calling Himself a king. They branded the Lord, who came to deliver people from sin, as one who was throwing the nation into disorder. Yet from the mouth of Pilate, who heard that accusation, came the word that there was no fault in Jesus. This is because, however fierce the accusation may be, the nature of the One who has no sin does not change. As we look at this trial,

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we must clearly know the charges people attached to Him and the work of salvation that Jesus actually accomplishes.

An accusation made by twisting the word that gives life to the people

"And they began to accuse Him, saying, 'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King'" (Luke 23:2).

The accusing crowd spoke of Jesus' teaching by changing it into an act of perverting the people. The Lord's preaching the kingdom of God and calling sinners was a work to cause people to return to God and obtain life. But the people who did not accept the Lord accused Him before Pilate in order to do away with that teaching. The people who should have heard the teaching and turned their own hearts tried instead to make the One who taught it into a sinner.

The accusation that He forbade paying taxes also did not agree with Jesus' words. When the spies had earlier asked Him about the matter of taxes, the Lord answered, *"Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Luke 20:25)*. Although He had never taught people to rise in rebellion against the authorities of the world, the accusers put forward words that Pilate would take issue with. Since their heart to kill Jesus had been decided beforehand, instead of listening to the meaning of His word, they twisted that word and used it.

Seeing this, we must not stop at merely weighing the wickedness of others. This is because we, too, once we have set in our hearts the conclusion we want, try to fit the word of God to that conclusion. If we hate to acknowledge our own faults

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before the word that exposes sin, we come to take even the right preaching of the word as something that torments us. But since we cannot stand before God with the peace obtained by hiding sin, we must humble our hearts before the word that was given to give us life.

The accusers tried to show that they were right, but the word shows their falsehood and Jesus' righteousness together. The attitude of pushing away the truth in order to hold on to one's own claim also becomes a hindrance to receiving the remission of sins. This is because if, even after hearing the word that the Lord bore all sins, one accepts only the parts that fit one's own thinking, one cannot believe in perfect salvation. Faith is not altering the word to suit one's own will, but accepting as it is what God has accomplished.

Jesus, who did not deny that He is the King

"Then Pilate asked Him, saying, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' He answered him and said, 'It is as you say'" (Luke 23:3).

To Pilate's question, Jesus admitted that He is the King. Just because people's accusation was false, the fact that the Lord is the Christ does not also become false. The crowd made that title into a charge, but Jesus is the true King who rules over sinners and gives them life. Someone who comes to seize people's power and enlarge his own position and the One who came to save His own people from sin differ, beginning with their very purpose.

Jesus is God, who made the universe and all things, and yet He came into the world clothed in the same flesh as ours. Since a person who has fallen into sin cannot become righteous by

himself and come to God, the Lord Himself came to seek people and did the work of salvation. Such a One did not even plead His innocence at length before Pilate, and that was not because He had nothing to say to make it clear, but because this road was from the beginning a road He was walking for sinners. Therefore, if we judge Jesus to be a man without authority by looking only at how He stood before Pilate, we cannot know who the Lord is. That the One who is King stood in a low place was not because He had lost His kingship, but in order to accomplish the work of saving sinners.

The Lord we believe in is not One who has power only when circumstances get better. Even while He was arrested and being tried, the Lord did not abandon His people. We must not look down on the word for the reason that what is before our eyes looks shabby, but must believe in the King who came even to that place and is for us. The confession that Jesus is the King must lead to the faith that accepts the Lord's salvation and entrusts our hearts to the Lord's word.

Our sins that He bore in His sinless body

"So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, 'I find no fault in this Man'" (Luke 23:4).

Pilate, too, found no fault in Jesus. This reveals the fact that Jesus is not One going to be judged because of His own sins. Why is the One who is innocent standing on this road of suffering? It is because the Lord bore our sins in our place, and that bearing is connected with the baptism He received in the Jordan River.

When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, He had the sin of all mankind passed on to Him once and for all. The

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sins that each of us commits from the time we are born until we die are also included in that sin of the world. The Lord, bearing that sin, went on to the Cross and shed His blood and died, and thereby received in our place the punishment for sin that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and accomplished eternal salvation. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that we are to believe in with our hearts is in this way the news that Jesus actually resolved our sins and judgment.

To say that Jesus bore sin does not mean that the Lord was changed into One who did evil. It means that, because the Lord, who has no blemish, had our sins passed on to Him, the Lord received the punishment in our place. When we know this relationship, we come to believe clearly why the death on the Cross is a death for us. If we look for the basis of salvation in the cleanness of our own hearts, we are shaken every day, but if we believe in the range of sins that the sinless Lord bore and the judgment He received in our place, we come to have the assurance of the remission of sins.

The way of salvation that continued even amid fierce accusation

"And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time" (Luke 23:7).

Even after hearing the word that there was no fault in Him, the crowd did not withdraw its accusation. Rather, they said all the more fiercely that He had stirred up the people from Galilee all the way to all Judea. At this, Pilate confirmed that Jesus was a Galilean and sent Him to Herod, who had jurisdiction over that

region. The trial did not end with the Lord being released, but led on to yet another interrogation.

The fiercer people's demands became, the more the suffering directed at the Lord continued, but that could not break down the will of the Savior. Because Jesus took responsibility to the end for our sins that had been passed on to Him through His baptism, He completed salvation by passing through the trial and the Cross. We who believe in this grace cannot make the loud voice of the accusing crowd the standard of truth. Rather than how strongly people assert something, we must examine what the Lord actually said and what He accomplished.

The charges the crowd first put forward made Jesus look like an evil man, but the text shows that even amid that accusation the Lord is the sinless King. Because that King bore our sins and stood in a low place for us, we have been delivered from the punishment for sin. Do not give your heart over to the false accusation, but give thanks to Jesus Christ, who bore our sins in His sinless body, and believe in that salvation. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

What was Herod hoping to see when he waited for Jesus?

< Luke 23:8–12 >

“Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.”

When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; since he came to see before him the One he had long wanted to meet, outwardly he seemed to welcome Him gladly. But Luke makes clear that the reason Herod was glad was that he wanted to see a miracle. Even if one has the heart to want to meet Jesus, what one hopes for in trying to meet Him is what matters. If a person who must be delivered from sin waits only for a spectacle before the Savior, he may fail to accept the Lord even in that close place.

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A heart that stayed in the expectation of seeing a miracle

"Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him" (Luke 23:8).

Herod had heard reports about Jesus and had long wanted to see Him. But having heard the reports and believing in the Savior were not the same. What Herod waited for in the text was the sight of Jesus performing some miracle. Since he had Jesus before him and wanted to watch a display of His power, at the center of his expectation was his own satisfaction.

The miracles the Lord performed revealed the power of the Savior who gives life to sinners. People had to know and believe who it was that healed the sick and raised the dead, but if they wanted to see only amazing phenomena, they would miss the Lord to whom those works pointed. This is because with a heart that waits for sights pleasing to the eye, one cannot gladly receive the word that exposes one's own sins.

We, too, may speak of Jesus' power while not actually setting our hearts on how He bore our sins. If we think that the Lord loves us only when a difficult matter is resolved or something special happens, our faith is shaken, too, when the thing we expected does not come. But the Lord's love is not something that newly arises and disappears according to whether what we want happens. We must know and believe what God has accomplished to save us, and that fact must hold fast the joy of our hearts.

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The Lord, who kept silent even in the face of many questions

"Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him" (Luke 23:9–10).

Herod questioned Him with many words, but Jesus gave no answer at all. The chief priests and the scribes kept vehemently accusing Him at His side. On one side they were asking in expectation of a miracle, and on the other side they were accusing, and the Lord, who was in the very midst of it, did not change His own will, dragged along by people's demands. Just because Herod's position was high, Jesus was not One who had a duty to entertain him.

We must not take the Lord's silence as evidence that He has no power. This is because Jesus is not One who came to this earth to gain people's praise or to satisfy the heart of the one judging Him. He had already spoken to His disciples of His suffering, death, and resurrection, and He was now walking that road on which He would save sinners. Rather than imagining what more the Lord might have said, we must look together at the recorded silence and the work of salvation He would accomplish.

The demands of the world always hold out their own standards to us, but the standard by which to judge the Lord's salvation is the word the Lord has given. If we set up as a condition of faith the demand that He show us such and such a thing right now if He has power, we become people who exalt our own demands above the word. There must be no case in which, even with the salvation the Lord has already accomplished set before us, we seek only other evidence and end up failing to receive the grace of salvation.

What was Herod hoping to see when he waited for Jesus?

The Savior, who bore our sins even amid contempt

"Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate" (Luke 23:11).

Herod, together with his soldiers, treated Jesus with contempt and mocked Him. Just because they arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, it was not that they worshiped Jesus as King. The text says clearly that this act was done amid contempt and mockery. Since the man who had been glad to see Jesus finally took the side of those who ridiculed Him, his gladness at first cannot be said to have been true faith.

Yet this mockery was something the Lord had spoken of beforehand. On the way up to Jerusalem, the Lord said to His disciples that *"He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon" (Luke 18:32)*. The One who was despised in this way is God, who made mankind, and the Christ, who came to save sinners. Just because people treat Jesus as worthless, the Lord's honor does not disappear; rather, when we consider why the honorable One suffered even such humiliation, His love toward us is revealed. Though the Lord is One without sin, because He bore our sins, He accepted the road of suffering and death.

The reason Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist was to have the sins of all the people of the world passed on to Him once and for all. Included in them are not only our past sins but all the sins we commit as we live our whole lives. With the sins He had borne in this way, the Lord was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from the dead and became our Savior. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that we believe in conveys

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not a miracle that would fill Herod's expectation, but the Lord's salvation that actually delivered us from sin and punishment.

Therefore, believing in Jesus does not stop at acknowledging that the Lord's power is amazing. It is accepting in our hearts the fact that the Lord of that power bore all our sins through His baptism and gave up His life in our place. Here also lies the reason we, who have no strength to overcome sin, are justified before the Lord. It is not because we have become people without blemish by ourselves, but because we believe in the salvation that Jesus, who has no blemish, accomplished for us.

People's harmony cannot take the place of faith

"That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other" (Luke 23:12).

Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate. The two men, who had previously been enemies, became friends with each other that day, but the fact that their relationship changed does not mean that they treated Jesus rightly. Herod's mocking of the Lord also remains as it is, and the trial of Jesus also continues. In this scene we see the fact that agreeing with one another among people and being right before God are not necessarily the same.

We regard becoming close to people and being recognized as important. But if we make light of the salvation Jesus accomplished in order to keep those relationships, we end up losing what is most precious. This is because, even if many people think the same way, that thought does not become the truth that remits sins. A person who believes in the Lord must, before watching other people's reactions, look back on how his own heart is before the word the Lord has given. In the place

where the gospel is heard, the one who hears must stand before that word; but if one remains in the place of interrogating the Lord and weighing whether He fits one's own expectations, even the love of the One who gave Himself for sinners is not received into that heart.

The Lord stayed for a while in Herod's place, but Herod, rather than obtaining the Lord's grace, put forward his own expectations and in the end sent Jesus away. Let us not close our hearts like that before the gospel that has been preached to us. Turn from the heart that rejoices only when He shows you what you want to see, and believe in Jesus, who accomplished our salvation even amid contempt and suffering. Then the joy of meeting the Lord does not end as a brief spectacle, but leads to thanksgiving for having received the remission of sins and to a life of following the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The prisoner was released, and the Savior was delivered up

< Luke 23:13–25 >

"Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, said to them, 'You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him.' And they all cried out at once, saying, 'Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas'—who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder. Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them. But they shouted, saying, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him!' Then he said to them the third time, 'Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go.' But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed. So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. And he released to them the one they requested, who for

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rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will."

A proper trial is one in which the innocent person is released and the person who has committed a crime receives punishment. But in Pilate's court the opposite happened. Jesus, who heard the words that no reason for death had been found in Him, was delivered up to the Cross, and Barabbas, who had been imprisoned for rebellion and murder, was released. In recording this reversed outcome, Luke shows what the crowd demanded and what Pilate chose. Following this event, we come to see not only man's injustice but also the grace of Jesus, who stood in that place to give life to sinners.

Pilate, who knew of His innocence yet chose another way

Pilate said to them, *"You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him" (Luke 23:14–16).*

Pilate gathered the chief priests, the rulers, and the people and said that he had found no fault in Jesus. Since Herod also had sent Jesus back, he made clear again the fact that He was not One who had done anything deserving death. But the conclusion Pilate put forward was that he would chastise Jesus and release Him, so that the judgment that He had no fault and the decision

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to give Him punishment were presented side by side, at odds with each other.

Even if a person knows right words and can say them with his mouth, if he does not accept them so that they govern his conduct, he comes to make a different decision. Pilate wished to release Jesus, but when the crowd's demand grew fierce, he finally followed that demand. This trial reveals the fact that one can speak as if one knows the truth while actually following the will of the people. We, too, must not consider that we have fully equipped our faith merely because we have said that something is right.

There are cases in which, while hearing the gospel and acknowledging that Jesus is the Savior, one in one's heart places the basis of salvation in one's own deeds. One speaks of the Lord's righteousness, yet weighs one's own good deeds and bad deeds to decide whether one's sins are remitted. Then, while saying that one believes in the work the Lord has completed, one actually follows the verdict of one's own thinking. What is needed before the word is not only a good answer, but the faith that accepts in one's heart the salvation that the word conveys.

A loud voice cannot change the fact of sin

"And they all cried out at once, saying, 'Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas'" (Luke 23:18).

The crowd shouted for Jesus to be done away with and for Barabbas to be released to them. The reason Barabbas had been imprisoned was clear: he was in prison for a rebellion made in the city and for murder. Nevertheless, the crowd repeatedly cried out to crucify Jesus, who had no sin. Rather than examining and

judging who had sin, they put first their demand that the man they wanted be released.

Even when Pilate said for the third time that there was no reason for death in Jesus, the crowd did not back down. Though it is written that *"they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed" (Luke 23:23)*, here, the fact that they prevailed does not mean that their words were proven to be the truth. It means that Pilate came to give sentence for the execution they had wanted, and shouting loudly did not change innocence into guilt.

We who read this trial must not confuse what the majority agrees on with what God says is right. Even if a sinner cries out that he has no sin, those words cannot wash away his sin, and conversely, even if many people deny the salvation the Lord has accomplished, that salvation does not become incomplete. Since the One who remits sins is God, the assurance of the remission of sins must also be received from the word of God. Rather than doubting the Lord's salvation, pressed down by people's words, we must clearly know and believe on what basis we are said to have no sin.

The sinner who was released and Jesus, who was delivered up

"And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will" (Luke 23:25).

Pilate decided to do as the crowd requested. It was not that he released Barabbas because he had discovered some new fact that Barabbas had no guilt, nor that he delivered Jesus up to the

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Cross because some crime deserving death had been exposed in Him. This scene, in which the prisoner is released and the righteous One is delivered up, shows like a picture what the remission of sins is. Just as an utterly wicked sinner was set free from sin because of Jesus, so we have been delivered from sin because the Lord received in our place the judgment that sinners were to receive. In the place where a sinner obtains freedom, there is always the Lord, who gives Himself.

Looking at Barabbas's crime, we may consider ourselves to be people who have nothing to do with him. But before God we, too, are people who commit sins and cannot bear the wages of those sins by ourselves. Since we cannot escape death and judgment by saying that we are less evil than others, we, too, needed a Savior who would bear sin in our place. The Lord came to this earth for precisely such people as us.

By receiving baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River, Jesus bore the sins of the whole world once and for all. Because even the sins we commit with our hearts and bodies throughout our lives were passed on to the Lord without a single one left behind, the Lord bore those sins and received the punishment of the Cross. His shedding His blood and dying was His receiving in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and the Lord rose again from death and became the Savior who gives us eternal life. We believe in this salvation accomplished through the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins.

In this scene, the fact that the sinner was released and Jesus was delivered up is clear, and as we look at that event, we realize our own situation, in which we could not be set free from sin by our own strength. Had there not been the grace of Jesus, who bore our sins and died in our place, there would have been no way of salvation for us. Therefore, the center of our thanksgiving

lies not only in the relief that we ourselves have escaped punishment, but in the Lord, who bore that punishment for us.

Do not forget the love that received the punishment in our place

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Since the wages of sin is death, sin is not resolved by covering it up or speaking of it as if lowering it to a small fault. The Lord's bearing our sins through His baptism and giving up His life on the Cross is the work of salvation in which He actually paid those wages. Just because people's trial was unjust, God's salvation is not also unjust. By receiving in our place the punishment for the sins He bore, Jesus saved us in a way befitting the righteousness of God.

A person who believes this fact has no need to hide his own shortcomings, nor to add new punishment in order to obtain salvation; he has only to engrave on his heart how precious the suffering the Lord received and the blood He shed for us are, and give thanks. Let us not become so accustomed to the words that we have received grace that we forget the sacrifice of the One who accomplished that grace. This is because the way by which we come to God in peace is the way the Lord opened by giving up His life.

At the end of the trial, Barabbas was released and Jesus was delivered up, and in the face of this scene we cannot be merely people who look on at an unjust trial. This is because, if we believe the fact that Jesus bore the judgment we were to receive for our sins, we know that the Lord's sacrifice is a matter directly related to our own life. Give thanks from your heart to the Lord,

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who received the punishment in our place and rose again, and use the freedom He has given you in a life of serving the gospel. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Let us weep for souls

< Luke 23:26–31 >

“Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus. And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, “Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!” Then they will begin “to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’” For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?’”

The people who weep for Jesus

Today we have read Luke chapter 23. Recorded here are the words our Lord spoke when Jesus, bearing the cross, went up the hill of Golgotha, and all the events that took place at that time. The word that stands out most to us here is *“a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him” (Luke 23:27)*. Jesus was convicted as a sinner in Pilate’s court and became a condemned man. Although Pilate said that Jesus had no crime deserving death, he released Barabbas as the people demanded and handed Jesus over to be crucified. At that time, when Jesus, bearing the cross, was going

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up toward the hill of Golgotha, there was a great multitude of the people and of women who beat their breasts and wept bitterly for Him. Many people who had followed Jesus, who had cared for Him, and who had known Him in ordinary times followed Him, beating their breasts and weeping bitterly.

Our Lord turned to these people who were following Him and spoke to them. *"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Luke 23:28)*. Dear fellow believers, we know this word well. But we must know what this word that our Lord spoke to us is, and what it is saying to us. And we must spread the gospel with this faith. This word is what our Lord spoke at the last, as He went up the hill of Golgotha bearing the cross, to the people of Israel and to the many people who were following Him and weeping for Him—the word He spoke to us before He was crucified.

Our Lord said, *"Daughters of Jerusalem" (Luke 23:28)*, and the word Jerusalem speaks of the foundation of peace, the city of peace, and it speaks of the people of religion. It is the word our Lord speaks to all religious people, and to the many church members who believe in Jesus, love Jesus, and follow Him. Dear fellow believers, although this Lord, who was bearing the cross and now going up toward the hill of Golgotha, was going up having been tried as the most wicked and atrocious of all sinners, Jesus had a reason for bearing the cross, and He bore the cross truly in order to save these people from all their sins. Yet even while bearing the cross in order to save all the people of the world, Jesus said that they should not weep for Him. He was saying, "I am doing what I rightly must do, but if you are really going to weep, you must weep for yourselves and weep for your children; it is not I who am pitiable, but you who are pitiable." To those many people who pitied Him, loved Him, cherished Him, and wept so bitterly, the Lord was saying, "If you are going

to weep, weep for yourselves and for your children. The ones who must weep are you. Do not weep for Me. I am your Savior, and I am bearing the cross in order to remove your sins; it is not that I have no power and have been handed over to Pilate and am doing this."

Truly, one must weep for oneself and for one's own children. When Jesus Christ was going bearing the cross, countless people followed Him and wept, but how many countless people are weeping even now! They are weeping because Jesus is pitiable, weeping because Jesus is so pitiful, and weeping, thinking how much it must have hurt Jesus. Even though Jesus is the One who was crucified in order to remove our sins, still, because Jesus is so precious, so lovable, and the One who made such a costly sacrifice, people say they weep for Him because they love Him and because He is so pitiable. But that weeping is truly wrong. The weeping itself is wrong.

Is the Creator One to be pitied?

If a person does not know himself, does not know what tribulation he will suffer in the future or what hell he will go to if he does not receive the remission of sins and is not born again by believing in Jesus Christ, and weeps thinking how much it must hurt Jesus—if he cannot weep for his own soul, which will go to hell and suffer forever, but weeps because that Jesus who went up the hill of Golgotha to be crucified is pitiable—that is truly a tremendous delusion. If one thinks of the suffering one will undergo, one must weep for oneself, and one must weep asking to be saved. How can one weep for Jesus? How much all the people of this world, while believing in Jesus, weep for Jesus—they are truly warm-hearted. They are warm-hearted, but

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they do not know how to think about themselves. Even though they themselves will go to hell, they do not weep for themselves, but think of Jesus being crucified and weep, acting as if they themselves were better, kinder, and more righteous than Jesus. A person must think about himself. He must think about his own future; he must think about whether he will go to the kingdom of heaven or to hell in the future, what suffering he will undergo, what joy and blessedness he will enjoy—he must think about the end.

What our Lord is saying is that it is not He who is pitiable, but you who are truly pitiable. He is saying, "I am now going to be nailed to the Cross and remove all your sins, rise again on the third day after I die, go in glory and sit at the right hand of the Father's throne, and judge you; yet you, without even receiving the remission of sins, weep for Me out of the affection of the flesh because I am being nailed to the Cross?" Dear fellow believers, it is truly not God who is pitiable. It is man who is pitiable. Is God One to be pitied? God said, *"I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14)*. He is the One who was not created, the One who exists of Himself, the One who is good, holy, and perfect. God is the perfect One; it is man, the created being, who is pitiable—how can the Creator be pitiable? This is getting things backward, the subject and the object reversed; it is being deceived by the devil's trick of making the created being pity the Creator and weep for Him. It is something that would truly displease God if He heard it. That is why Jesus said, "It is not I who am pitiable, but you. Do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves. If you fall into the devil's enticement and do not receive the remission of sins now, you will go to hell."

It is not God who is pitiable; it is people, all mankind, who are pitiable. It is those who have not received the remission of sins who are pitiable. Before Jesus went up the hill of Golgotha

bearing the cross, He was scourged, He went hungry, He was utterly exhausted, and His whole body was covered in blood. A crown of thorns was put on His head, so that blood flowed down from His forehead as well. As He went on, utterly worn out, bearing the frame of the cross, He collapsed and could not get up well, so the soldiers seized a Cyrenian who happened to be coming up from the country, laid the cross on him, and made him follow Jesus up. God caused this man from the country to be used. In each and every one of these records there is God's own will. God caused this man coming up from the country to bear the cross without a word. So even in the age after Jesus removed all our sins on the Cross, rose again on the third day after He died, and sat at the right hand of God's throne, all the people who served God were pure people like this man from the country. Only pure people served the Lord. Those who purely accept the Lord's salvation receive salvation.

Why we must weep

Our Lord is telling us the reason why the daughters of Jerusalem, why countless people, must weep not for Jesus but for themselves. Why must we weep? We must weep because we will suffer endless tribulation in the future. If one only pities Jesus—if, without receiving the remission of sins oneself, one only pities Jesus, thinking how much it must have hurt Him when He was crucified—one must weep for oneself, because one will have to go into the hot fire of hell and suffer. When Jesus told the people who were weeping for Him not to weep but to weep for themselves, He was saying, "Think of what you yourself will undergo in the future, weep quickly, and ask Me for help; know that your children, too, will go into the fire of hell

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and suffer, and truly plead and weep and pity them, asking Me to save them." Our Lord is saying, "Do not pity Me, but pity people; pity yourself and pity your children."

When Jesus was tried in Pilate's court before He died on the Cross, the Jews, beginning with the chief priests, down to the Pharisees, the scribes, and the people, shouted to crucify Him. Not all of them did so, but many people were incited and shouted so. Pilate, however much he interrogated Him, found no fault in this Man, and he thought it strange that people of the same nation were demanding that He be crucified as if He were their enemy. So he took water and washed his hands, saying that he was innocent of this Man's blood, and the people said, *"His blood be on us and on our children" (Matthew 27:25)*. Pilate washed his hands, but his heart was still uneasy. It was because this Man clearly had no fault, yet those people had rejected their own Savior.

Jesus is the Son of God and our Savior. God is the God of all mankind; He is my God and your God. Our Lord is my Lord and your Lord. Yet they rejected the Son of God, demanding that He be crucified and killed. That is why Jesus said, "Weep for yourselves; weep for yourself and your children; all you who live religious lives, weep for yourselves." He said, "If you do not believe that I am your Savior, that I am your Master, you will fall into the fire of hell; it is really you who must weep; you must weep for yourselves and weep for your children."

As the Lord said, afterward Jerusalem fell and the people of that city suffered great tribulation. It was because they rejected their own God, their own Lord, that Jesus who had come to save them from all their sins. But it does not end with suffering a horrible death. After death they fall into the fire of hell. The Lord spoke of the place *"where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched'" (Mark 9:48)*, and the Book of Revelation says

that it is the second death. For whom must one weep? Must a person who has not received the remission of sins, a person who believes in Jesus but still has sin in his heart, weep for Jesus, or must he weep for himself? He must weep for himself. What is pitiable about Jesus? Jesus came to this earth to send us to the kingdom of heaven and did a precious work—what is pitiable about that? He was to hang on the Cross for a short while and suffer for about six hours, and then it would be over.

Jesus rejoiced even as He died on the Cross. Although He was in great anguish for a short while because of being turned away from by God the Father, He said, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*, and died gladly. It is not that He died a horrible death. Where is there anyone who would feel bad after finishing all his work? That God, who did all the good work and said that it was finished, was fully satisfied.

But people's thinking is wrong. How can humans regard God as so pitiable? It is the thing God is most displeased by. Countless people in this world now pity Jesus. Do you know how much it displeases God? The Lord's word is this: "Do not weep for Me, but weep for yourself. My being nailed to the Cross is being nailed for a short while in order to save you, but think of what you will suffer every day in hell. Compare My hanging on the Cross now for about six hours with your living together with the worms forever. It is you that you must weep for; I am suffering only for a short while." Yet people gather in the church building at every occasion and weep, thinking how much it must have hurt the Lord when He hung on the Cross. At every occasion they think of the Cross and weep, think of His being scourged and weep, think of His wearing the crown of thorns and weep, and think of how much it must have hurt when He was nailed and weep. They are warm-hearted, but how arrogant they are—not knowing the plight they themselves will

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face in hell, they weep for Jesus out of the affection of the flesh. That is a grave sin before God. If one does not believe in Jesus as the Savior, one goes to hell. Even in this present age, the Lord says to those who follow Him, "Do not weep for Me, but weep for yourself and for your children; in a little while, hell comes to those who do not believe in Me."

The last plagues and eternal hell

Our Lord told us what it will be like when the last disaster comes in this last age. *"For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' Then they will begin 'to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"' For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:29–31)*. He is telling what terrible things this world, this earth, will go through in the disaster of God at the last. He says that at the last, those who have not nursed, those who could not conceive, are blessed. It is because, even if one dies, it is all right if one dies alone. Our God is preparing an utterly horrifying disaster for those who have rejected Him. He is preparing seven plagues in bowls for those who reject the fact that God has become their Savior. When those plagues are poured out, people will look at the mountains and say, "Mountains, cover me." Hailstones the size of pumpkins, weighing a talent each, will fall from the sky. Scientists say that nuclear bombs are terrifying, but what is more terrifying than nuclear weapons is the disaster that God sends down. It is disease, earthquake, famine, and tribulation.

When our God said, "Do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves," it was because the suffering you will undergo is so

great. Our Lord says, "If you reject that I have become your Savior, you will suffer such pain, and then go into the unquenchable fire and suffer forever." I believe this word. If the people living in this present age do not believe but reject the fact that Jesus Christ is the Savior who bore all the sins of their whole lives—their original sin, their actual sins, and even their future sins, the sins of every person in this world without leaving out a single one—the fact that He is the Lord who delivered them from all sins, He makes them enter such suffering in this present life and enter the unquenchable fire in the life to come. You must believe. You must accept Jesus.

Let us look once at the word of Revelation. *"I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'" (Revelation 6:12–17).*

The stars of heaven fall like the fruit of a fig tree falling, and the sky vanishes like a scroll being rolled up. In this last time God will cast down and do away with the whole world of the stars of heaven. And that every mountain and island is moved out of its place means that there will be a great earthquake. It means that there will be crustal upheaval on this earth and nothing will remain intact. In the last chapters of Revelation it

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says, *"Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen" (Revelation 18:2)*. It says that everything in this world that has been built up by human strength will all collapse. God pours out the wine of wrath, burns the trees, causes earthquakes, and casts down all the stars of heaven and does away with them as a scroll is rolled up; so when one looks at the sky there are no stars, the sun is there but gives no light, the moon is red and it is dark even at midday, the earth's axis shakes and splits, lava bursts out, not a single mountain remains intact, and the islands move away. When it comes to that, will people not say, "Mountains, hide me"? People think that if hail falls they can dig an underground shelter, and if famine comes they can dig a deep well beforehand, but God shakes the earth in its entirety. Because God's disaster is different from human thinking and is so terrifying, even though a person dies when a mountain covers him, the terror is so extreme that he says he would rather that mountain covered him. Such a plague will come down on this earth.

To the people who do not believe in God, the people who reject Jesus Christ, our Lord said, "Do not weep for Me, but weep for yourself; I am preparing such a plague for you." He means that if anyone takes the devil's side and does not fully believe in the Lord, He will judge such people in exactly the same way as the Lord judges the devil. Dear fellow believers, do you believe this fact? Jerusalem is a city of religion. Among the people of Jerusalem, many women and men, children and adults had followed Jesus and were those who loved Jesus in ordinary times. Yet Jesus said to those who followed Him, "Do not weep for Me, but weep for yourself and weep for your children." He is saying, "If you do not fully believe that I am your Savior who removed your original sin, your actual sins, and even your future sins, all the sins of your soul and all the sins of your flesh, you

will suffer great tribulation; so weep for yourself and weep for your children."

Weep for yourself and for your children

Even if your children are the children of a believer, if they do not receive the remission of sins, they go into the unquenchable fire. This present age is urgent. If one does not believe in Jesus Christ as one's own Savior, everything one has painstakingly built up on this earth all collapses, and not only that, one meets the endless plagues God sends and becomes truly pitiable. God's plagues are not the kind of plagues humans imagine. It is fortunate if your children have received the remission of sins, but if they have not received the remission of sins and even a little sin remains in their hearts, they go into the unquenchable fire. Is it not pitiable? If we believe in Jesus and yet even a little sin remains in our hearts, we do not fully believe that Jesus is our Savior, and we are merely living a religious life just like the people of Jerusalem. If a person says that Jesus is a good person, the One who died for us, and our Savior, but that because we sin every day we cannot become righteous and so must confess our sins every day to receive the remission of sins, and thereby disregards God's merit and His being the Savior, that person goes to hell. It is not only his children who go to hell; he himself goes to hell. So for whom must one weep? One must weep for oneself. I ask you to think of your own soul that will go to hell.

Dear beloved saints, it says, *"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:9)*, and it says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to*

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the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). God does not condemn a person who has no sin in his heart. He does not judge him. He does not say that a person who has no sin has sin. To a person who has received the remission of sins by fully believing in our Lord with his heart, our God does not say that he still has sin. God, too, acknowledges that a person who has fully believed in Jesus Christ has no sin. But if one believes in Jesus yet does not fully receive the remission of sins, one goes to hell and suffers endless hardship on this earth. We ourselves, who have to live through this age, must especially think about this. We have been born again, but we must think about whether our family, our children, or our parents have been born again or not. If we truly know that there is such a disaster and that people go to hell, we must weep not for Jesus but for our families, for our children, and for our parents. The sins of our children and parents, too, are included in all the sins of the world that had been passed on to Jesus once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Since Jesus bore those sins and received the judgment in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, we must preach the gospel to our families, too, so that they will believe in this remission of sins.

Jesus is our Savior. He is our Lord. Jesus is the Lord of all mankind, and He has become the Savior of those who believe in Him. To those who do not believe, He is the Lord of judgment. Those who believe in Jesus yet do not fully accept Jesus' salvation go to hell. Even if one rejects only a third of it, it is hell; even if one rejects only half of it, it is hell; even if one rejects only 0.1 percent of it, it is hell. If one believes that Jesus could not take away all of one's sins, it is hell.

The word to weep is the word to save

We must weep for ourselves and for our families. Then what must we do? What our Lord said is clear. His word is that He sends to hell those in our families who have not received the remission of sins, and that He sends to hell everyone in this world, too, if they do not receive the remission of sins. Then what must we do? We must believe in God as our own God, ask Him with that faith to save those souls, and preach the gospel by faith to save those souls from the curse and destruction. We must do it by faith. The Lord is my Lord and yours, and the Savior of those who believe. God is the God of those who believe. We must spread the gospel, believing the fact that God saves those souls—my family members and religious people—and save them. Since Jerusalem speaks of a city of religion, it means that God saves religious people. Then what does it mean that He told us to weep for these people? To weep means to save. It means to truly preach the gospel by faith and save them. It means to pity these souls. It is not saying that, because He told us to weep, we should just be weeping all day long.

By believing in God, by believing in our Lord as Lord, we can save all the people who have fallen into religion. I believe that God will save religious people. I believe that if we believe in God and pray and ask Him to save our children or our family members, God Himself will change their hearts by His own power and save them Himself. Because God is our God, and because we believe that He does that work, when we say, "God, I believe," and take up the challenge by faith, we believe that God works and saves that soul.

God is my God and yours, and the God who solves our problems. In this last time, without faith one cannot be saved. We save souls by faith. We save them by believing in God, by

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believing in our Lord. How must we live in the last time? We must live by faith. Believing that God will save those souls who have fallen into religion and are still in anguish because sin remains in their hearts, we save by faith the countless people who have fallen into religion. In this age, if one does not receive the remission of sins, what hope is there? What use are the buildings one has piled up? We are all right, but for our children and the children of faith, for the many people who still say they believe but have not been born again, for the many people who are living religious lives, we must preach the gospel. We must preach the gospel ceaselessly with the faith that we will save those souls, and save them. If they are not saved, in the end their flesh is cursed in God's terrible plague, and when they die, their souls, too, come to have a part in that second death of which it is said that they *"shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8)*. We come to salvation by faith.

Then what do we do if they do not listen even when we tell them? Believe in God. Believe that God is our God. Believe that the Lord is my Lord and yours. We take up the challenge, believing in God and saying, "Lord, please help. I believe that You will do it. Please save them." This is faith. When we say, "Believe and come out to church. Receive the remission of sins. If you do not receive the remission of sins, it will be a disaster. Jesus loves you. He has saved you. You want to go to the kingdom of heaven, don't you? Come and hear the word of God," if God works, even if we speak somewhat inadequately, God works in their hearts, so that they become afraid and get the thought of going once to see, and by God's leading they follow us and receive the remission of sins.

We must think about how much we really think of souls. We must think about whether we really believe that souls really go

to hell, that they receive the terrible plague, that they go into the lake burning with hot fire and brimstone and suffer forever, and whether we really know and believe that such terrible plagues of God await them. Our Lord said to us, "Do not weep for Me, but weep for yourself and for your children; weep for your family and weep for the countless neighbors who have fallen into religion; there is suffering for these souls." We must really know this and believe it. For the soul that has not received the remission of sins, the suffering of the tribulation of hell is waiting. This is not something said in order to frighten you. We must know how much we, who have received the remission of sins, think of the kingdom of heaven and how much we think of hell.

God told the people of that time that such a terrible plague, in which they would say *"to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!'" (Luke 23:30)*, would come upon those who did not accept Him. Our Lord said that He would put those who do not accept the fact that He has become their perfect Savior into the fire that is never quenched. We must think about this and examine our hearts and thoughts once again. Christianity is not the kind of religion in which people can fellowship with one another, saying, "You like Buddhism and I like Christianity." It is not a religion made by man. Christianity is that God made us and God saved us. If one does not accept God's salvation, one receives God's judgment and wrath. Because what God has done is not what man has done, we must know the fact that everyone who does not accept God's salvation comes to go into the unquenchable fire. And knowing it, we must accept by faith everything Jesus Christ has done. Since Jesus, who accomplished this remission of sins and rose again from death, is our Savior, you and I believe in the salvation the Lord has given and look to the eternal kingdom.

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The Millennial Kingdom and eternal hell—there is no middle ground

We know and believe the fact that if people are not born again they go to hell, that they go into the unquenchable fire. We also know that in this last age, many people, whether born again or not born again, are caught up in God's disaster. Our Lord has now slowly begun the disaster on this earth. It is not that there is no disaster for the born-again either. But the born-again can endure because they have hope. If God takes us, we go to the kingdom of heaven, to Paradise. If He does not take us, we can endure to the end. Our Lord will come to this earth in the future, make all things new, take the people who are still alive at that time, raise again the dead and the martyred, and build the kingdom of Christ on this earth with His people for a thousand years. So He gives the righteous the authority to rule over ten cities or one city, and gives them servants. He recompenses what they suffered on this earth. If they suffered harm, He lets them enjoy that much in return. That is what it means when He says that He will give rewards. It is not that there are ranks in the kingdom of heaven. Why does Revelation say that He will make all things new and that we will live on this earth? It is in order to fulfill the word God promised, that He would give rewards to the righteous, that He rebuilds it and we live for a thousand years. After that, He carries out the Great White Throne judgment, sends those who are not born again to eternal hell, and makes a new heaven and a new earth and lets the born-again live there forever.

Do not think of the kingdom of God theoretically. Do not think of it religiously. Do not think of it as a doctrine made up in some human head or by some denomination. It is God's own predestination, His plan, and His providence. We know that if

people do not receive the remission of sins they go to hell. As for what kind of hell that hell is, Revelation says it is the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. It says it is the second death. It says, *"As it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27)*. If one is born once and receives the remission of sins, one goes to the eternal kingdom and does not suffer the second death. But if a person is born once and rejects the love and salvation of Jesus Christ, he suffers the second death, and that death is eternal death. People think wrongly about the concept of death and think that when one dies there is nothing, but the death that God speaks of is not that kind of death. It is losing all happiness; it is a curse.

Among the people living on this earth, there are those who, though they have sin, unite religiously and, saying that Jesus could not remove all their sins, live religious lives on friendly terms with one another, and oppose and speak ill of those who say they have received the remission of sins, making the righteous out to be strange people. When such people die, they are robbed of eternal happiness. How does God recompense them? He raises them again with bodies that feel pain but never die, puts them in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, and makes them live there forever. Concerning that place the Lord said that there the worm does not die. There the fire of brimstone burns at all times; no one dies of cold, and it is hot forever. It burns at all times, without night or day. One feels that heat forever. He is saying, "The sin of rejecting My love and disregarding My salvation is precisely such a grave sin, so this is fitting for you."

The greatness of God's wrath is determined in proportion to the greatness of God's love. God the Creator makes created beings His children and gives them the happiness of living with Him forever, so it is fitting that He gives an eternal curse to those

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who reject that grace. Why did He make hell? Hell was made for those who reject God's love. That is entirely fitting. As great as God's love is, so great are God's wrath and curse. Our God has saved you and me. Having received this salvation, too, is no small thing. We go to the kingdom of heaven and sit and live together just as Jesus Christ sat down at the right hand of the throne. Ephesians says, *"Made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6)*. We are kings. He has made created beings kings, so is that not the highest of all? If He has given us all God's happiness and glory with God forever, how great is that! This is something a person cannot fully express in words. It says, *"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18)*. The reason we must accept this salvation of God is that if we accept this salvation, we become children of God and little Jesuses. Although we have flesh, we are different from ordinary people.

People do not know the fact that if they believe in Jesus Christ, He gives them such great blessings. They think only that if one believes in Jesus one simply has peace on this earth, only to that extent. But it is of a different dimension. If one believes in Jesus, it is not only that one has peace on this earth; even in this present life one has not a single sin in one's heart and lives in peace, having received God's grace. Though there are many tribulations, by God's help and care, by His giving us His peace, we live in peace. And in the life to come we live in eternal joy, in eternal delight and laughter. But if one rejects God's love, the salvation of Jesus Christ, one suffers eternally. There is no middle ground. People these days make up many theories of a middle place. Because humans are so afraid, they make a religion themselves and say that there is a middle place between the kingdom of heaven and hell. A place that is a little warm and

a little cool fits their thinking exactly, so they want to go there. But there is only the kingdom of heaven and hell; there is absolutely no middle ground. And no one can cross over, either. God did not build the line between them with bricks; by His own power He made it so that no one can sit in the middle. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? It is truly so. There is no middle ground.

Religion and faith are different

People live religious lives. When He said, "Daughters of Jerusalem," it was a word spoken to all who live religious lives. This is the word: "You, too, while living a religious life, say that you love Me and weep for Me, but there is nothing to weep for Me about. My going like this now is to save you. Because I bore your sins by receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, I am going for your sake, and My dying for you is receiving the judgment in your place, so what is there to weep about? Rejoice. And if you are going to weep, think carefully about whether you have perhaps not fully accepted My love and My salvation; if, though you believe, there is perhaps sin in your heart, know that you yourself will go to hell, and weep; your children, too, will go to hell; weep for yourselves; do not weep for Me." This is our God's firm word of exhortation. Our Lord, knowing that in later ages countless people would look at the Cross and weep for Him, thinking how much it must have hurt, and that the devil would deceive them so, spoke this word before He died on the Cross to those many people who followed Him, pitied Him, and loved Him—to those who believed in Him.

Dear fellow believers, I ask you not to weep uselessly for God, but to weep for people. Pity people for going to hell, weep,

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and preach the gospel by faith. It is enough to believe in God. We believe and go and speak, saying, "God, You are my God. God, please do this and this." If it does not work after speaking once, do not be discouraged, but go again, saying, "God, please do it. God, I believe in You. I believe that You are my God," and speak again. He is telling us to pity them and save them.

That you and I have been saved is no small thing. I cannot tell you how good it is to be saved. We must weep for people, and people must weep for themselves, lest they go to hell. People say that after living happily on this earth, when one dies it is all over, but He tells us to see whether it is over or not. It says, *"As it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27),* and it says, *"There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12)*. Jesus alone is our Savior; Jesus alone bore our sins with the baptism He received from John in the Jordan River and was judged for them all in His own body on the Cross. If one does not believe this fact, it is hell. There are people who attend big churches, belong to denominations, are swept along by the mass psychology of the crowd, and drift with the currents of the world. One must know that if one goes along that broad way, one will go to hell. One must pity one's own soul and weep. One must think of one's own soul suffering forever and weep. Our Lord spoke this word to all the people of this earth.

If one believes in Jesus and yet has sin in one's heart, that is religion. It belongs to the daughters of Jerusalem. True faith is to look up to and believe that God has removed one's sins. Religion is making God oneself and making one's own salvation oneself. Religion is making it oneself and believing it oneself. Faith and religion differ that much. Faith is believing with the heart, looking up to what God has done, to His having saved us. Faith is believing in that God, our Lord—Jesus Christ, who was

born in a manger, bore your sins and mine by receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, died in our place on the Cross, rose again on the third day after He died, went up to the right hand of God's throne, and became our Savior. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

But religion is as follows. One believes that God exists and is almighty, believes that God left the throne of glory and came to this earth in order to remove one's sins, believes that He wore the crown of thorns in order to bear the sins of the wrong thoughts in one's head, that He was stripped of His clothes and spat upon in order to suffer in one's place the contempt one was to suffer, believes that He died on the Cross in order to remove one's original sin, and believes that He rose again on the third day after He died and ascended. And then one says that as for the actual sins one commits daily, our God who sits at the right hand of the throne of heaven always remits them whenever one repents—that He remits them, saying, "So you know you did wrong." One has made Jesus and God like that oneself. This is religion. The Jesus one has made oneself, the God one has made oneself, the method of salvation one has made oneself, one's own method—that is religion. Countless people in this age believe as religion. They make a god themselves, make salvation, make the method of salvation too, make the kingdom of heaven, make a middle heaven, and make hell. This is precisely the religion that man has made and the devil has made. But God created us Himself; from the time He made us, He made us in order to make us His children; He knew that the fallen angel Satan the devil would do this and permitted it all; and God Himself, clothed in flesh, came to this earth, bore all the sins of mankind by receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, was judged for them all on the Cross, sits at the right hand of God the Father's throne, and has sealed as sons of God by the

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Holy Spirit whoever believes in Him. That is God's plan and God's salvation.

"You who live religious lives, weep for yourself, know that you will go to hell, know that you will suffer eternal torment in hell, and beg and weep before God to save your soul; and believe that I have saved you, and receive the remission of sins. Not only you but your children, too, go to hell; your husband, too, and everyone you know, if they do not believe in Me, go to hell. Weep for yourselves; do not weep for Me. I am your Savior and your God. I made you in order to be your God, and I came to this earth in order to be your Savior and bore all your sins. I, who removed all your sins in the Jordan River and on the Cross, am your Savior." That is what our God said to us.

Let us submit to God and save souls by faith

Dear beloved saints, for whom must we weep? You and I have received the remission of sins. Then for whom must we weep? We must weep for souls. We must not weep for God. God's thoughts and man's thoughts are different. Jesus came to this earth to save us, bore the cross for us, bore our sins, and received the judgment in our place. Yet humans looked at what God did in order to remove all their sins, and wept out of pity and sympathy. How contradictory and how wrong a thing that is! But what is even more wrong now is that such people are almost everyone on this earth. I want to say this to you and to myself. There are many such pitiable souls. By faith, God is my God. It is not God on one side and us on the other; God is our God, the God of the born-again saints. We belong to God, and God is our God. Though we are human, we are the born-again, those without sin, children of God who have the Spirit of God. If we

pray by faith, “My God, please do this and this. That soul is pitiable. Save him as You saved me,” believe that God will save him, and go and speak by faith, then, because God is the One who works in the faith that believes in Him, He works in those souls. If it does not work the first time, we do it a second time; a second time and then a third time; and again, believing in God, we must preach the gospel by faith to these pitiable souls. We must live by faith.

In this last time, will you set your heart on the riches of this world? I am not saying to squander what you have. Manage it well. But when the disaster comes upon this world, it all collapses. Nothing is left on the earth. Something like a great earthquake that occurred in some city is nothing. It says that the islands are moved out of their places. When God shakes, mountains sink down, the ground splits and subsides, and islands are moved out of their places. Will this house we live in, built on the sand, remain? A disaster so terrifying that people will say, “Mountains, please hide me,” is coming to this earth before long. The disasters until now have been natural disasters, but a disaster that God Himself pours out is coming upon this earth. Nothing will be left. In this age, by faith, we must confirm through the word and believe Jesus Christ’s coming to this earth and His having borne all our sins by receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, and accept by faith that He died and received the judgment in our place for all our sins on the Cross, and so receive salvation.

Dear fellow believers, submit to God. Submit to the word of God. Everyone who submits to God receives God’s blessing. Everyone who does not submit to God but stiffens his neck in pride suffers a curse. Without fail, inevitably, he suffers it. If one defies God, it is the end. One must weep for oneself. One must prepare one’s own faith. This is not something said merely in the

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manner of an evangelistic rally. As to what we must preach and prepare now: the born-again saints must believe that God is their God and run the remaining race by faith, and those who have not received the remission of sins must receive the remission of sins. Whatever people may say, if one receives the remission of sins, that is the best. The greatest blessing among all blessings on this earth is the blessing of the remission of sins. This blessing is truly the greatest blessing. One must receive the remission of sins in this present age. In this age, tribulation comes to the flesh and tribulation comes to the soul as well. These two are now overlapping upon us. If one does not receive the remission of sins in this present age, there is no hope. There is nothing but a curse. However much one labors and however much one learns, it is in vain. However much one piles up, it is in vain. See whether what I say is right or not. I am not telling my own story. I believe the word of God. There is no mistake.

People may have lived religiously until now. But now it is the last time. Now religious thinking must be cast away. It is time to cast away human thinking. Now it is a matter of whether one obtains salvation by faith or not, whether one escapes this disaster by faith or not. When the disaster comes, we need only take refuge in our Lord. We need only rely on the Lord. The Lord keeps us. The Lord gives us faith so that we do not lose this faith, gives us what to say at each moment, never lets us submit to the devil, permits martyrdom, and also permits us to meet God alive without tasting death. Let us not weep for God, but weep for people. People are so pitiable. Countless people reject us. But do not be afraid. Speak the gospel by faith. Whoever accepts this receives the remission of sins. However much the age bands together and the world becomes one to oppose the righteous, if we speak by believing in God, we can fight them and win. And we can save the souls that belong to them. Faith saves souls, and

by faith souls are saved. Dear beloved saints, I ask you to live the rest of your lives by faith and to save souls by faith. I ask you to believe in God and rely on Him by faith and be victorious. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The King who did not save Himself but gave life to sinners

< Luke 23:26–38 >

“Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus. And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, “Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!” Then they will begin “to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’” For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?’ There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’ And they divided His garments and cast lots. And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, ‘He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.’ The soldiers also mocked Him,

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coming and offering Him sour wine, and saying, 'If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.' And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Over Jesus' cross there was an inscription saying the King of the Jews. Beneath it, the rulers and the soldiers mocked Him, saying that if He was a king He should save Himself. People regarded escaping from the cross as the power of a king, but the Lord was taking that punishment in order to give life to sinners. This text shows where the Lord's eyes were directed, from the road leading to the Cross until the moment He hung upon it. When we know whom the King who did not save His own body saw on that road and for whom He spoke, we come to believe rightly in the King of the Cross.

The Lord, who looked at those following Him even as He went bearing the cross

When the people were leading Jesus away, they seized Simon, a Cyrenian, laid the cross on him, and made him follow behind Jesus. A great multitude of the people and of women who wept bitterly also followed along. They beat their breasts and wept for Jesus, but the Lord did not set His eyes on the suffering before Him; He turned and looked at them.

"Jesus, turning to them, said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children'" (Luke 23:28).

The One who was going to receive punishment looked back at those who were weeping for Him and, on the contrary, was

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concerned about their future. The Lord knew that He was not One to be pitied but One to be believed in, and so He made the people who followed Him look to their own souls and the souls of their children. Even on the way of the Cross, the Lord's heart was set not on His own body but on the people who had to be saved from sin.

"Then they will begin 'to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"' For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:30–31).

The Lord said that a day of judgment so terrible that people would ask the mountains to cover them would come. It does not mean that bearing children is evil; rather, He warned how agonizing it would be to have to see even the suffering of one's children, because the suffering of that day would be so great. If tribulation comes even upon the green wood that has life, what will become of the person who meets that judgment as dry wood, without the life of salvation? The King made the judgment known to His people in advance not in order to frighten them, but in order that they might receive salvation now. Therefore, if we, too, care about our children's future, together with preparing them to live in the world, we must clearly preach to them the gospel that they themselves will believe.

The reason He hung side by side with the criminals

"When they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left" (Luke 23:33).

The two criminals, too, were led away with Jesus and were crucified at the place called Calvary. The sinless Jesus stood side by side among sinners and received the same punishment. Dying

hung on a tree was the punishment handed down to accursed sinners, and concerning Christ, who stood in that place, the Bible says as follows.

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')" (Galatians 3:13).

The reason Jesus could stand in the place of the curse was not that He had sin, but that He had taken our sins upon Himself. The Lord had the sin of all mankind passed on to Him once and for all when He received baptism from John the Baptist, and in that sin are included all our sins—of the past, of the present, and even those we will commit as we go on living. Because He bore the sin of the world in that way, the Lord received the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying in the same place as the criminals, and He rose again from death and saved us. The two men hung on His left and right died as the wages of sin, but the One hung between them died bearing their sins and our sins.

The price of sin that the One who asked for remission paid Himself

"Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.' And they divided His garments and cast lots" (Luke 23:34).

Jesus did not ask for vengeance against those who were nailing Him. Saying that they did not know what they were doing, He asked the Father for their remission. Even before those who divided His garments and cast lots, the Lord's heart toward sinners did not change. The words that they did not know do not

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mean that there was no sin in their deed; they show how fearful a thing they were doing without recognizing the Savior.

But the remission that the Lord asked for on behalf of sinners is not a matter of simply overlooking sin. For the very One who asked for remission was, in that very place, paying the price of sin Himself. By paying with His blood on the Cross for the sins that had been passed on to Him through His baptism, the Lord put the final period to the work of removing the sin of mankind. That is why, hearing this prayer, we can believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and come to God.

Therefore, as we read this prayer, we must not think that salvation is obtained automatically even without faith. We must know the salvation that has been given to us, and we must accept with our hearts the baptism by which Jesus bore sin and the punishment of the Cross He received in our place. For although the Lord bore the sins of all people, a heart that refuses that grace does not automatically change into a believing heart. Before the word of salvation that He lets us hear now, it is necessary to believe in the Lord.

The King who stood in the face of the shouts telling Him to save Himself

"The people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, 'He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God'" (Luke 23:35).

The rulers sneered that since He had saved others, if He was the Christ, the chosen of God, He should save Himself. The soldiers likewise mocked Him, saying that if He was the King of the Jews He should save Himself. They thought that Jesus' power would be proven only if He escaped the cross, but the

Lord was in that place in order to receive in our place the judgment we had to receive. We must not regard saving sinners and keeping His own body from punishment as the same thing.

"An inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Luke 23:38).

Jesus is the King who has the authority to remit sins. Because that King bore the sin of His people and accepted death, the way has been opened for us to be saved from sin and enter His kingdom. The fact that the Lord did not save Himself is not evidence that He had no power to save, but evidence of the love with which He took responsibility for us to the end. A person who knows that grace cannot mingle with the mocking crowd and test the Lord.

The writing "King" inscribed over the cross and the sneering heard beneath it were treating the same One in entirely different ways. As what kind of One are we receiving Jesus? If we believe the fact that the Lord bore our sins, we come to confess that the love that remained on the Cross gave us life. Let us believe in the King who walked to the end the way of saving sinners instead of the way of saving His own body, and entrust the souls of ourselves and our children to His salvation. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The sinner who received the promise of being with the Lord

< Luke 23:39–43 >

"Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.' But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.'"

Two criminals hung on either side of Jesus. Both were sinners receiving punishment, in a situation where they could not come down from the cross by their own strength. Yet though they faced the same Jesus in the same place, their words differed. One blasphemed Jesus, and the other asked the Lord to remember him when He came into His kingdom. The difference lay not in who had lived a better life, but in who they received the Jesus before their eyes to be.

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The sinner who blasphemed the Savior while trying to escape suffering

"Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us'" (Luke 23:39).

One criminal, asking whether He was not the Christ, told Jesus to save Himself and the sinners hung with Him. Though he put the word salvation in his mouth, Luke records those words as blasphemy. It was because he did not acknowledge his own condition as one who had sinned and entrust himself to the Savior, but tested Jesus, saying that if He was the Christ He should try to escape this punishment. The heart that would acknowledge the Lord only if He acted according to his own will is revealed in those words.

What this criminal needed was a salvation deeper than being released for a moment from the suffering of the cross. For even if his body came down from that place, the problem of having to receive the judgment for sin before God would remain. Yet he blasphemed the One who had come to bear his sins, and so he failed to recognize the Savior who was closest to him. Here we see the fact that however great the hardship of the flesh may be, it cannot take the place of the remission of sins.

We, too, can tell the Lord our hardships and ask for His help. But if we say that we will believe only if He changes our circumstances in the way we want, we end up setting our own demands in the place of faith. The Lord is the One who knows our situation, but the salvation He gives reaches beyond the circumstances before our eyes to eternal life. Therefore we must not make light of the grace of the Savior, who has resolved our sins, because of a problem we want solved right now.

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The confession that acknowledged one's own sin and believed in the Lord's righteousness

"We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41).

The other criminal rebuked the one who was blaspheming and asked whether he did not fear God. Since he acknowledged that the punishment he was receiving was fitting for his deeds, he did not put himself forward as a righteous man dying unjustly. At the same time, he confessed that there was nothing wrong in what Jesus had done. He did not regard Jesus, too, as a sinner like themselves just because He was hung on the same kind of cross.

In this confession we see how a person who receives the remission of sins stands before the Lord. Acknowledging the fact that one has sin and believing that Jesus is the righteous Savior go together. It is neither ending in discouragement, looking only at one's own sins, nor speaking only of Jesus' excellence while hiding one's own sins. It is knowing oneself as one who deserves to be judged, and turning one's heart toward the One who will deliver that self.

The reason Jesus was crucified though He had never done anything wrong is that He bore the sins of others. The Lord had the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all when He received baptism from John the Baptist, and the word He spoke to John at that time was *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).* That baptism, by which He had the sins of sinners passed on to Him, was the most right thing the Lord did. All the sins that each one of us commits throughout our whole lives were passed on to the Lord at that time, and Jesus, who bore those sins, received in our place the judgment we were to receive by shedding His blood

and dying on the Cross. And He rose again from death and gave new life to us who believe.

We who have heard this gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot accept the work of salvation the Lord did by dividing it into parts. Since the fact that our sins were passed on through the Lord's baptism is connected with the punishment He received in our place on the Cross, only when we believe those two together do we come to know that the Lord's death is a death for us. The text does not say when or what word the criminal heard, but the fact that he acknowledged Jesus' righteousness and entrusted himself to Him is clear. Today we hear the Lord's salvation recorded in the Bible and believe with our hearts in that same Jesus.

The grace asked for without putting forward one's own merit

"Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom'" (Luke 23:42).

That criminal spoke to Jesus, who was facing death, of His kingdom. People mocked Jesus, seeing Him only as one hung on a cross, but he believed that Jesus was the One who would come into His own kingdom. He acknowledged that the punishment now visible was not the Lord's end and that He had the authority to receive him. Because he had this faith, he could ask Jesus to remember him without putting forward the days he had left.

He had no opportunity to do many things from then on and make up for his past sins. But such merit was not necessary for the Lord to receive him. For salvation is not achieved by a sinner producing a price and offering it to the Lord, but by receiving through faith the grace the Lord has prepared for sinners. The

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way of salvation was not blocked just because he had nothing to put forward.

We, too, cannot hold out before God our long years of believing, our deeds of helping others, or our labor for the gospel as the price of salvation. Such labor is what a person who has received grace does out of gratitude, not the price that washes away sin. Since the One who paid the price of sin is Jesus, what we are to rely on is the perfect salvation the Lord accomplished with His baptism and blood. When this faith becomes clear, we are freed from the anxiety that He will receive us only if we add more of our own merit.

The promise given to the sinner today

"Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise'" (Luke 23:43).

Jesus did not say to the criminal that He would receive him if he became more righteous later. He promised that he would be with Him in Paradise today, and at the center of that promise is the grace of being with the Lord. It is not that the sinner hung on the cross opened the door of the kingdom of heaven by his own strength; the Lord of salvation received him. Since Paradise is the kingdom of joy where Jesus is, there is no hope more certain than His promise.

Even after receiving the Lord's word, the criminal's body was still hanging on the cross, but his future was no longer determined by the punishment before his eyes alone. It was because the promise of being with the Lord had been given to him. In the same way, the assurance of the remission of sins does not arise from all suffering having disappeared, but from the salvation and the word of the Lord, who has received us.

Knowing this promise does not mean that it is all right to put off salvation. Since one of the two criminals spoke blasphemous words to the end in the same place, it is not that everyone comes to believe automatically when death draws near. We who hear the Lord's word now must receive that salvation in our hearts. Rather than looking for permission to go on sinning until late, we must believe in the grace that delivers even such a sinner, and give thanks.

At first they were two men under the same punishment, but at the end of the text, one of them received the promise of being with the Lord. It was not a promise he obtained because he was cleaner than the other, but grace he received by believing in the righteous Jesus. Let us, too, not hide our own sins, but rely on the Savior, who bore all those sins. The hope that will not leave us even in the face of death lies in the salvation the Lord accomplished and in His promise given to those who believe. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Pass through the torn veil and approach God

< Luke 23:44–49 >

“Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, “into Your hands I commit My spirit.”’ Having said this, He breathed His last. So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, ‘Certainly this was a righteous Man!’ And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned. But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.”

When Jesus was hanging on the Cross, the sun was darkened and darkness came over all the earth. While that darkness continued, the veil of the temple was torn, and the Lord, after committing His spirit into the Father’s hands, breathed His last. To the eyes of the people who saw Jesus’ death, it was the sight of one life coming to an end, but through that death the opening of the way to approach God was being accomplished. As we look at this scene, we must know, together with the suffering the Lord underwent, what He gave us through that suffering.

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The judgment for the sin of the world received in the darkness

"Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour" (Luke 23:44).

Luke records that the darkness which began at about the sixth hour continued until the ninth hour. The One on the Cross had never committed sin, but He is Jesus, who bore the sin of the whole world. God did not let that sin go as if it had never happened; He turned away from the Son, who was bearing the sin of the world, and had Him receive the punishment instead. Therefore, when we look at the Cross, we must think at the same time of how heavy sin is and of how God delivered us from that sin.

The fact that Jesus is the Son of God did not make the punishment for sin any lighter. Because the Lord bore our sins, He went as far as the place of shedding His blood and dying. It was not because the Son had changed into One who is not loved, but in order to save sinners who do not deserve to be loved, that He received that judgment in their place. If it had been a love that merely closes its eyes to sin, the death on the Cross would not have been necessary, but the Lord's love is a love that actually paid the price of sin and gave us life.

What we must not forget at this point is the fact of when that sin was passed on to Jesus. Jesus had the sin of all mankind passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, and the sins we will commit throughout our whole lives are also all included in it. That the Lord, who was hung on the Cross bearing that sin, shed His blood and died was His receiving in our place the punishment for our sins, and the Lord rose again from death and completed our salvation. Because we believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we

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can get out of the place of looking for a way to pay for our own sins again and rely on the Lord's salvation.

The veil God tore and the way that was opened

"The veil of the temple was torn in two" (Luke 23:45).

The veil of the temple was torn in two. It was not man who tore it but God who tore it, and Jesus' dying on the Cross and the opening of the way to approach God were not separate events. Sin had been standing between God and man, but when the Lord bore that sin and received the judgment, God, on His side, broke down that wall that had been blocking the way. When Jesus received baptism from John, heaven was opened, and when He received on the Cross all the punishment for the sin He had borne through that baptism, the veil of the temple was torn. The tearing of the veil shows that God opened the way of salvation, which we could not break through by ourselves.

This way is not a way that man made little by little by sinning less. It is a way that was prepared because Jesus received the judgment for sin in our place with His body, and that is why no one can approach the Father except through Jesus. The Lord told His disciples this very fact.

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'" (John 14:6).

To say that the Lord is the way does not mean that Jesus merely taught us a way to live more kindly; it means that the Lord actually solved the sin that keeps man from approaching God. Since sin was passed on through Jesus' baptism and the judgment for that sin was finished on the Cross, we, instead of making a new way of salvation, accept by faith the way He has

already opened. Because the salvation the Lord accomplished is true, the faith that relies on that way also has a clear basis.

Every time we see our shortcomings, we do not need to think that the door of the kingdom of heaven has been closed again. This is because we must not confuse the fact that our lacking state has been exposed with the fact that the Lord bore the whole price of sin. We must acknowledge what we have done wrong and turn from it, but we must approach God with the faith that believes in Jesus, who bore even that wrong. The basis on which we are justified is not a single day's diligence but the remission of sins that the Lord completed.

The spirit He entrusted into the Father's hands

"And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, "into Your hands I commit My spirit."' Having said this, He breathed His last" (Luke 23:46).

Jesus called out to the Father with a loud voice and committed His spirit into the Father's hands. Since He breathed His last after saying that word, the Lord's death was not something that only looked like death on the outside, but a real death in which He suffered with His body in our place and gave up His life, shedding His blood. He did not merely promise with words the price for giving sinners life, but paid it Himself to the end.

Even so, we must not misunderstand the word that the Lord bore our sins as meaning that the Lord Himself had sin. Our sins, which the Lord bore through His baptism, were laid on His flesh, and it was that flesh that received death on the Cross; it is not that there was sin in the Lord's spirit. That is why the Lord could entrust His sinless spirit to the Father. Here lies the reason we

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must rightly know the facts of salvation: faith does not become whole just by feeling the pain of the Cross greatly; rather, only when we know who bore whose sins and what He accomplished can we rely on the Lord as the Savior.

Our lives, too, are not held in our own hands. When someday we come to face death, we cannot approach God by relying on our own goodness or religious career. But a person who believes in Jesus, who accomplished the remission of sins with His baptism and the blood of the Cross and rose again, relies on the way He opened. The fact that the Lord wanted to save us so much that He gave up His own life is the basis of a hope that will not be shaken even in the face of death.

Do not stop at beating your breast, but believe in salvation

"So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, 'Certainly this was a righteous Man!'" (Luke 23:47).

The centurion, seeing what had happened, glorified God and said that Jesus certainly was a righteous Man. He did not see the Lord's death only as a sinner being punished for his own sins. Meanwhile, the crowd that had come together to watch saw what had happened and beat their breasts and returned, and those who knew Jesus and the women who had followed Him from Galilee also stood at a distance and watched. Even while they saw the same death, there was a meaning of salvation that had to be accepted in the heart.

We, too, may feel sorrow and pity as we hear of the Lord's suffering. But since our sins are not remitted by the fact that our hearts ached, we must not stay in that emotion. Jesus' death was

not a pitiful end but the beginning in which our salvation was completed. We must believe the fact that Jesus bore our sins and died in our place, and that through that death He opened the way to approach God. We must turn our hearts from the place of pitying the Lord to the place of receiving the grace He has bestowed on us.

Darkness came over all the earth, but in the midst of it the way to God was opened. Jesus' death was not the moment when His will to save us was broken, but the moment when the punishment for our sins was paid. Believing in God, who tore the veil and opened the way of salvation, lay down the heart that tries to draw back from God because of your own sins. Since Jesus, who died for us and rose again, is even now the sure way by which we approach the Father, pass through the torn veil and approach God boldly. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

He who endures to the end obtains salvation

< Luke 23:26–49 >

"Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus. And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, "Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!" Then they will begin "to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!'" For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?' There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.' And they divided His garments and cast lots. And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, 'He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.' The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, and saying, 'If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.' And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew:

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THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.' But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.' Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, "into Your hands I commit My spirit."' Having said this, He breathed His last. So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, 'Certainly this was a righteous Man!' And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned. But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things."

Jesus, the King of righteousness

People commonly refer to Jesus and say, "He is the King of righteousness." They also say, "He is the King of peace," and "He is the King of kings." Today I would like to consider together with you this part: "Our Lord is the King of righteousness."

If we look at the word, people led Jesus away and, in order to have Him receive the punishment of the cross, made Him bear

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the cross and dragged Him up to the hill of Golgotha. When Jesus was going up the hill of Golgotha bearing this cross, a certain great multitude that wept bitterly followed Him. They sobbed, and they also beat their breasts and wailed. Also, a man from Cyrene, from the country, who happened to have come to the city of Jerusalem, carried in Jesus' place that wooden cross Jesus had been bearing and followed behind Jesus; there were various scenes like these.

"Do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children"

In particular, when Jesus was going up the hill of Golgotha bearing the wooden cross, many women followed Him, weeping and grieving. But Jesus looked at them and spoke this word: *"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Luke 23:28)*.

Our Lord also says as follows: *"For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!'" (Luke 23:29)*. He said that when the last day comes, the barren on this earth, that is, women who cannot conceive a child, wombs that never bore, and those who never nursed, are blessed. It is because people will go through such a terrifying judgment in the last days that Jesus spoke in that way.

Our Lord, even while going up the hill of Golgotha bearing the cross, was thinking of us now and speaking of the last days. He was speaking of how much suffering people will undergo when the plagues of the last seven trumpets and the plagues of the seven bowls are poured out. On that last day this universe will be shaken, the earth's axis will be shaken, and the celestial

axis, the world of the stars of this sky, will be shaken, so that people will be destroyed. Also, the Lord will come to this earth and judge those who have not been born again, and He is telling them to think of that time. "Just because I am now going up the hill of Golgotha bearing the wooden cross like this, you should not pity Me and say that it is a shame. You say of Me, 'It is a shame about that young man,' and 'What wrong has our Lord done, that He suffers such a thing?' and you grieve and weep for Me like that, but you should not weep for Me; in fact, you should weep for yourselves and your daughters, for your children." That is what He said.

The reason the Lord spoke that way was this: "If you are not saved, there will be suffering for you greater than My now bearing the cross, going up the hill of Golgotha, and being nailed to the cross; you will suffer in hell for all eternity a burning torment hundreds of millions of times greater than My now receiving the punishment of the cross, being killed, being despised, and undergoing this tribulation." That is why He spoke in this way.

The reason He bore the cross silently even though He had the power

In fact, our Lord had never committed a sin for which He had to die on the cross, and He had done nothing wrong. Our Lord had done nothing wrong, but the people of Israel incited people, saying, "Jesus is the King of the Jews. The King of the nation of Israel is Jesus. It is that Man," and countless people also incited people and set Jesus up in that way. In particular, it was because the religious leaders of the nation of Israel—the leaders of the Pharisees, who were said to believe in the LORD God, and the

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religious leaders including the chief priests and the scribes—and the political leaders hated Him that Jesus received the punishment of the Cross. Quite ironically, because He was hated by those who were zealous for religion, through their false accusation Jesus, though He had done nothing wrong, is now being dragged up the hill of Golgotha bearing the cross. However much He was falsely accused, is He One who could not even establish His own innocence? The Lord received the punishment just as He was falsely accused, and was nailed to the Cross and died.

In fact, our Lord had done nothing wrong. He had never so much as stolen and eaten even a piece of bread. The Lord had never once done anything to be faulted for, nor committed even the smallest sin deserving of being hung on a cross. Nevertheless, Jesus was sentenced to the punishment of the cross, the punishment that the most atrocious criminals of that time received, and was dragged up the hill of Golgotha bearing the cross. Why on earth did Jesus have to bear the cross?

The Lord was not One without power. If the Lord had shown His own righteousness, He was One who could have stopped the punishment of the cross at once, and One who could have punished all those who falsely accused, reviled, and spat on Him. Although He is God, who had the power, with His own power, quite sufficiently, to say, "I am God, who made this universe. I am the Creator," and to make everyone kneel, He bore the cross silently. Though He Himself had done nothing wrong and had the power, the Lord is now suffering like that at the hands of those who have no power. I know that, of course, He did this for you and me.

That is why we call the Lord "the King of righteousness." "He is the King of right deeds and of love." If someone were to suffer harm without having done anything wrong—however

good a person on this earth he might be—if he suffered harm without having done anything wrong, he would not stay still. If it were not that he suffered harm because he lacked some power, but that he bore with it even though he had the power, these are things that ordinary people could not endure. If it were you or me, if we had done nothing wrong and there was nothing unrighteous in us, and someone slandered us and inflicted harm on us, a temper like a fiery arrow would at once shoot up like a volcano erupting, and we would at once go after the person who harmed us and at once assert our own rightness.

"I have done nothing wrong, and I will not let pass everything you have spread wrongly about me and all the harm you have done me. I will make you pay the due price for it." One makes it clearly known to everyone that he has not done the slightest wrong, and, saying that there is no reason he should suffer like this, repels in one stroke all the unjust persecution and all the reproach, puts forward his own rightness, and sets his collapsed pride firmly upright. However powerless a person may be, there is no one who would stay still under his own unjust treatment or a false charge.

Of course, among the people of the world there are indeed some who give up their lives, saying they are doing a righteous deed. Even a man like the philosopher Socrates, whom the world considers great, drank the cup of poison and died in order to show everyone the appearance of obeying the law, but that was because he was a man for whom that was the only way to show his own rightness. Also, among ordinary people, there are some who, saying they will save many lives, leap into the flames and are crushed to death under a collapsing burning roof, and there are some who leaped into the water to pull out a drowning person and saved that person but, having no strength left to get out themselves, drowned and died. People look at such people and

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call them righteous, honor their spirit for a long time, and spread to people the idea of sacrificing oneself to fulfill righteousness.

But even though they saved other people, they did not have the power to protect their own lives as well. Of course, such people are truly right people. Of course, they did well. But however righteous a deed they did, they did not have the power to escape their own death. Even if Socrates drank the cup of poison to prove his own righteousness, what meaning is there if he himself could not come back to life? If they had had the power to grab the roof as it came down, throw it off, and rescue all the people, they would not have died either. If there is a difference between Jesus and the people who sacrificed themselves for righteousness in the world, it is that Jesus is God, who has such power.

Jesus is not One to suffer unjust treatment from anyone because He lacks some power. Nevertheless, the reason our Lord silently received the suffering of the Cross is that He had the sin of mankind all transferred to Him through the baptism John the Baptist gave Him at the Jordan River. Because our Lord had the sin of the world, the wrongs and faults of all people, all transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, He went up the hill of Golgotha bearing the cross to receive the punishment. It is not that the Lord suffered unjustly because He lacked power; although He is the Lord who has power, He received the punishment of the Cross in order to save you and me. If He had not had the sins of all the people of this world transferred to Him through His baptism, there would have been no reason at all for the Lord to receive the punishment of the Cross. The Lord received baptism from John in order to fulfill all righteousness, and in order to do every right thing for us, He did not use His own power and suffered the suffering of the Cross.

Of course, since we believe that our Lord received baptism from John, bore all the sin of the world, and did so in order to save us, we may think that this is a matter of course. But let us for once think of ourselves as Jesus Christ. When we think of you and me, who are living now, as Jesus, if we were to suffer unjust treatment as Jesus did, could we endure it? We would probably assert our own rightness and struggle to clear ourselves of the injustice. If only we had the power, would we not at once throw it off and prove our rightness? Let us think about it, even we who have received salvation.

There are also many times when we go through difficult things. There are times when we go through difficulties for the gospel, because of the gospel, but there are also times when we are ignored or treated unjustly over utterly absurd matters by people who have not been born again, and at such times, does it not feel like a fire breaking out inside us? We see a cannon as big as a mountain in our heart catching fire all at once and being one step away from exploding, and then, if touched just a little more, going off wildly all at the same time with no time to do anything about it. Of course, such a thing would stand out in a person with a quick temper, but I know that there are some among you, too, whose anger explodes once it passes a certain level they cannot bear.

"Today you will be with Me in Paradise"

But unlike such people as we are, our Lord is truly righteous. I think that the word *"today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43)* that our Lord spoke to the thief on one side is the word that gives the greatest hope and is the most blessed.

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It would be joyful just not to live forever in a world this complicated, this troublesome, and this full of unrighteousness, but I am so happy that we can live together with the Lord we love in a place full of love and joy, a place where there is not the slightest worry but only peace of mind, a place full of only delight and with no evil at all. Paradise is such a place. It is a place where there are conditions in which one can truly love, cherish, and care for the people there, whoever the others may be. I want to live in that Paradise forever. I hope to live in the kingdom where there is only glory and joy, always doing good and freely giving and receiving love. Not only do I have the heart to live in such a kingdom, but at times I also imagine that I am there now, hold that feeling of happiness, joy, and satisfaction, and steep myself in such emotions. How good it would be if now were really such a world! I hope that place will come soon—a place where we are not fretful like this, where it is not a world in which we quarrel and fight each other like this, and where there is no anxiety of living in danger, nervous about when a war might break out.

This world truly seems to be living under the threat of war. Great powers oppress small nations, weak nations threaten to make nuclear weapons to secure their position, rumors of wars arise here and there, and natural disasters happen all the time; it is a world in which people's hearts are hardened. How good it would be if, instead of this complicated and terrifying world in which one cannot speak one's true heart even when one wants to, a peaceful world that the Lord rules truly came! We, the born-again, as we think that we will go and live in such a world in the future, have a heart that rests for a very brief moment. We truly have a thankful heart about coming to live in such a world, and we steep ourselves in that heart for a while.

Even so, the world is still complicated, and doing the work of righteousness is still complicated and hard. There are still so many enemies, too. Those who opposed Jesus Christ delivered Jesus up to be nailed to the Cross and die, and also themselves drove in the nails and killed Him; there were those who followed Jesus, who was going up the hill of Golgotha bearing the cross, and mocked Him; and the thief on one side, of the thieves on either side, mocked Him and even spat, saying, "Why don't You come down once and show us that You are the Son of God? Come on, save us, too!"—and those who oppose the gospel still do so even now.

And this world is still a world of wars, natural disasters, and the rise of evil people, a world in which there is no justice but much unrighteousness, and unrighteousness prevails. As we live in such a world, it seems only too natural that we wait for the Paradise the Lord truly rules, the Paradise He spoke of in saying *"today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43)*. Paradise, of which our Lord spoke, that is, the Lord's kingdom, is full of the best things, such as love, joy, gentleness, peace, and self-control. And there, there is no evil but good, and it is full of righteousness and full of joy and delight. When we think that such a place full of good is the Lord's kingdom, a heart that wants to go there as quickly as possible arises, and we come to hope to go to that kingdom soon.

Truly, the Lord is the King of righteousness. Therefore, though the Lord had done nothing wrong, He received the punishment of the Cross in order to remove all our sins. For you and me, and for all the people of the whole world, the Lord received baptism from John and bore the cross and thus bore all the curses for us. It is not that the Lord received the punishment of the Cross because He lacked power; Jesus, who is the omniscient and omnipotent God, has that power but did not use

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it, and, just as the word *"A bruised reed shall he not break, And smoking flax shall he not quench, Till he send forth judgment unto victory –ASV" (Matthew 12:20)* says, He Himself bore our sins for us. The Lord received the judgment of the Cross for sin for our sake and suffered in our place. And He rose again from death and became our Savior. That is why our Lord has become the King of righteousness to you and me.

Truly, there is no god, human, or created being that has done a more righteous deed than our Lord. Nothing whatsoever is as righteous as Jesus. Who, having power, would suffer persecution? Who is there who would do so? For what reason would a king with power on this earth be persecuted by his people? What king is there who would do so? What leader is there who, despite having power, would give up his royal authority and step down himself? Everyone, whenever he had power, held on to it and coerced others. But our Lord, though He has power, did not use it, and offered Himself as a sacrificial offering, as an instrument of righteousness, only for you and me. By giving up His whole body, He saved you and me with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross. That is why our Lord has become the King of righteousness, the King of peace, and the King of love, and the true Lord God of salvation to those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, including you and me. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

We who are used as instruments of righteousness

This world now is a very hard and weary world. Darkness covers this earth, and all things are waiting for the day the Lord will come. I know that the lives you and I are living now are not

so smooth either. The hearts of the people of the world are hardened. People's spirits are now being changed into spirits that hunger and thirst for blood rather than hungering and thirsting for righteousness, and that hunger and thirst for evil rather than hungering and thirsting for good. It has become a world that cannot bear even the smallest thing, that is impatient and obstructive, that loves money more than it loves God, and that loves falsehood more than it loves the truth, a world *"having a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Timothy 3:5)*. This word is in 2 Timothy, and even without listing things one by one in detail like this, the reality we see with our eyes is like that. In such a world now, we, who have evil, lacking, and weak parts in the flesh, are being used as instruments of righteousness. Our Lord is the King of righteousness, and we, who are lacking, are doing the work of spreading to the whole world the love of Jesus Christ, the King of righteousness and King of peace, and the salvation of God.

Our Lord, as the King of righteousness, has given us righteousness. Though we are lacking, because the Lord has given us righteousness, we do the work of leading many people to righteousness. Because Jesus bore sin through the baptism He received from John, died through the Cross, and rose again from death and thus saved us, we, though lacking, want to live a life of righteousness while living on this earth, preaching the gospel of salvation. We want to spread the gospel of righteousness. Is it the same with you, too?

Now many people think that speaking in tongues and becoming emotionally worked up is the work of the Holy Spirit. But that is not the work of the Holy Spirit that the Bible speaks of. We must preach to the whole world how Satan the devil deceives us, what the truth is, and the gospel of being born again of water and the Spirit.

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We ourselves have no rightness of the flesh. But with the faith that believes in the Lord, we can do right things. Though we are lacking, let us gather our strength and work. Just as, when small fireflies are gathered and put in a bottle, it is as bright as some light bulb, though our faiths that believe in the Lord are small, though they are small faiths that have received salvation and that resolve to follow the righteousness of God, let us gather these faiths like this and shine on the world. Because the world is so very dark now, I believe that even though ours is a small light, many people will appear who recognize our light and follow the light. I believe that countless people throughout the whole world will discover the light and be able to meet the Lord. Do you believe so, too? Let us live with faith. Truly, there is nothing righteous in our own flesh, but because the Holy Spirit is in our hearts, we can do righteousness and live righteously through the Holy Spirit. Let us live righteously like that until the day the Lord comes, and then depart. Let us do righteousness to the end and spread the gospel so that everyone may hear the gospel, meet the Lord, and obtain eternal life, so that they may all receive the remission of all sins in their hearts, and so that when the Lord comes to this earth, they and all of us may truly welcome the Lord without any hindrance. Just as the Lord spoke to the thief on one side the word *"today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43)*, I know that we must spread the gospel so that they, though they truly have no righteousness in the flesh, may have the kind of faith by which they can enter Paradise, the kingdom of God, through that faith that believes in the Lord. Let us do righteous work until we depart.

A righteous life is the life that we, who are lacking but believe in righteousness, live. Though you and I are living in an age in which this world is wicked, in which this world is unrighteous and truly hates doing righteousness, in which it

regards a person who does righteousness as if he were a fool, in which it has completely lost righteousness and looks with strange eyes at one who does righteousness, we must live and depart as befits disciples of the King of righteousness, the Lord. Though we are lacking, we must still live and depart living a life that does righteousness and spreads the righteousness of Christ to the whole world. We must live and depart with faith. Throughout the whole world there are still countless people who, not knowing the righteousness of Christ, are bound by sin and dying because of sin. We must know that there are so many people who are being oppressed by the devil and dying. There are so very many such people. In India, in France, in Germany, in Britain, in Asia, in Africa—on every continent of the world there are an enormous number of them. Since an enormous number of people are being deceived, we are truly people who have so very much work to do.

Our Lord is the King of righteousness, and He is now in our hearts as the King of righteousness. He is in the hearts of you and me as the King of righteousness. You and I cannot but be servants of the King of righteousness. And we cannot but do righteous work, right work. The righteous work is the work of spreading the gospel to the whole world. We must live the life of a messenger who spreads the gospel so that people who have no way to know the gospel of the water and the Spirit can come to know the gospel. We are people whose destiny has been set so that we can live such a life. God has called us so that we can live such a life.

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Now is the time to work

We, at least, have received the remission of sins, but many in the world do not yet know even the gospel. Remembering that there are billions of people on earth who do not even know this itself—that the Lord has removed all their sins too, that He bore them all through the baptism He received from John—let us have faith in our hearts and become righteous people who truly bear and endure well. I hope that you will become righteous people who can be persecuted for righteousness, suffer for righteousness, and hunger and thirst for righteousness, people who are truly hungry because they want to do righteous work. Even if our flesh is not so very full, spiritually we must become people who truly hunger and thirst because we want to do many righteous works. And we have already become such people by faith. By faith we must do even more work in the future. Among runners, we are runners who run a marathon. A marathon is 42.195 km long. I consider that we have now run 20 km. At 20 km, one can say that a marathon runner has passed over a certain hurdle. When a marathon runner runs 20 km at a steady pace, he goes through a pain, once, as if his intestines were tearing apart. When he gets past that point of crisis where he feels like dying, his breathing becomes indescribably short, a scorching breath pours out of his mouth, and white foam comes to his lips, but I am told that once he gets over that hurdle and keeps running, he can run with less difficulty for quite a while longer.

We, too, in serving the Lord up to now, have probably passed over such a hurdle once or twice. It was disagreeable and irritating at times, exciting at times, and then hard. We have passed several hurdles, and now we are in a situation where we are heading toward the final finish line with the stadium right before our eyes. A marathoner running the last stretch begins to

run at a faster pace than at the start. Like a marathoner putting on a final burst of speed, it is now time for us, too, to run with all our strength for the last stretch.

Just as our Lord is the King of righteousness, we are the people of the King of righteousness. Even though the world is unrighteous, let us not lament this world and fight against it, but let us run on the path of living for the righteousness given to us, for the gospel. Praying for the gospel, let us keep our faith, look to the Lord's kingdom, wait for the Lord's kingdom, and live in hope.

We must not think as if we were going to live in this world for thousands of years. It is said that on the last day, wombs that never bore and breasts that never nursed are blessed. For the mountains will collapse, terrifying plagues will cover the whole world, and, with no room to flee, balls of fire will fall, hail will fall, and earthquakes will occur. And in the pitch-dark night, the stars of the world of the Milky Way will fall toward the earth. If we look at Revelation, it says that stars fall to the earth. Things will happen in which a third of the sea becomes blood and the creatures of the sea die, and tidal waves will arise and begin to submerge even the land. I know that God spoke of these things in advance because enormous things will actually happen before our eyes.

Let us endure to the end and live by faith

Dear beloved saints, the Lord is the King of righteousness. There is no one who has done more righteous work than the Lord. Among gods there is no such god, and among human beings there is no such human. Who is there that, having power, sacrifices himself for the world he made and the people he made,

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bestows the love that saves the people he made from death, destruction, and the curse, and leads them to the kingdom of eternal life, to Paradise? Our Lord is the Lord who saved you and me. We truly have no one but the Lord. We have been saved only through Him.

"Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, "into Your hands I commit My spirit."' Having said this, He breathed His last" (Luke 23:44–46). The veil of the temple was torn in two. The veil of the temple that had been perfectly intact was ripped apart. Because Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John, bore the sin of the world, and was nailed to the Cross and died for us, and thereby made it possible for whoever believes in that Jesus Christ to enter the kingdom of God, the veil of the temple was torn. It meant that Jesus saved us from all our sins, which had been blocking us from God, and thus broke down the wall of separation, and that He clothed us with the righteousness of God and made us children of God. What an amazing righteous work our Lord did! I truly want many people, too, to know that righteousness of our Lord, just as it was said, *"Certainly this was a righteous Man" (Luke 23:47).*

These days, for the firefighters who leaped into the flames to save people and gave their lives, countless people shed tears, help their families, and honor those people. In fact, our Lord cannot be compared with such people, but our Lord is far more righteous. Rather than making such people known, we make our Lord known to the whole world and honor Him forever and praise Him forever. We must spread to the whole world that love and that salvation of our Lord, who, though He had power, did

not exercise all His power but rather humbled Himself, treated us with love, and removed all our sins and saved us.

Let us, you and I, live by faith and meet the Lord. In just a little while the Lord will come. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? When the world is unstable, live wisely by faith and resist Satan the devil by faith. When an anxious heart comes into your heart and Satan the devil assails your heart, command, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I command you, Satan the devil, be gone." Only then can Satan not seize and crush your soul. Otherwise, Satan seizes and crushes your soul. Satan gives fear to our hearts and threatens us. Even though it is not visible to the eye or audible to the ear, there is only one way we can resist and overcome all fear and everything that Satan the devil and the adversaries do. It is to say, "In the name of Jesus Christ, Satan the devil, be gone." Because Jesus Christ overcame Satan the devil, and because Satan the devil cannot move at all before Jesus Christ, we must command like that. We must put the name of that Jesus Christ at the front and drive away Satan the devil, and, overcoming Satan the devil by faith like that, we must spread the love of Jesus Christ. We must spread to the whole world this salvation by which Jesus Christ, loving the whole world, removed all sins.

We must live by faith and stand before God by faith. Until then, we must hold on to the Lord's righteousness, boast of the Lord's righteousness, and look to the Paradise the Lord promised us. Rejoicing in hope, we must overcome tribulation and wait for the kingdom of God. *"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13)*. Our Lord treated us with love and made us children of God. What the result of that love is, is hope. We must look to that kingdom and live this present time by faith, spreading the

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gospel. The Lord saved us from all our sins in order to give us the kingdom of God. That is why we must live with faith.

Before long we will meet our Lord. You and I will actually see with our own eyes all the words recorded in this Bible. We will see that this word is the truth and that things come to pass according to this word. We will see it before long. Even so, we must not sit idly by. All the more, we must spread the gospel, arm ourselves with faith, arm ourselves with the word, and live with the hope of entering and living in the Lord's kingdom. Let us not be discouraged as we look at this earth; let us give the command to all negative thoughts, "In the name of the Lord Jesus, Satan, be gone," and, hoping for the kingdom of God that the Lord gives us, let us wait by faith with the hope of living in that kingdom, where only God's goodness and love are full, in the midst of joy. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

Let us all, who have been born again of water and the Spirit, live by faith. Let us live by faith and meet the Lord. Now it is not long; we only need to endure a little more. Perhaps it is harder for that very reason, but let us endure a little more, doing the work of the gospel. Because we have only a little to endure, and because there is no one to do it but us, we must work with all our strength. If there were many people other than us to do it, we might play to our hearts' content, but regrettably there is hardly anyone to do it other than us. Though we turn our eyes this way and that over the whole world, and however wide we open our eyes and look, there is no one to do the Lord's work other than us. We are the only ones who can do the work of the gospel. The Lord has given us the greatest blessing and has entrusted us with the greatest work. And He also has great expectations of us. And He also gives us the greatest gift. Though our shoulders are heavy, with faith, if we are with the Lord, we can do it however much there is. Even if the work of

righteousness entrusted to us is beyond our strength, because we hope for the good day to come, we simply give thanks to the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

The hands that laid the Lord's body to rest and the heart that prepared spices

< Luke 23:50–56a >

"Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils."

After Jesus breathed His last, Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and asked for the Lord's body. In the place where people had united in their intent to kill Jesus, this man had not joined in that decision. Now he did the work of taking down the Lord's body, wrapping it in linen, and laying it to rest in a new tomb.

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The women who had followed after also looked at the tomb and where the Lord's body was laid. Even in the place where visible glory had vanished, the heart that loved the Lord was leading to actual service.

The choice of a person who waits for the kingdom of God

"Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God" (Luke 23:50–51).

Joseph was a council member, but he did not take part in the council's decision and deed. It was not that he unconditionally shared the will of those in the same position just because they moved in one direction. Luke introduces him as a good and just man and as a man who was waiting for the kingdom of God. What he was waiting for is recorded together with what attitude he took when faced with people's decision.

To wait for the kingdom of God does not mean thinking only of a distant future while doing nothing on this earth. A person who treasures the kingdom God gives also deals with the matter before his eyes right now with that faith. If only people's recognition and one's own position are precious to a person, it is hard for him to go against a decision that many people follow, but if he hopes for the Lord's kingdom, he can set his heart on His will. Joseph did what he had to do for the Lord at that very time.

Where our hearts are directed also affects today's choices. If we say we believe in the Lord yet desire only to rise high in the

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world, we easily step back when serving the Lord collides with our own interests. Conversely, if we believe the fact that the Lord has given us the remission of sins and the eternal kingdom, we do not judge service only by immediate gain and loss. Since the kingdom we wait for is a kingdom we enter through the salvation the Lord bestowed, that grace must also lead our present life.

The labor of laying the Lord's body to rest

"This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before" (Luke 23:52–53).

Joseph asked Pilate for Jesus' body, took the body down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb hewn out of the rock. The Lord's body was laid in a tomb where no one had ever been buried, and Luke records this matter in detail to show that Jesus actually died and was buried. Our salvation is not a comfort made up in the heart, but something accomplished bodily within history.

When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, He bore the sin of the whole world once and for all. The sins that you and I commit throughout our whole lives were all passed on to the Lord, and Jesus, bearing that sin, shed His blood and died on the Cross and thus received in our place the judgment we were to receive. And He was buried in the tomb and rose again from death and became our Savior. In the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we believe in are contained the sin and death the Lord actually bore for us, and the life He gave us anew.

It is not that Joseph's labor completed the Lord's salvation for Him. The One who received the judgment for sin in our place is Jesus, and Joseph was entrusted with the work of burying that Lord's body. We must not confuse the place of the Lord, who bestowed grace, with the place of the person who receives that grace and serves. The material things or labor we offer are also not a price that buys the remission of sins, but things used in serving the Lord in gratitude for the salvation we have already received.

Therefore, even if we are entrusted with a small task, we have no need to regard that task lightly. Instead of words proving his own excellence before people, Joseph did the work of asking for the Lord's body and laying it to rest. When we think of the grace we have received from the Lord, we, too, come to accept the labor the gospel needs as the work of our own lives. Rather than comparing the size of our service with others, what is important is to carry out by faith the task given at that time.

The faith that lives with the old man left in the tomb

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

As we look at Jesus' burial, we must think about what relation the Lord's death has to ourselves. The Apostle Paul confessed, *"I have been crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20)*. Because the Lord bore not only other people's sins but my very own sin, I believe that the death the Lord received was the death He received in my place. Just as Joseph gave up his own tomb,

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in which no one had yet been buried, we, too, must be buried together with the Lord in the tomb of our hearts by faith. Since our sins were passed on through the Lord's baptism, we believe that we, too, died with the Lord at that time, and that when the Lord was buried, our old man was also buried with Him. We who have been delivered from the judgment for sin through that death now live by the faith that believes in the Lord, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

This faith is not a word telling us to harm our bodies or throw away our lives. It is telling us not to keep setting up as the master of our lives the desires of our own that we clung to before we were saved. Since the Lord, who took responsibility for our sins, is our Lord, what to live for must also be decided within the Lord's will. Even if we have been born again, if we do not bury the old man in the tomb of our hearts, we stop following the Lord at the place where loss comes to us; but when we lay down the heart that put our own exaltation and gain foremost, we can gather our hearts on the way of serving the gospel together with the Lord.

We must not make the confession that we have died with Christ an excuse that it is fine to live any way we like. This is because a person who believes the fact that the Lord gave up His own life to give him life does not want to live apart from that love. That said, our lives do not become perfect overnight, so every time our lack is exposed, we must rely again on the Lord's salvation and ask for strength to follow His will. The heart that believes in the Lord actually sets the direction in which we serve.

Service that comes from the love received first

"And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid" (Luke 23:55).

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed after the burial and observed the tomb and where the body was laid. And it is written that they *"returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils" (Luke 23:56)*. Even though they had seen the Lord's death, they did not bring to an end everything related to Him, but continued to prepare the service they could do. Their steps and their preparation show their love for Jesus.

The reason we, too, can love the Lord is that the Lord loved us first. Since Jesus did not leave the problem of our sin and death to us but bore it Himself, a life of following the Lord comes out of a heart that knows that love. If we try to obtain love by doing something for the Lord, service always becomes a heavy price. But if we believe in the love we have already received, we can serve the Lord with thanksgiving even in the midst of weakness.

Sometimes our labor may go unnoticed, or things we planned may not go as we thought; at such times, think of how far the Lord lowered Himself for you. The fact that He who bore our sins, died, and was buried in the tomb rose again and became our life tells us that the life of following the Lord now is not in vain. This is because the reason for serving is not our circumstances, but the love we have received from the Lord.

Joseph laid the Lord's body to rest in the tomb and the women prepared spices; though the tasks they were given differed, their hearts toward the Lord led to each one's labor. Let us, too, hope for the kingdom of God and serve the Lord in the place given to each of us. With a heart that believes in Christ,

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who died in our place and rose again, lay down your own desires, and offer the rest of your life in gratitude for the love you received first. ✉

Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

Keep even the zeal of your service within the word

< Luke 23:56b >

“They rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.”

The women who had prepared spices did not immediately run toward the tomb. Luke records that they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment. Those who had loved Jesus and followed Him even to the place of burial now stopped the work they had been doing. If we think that only constant movement is the evidence of love, this rest is hard to understand, but they did not separate the heart that serves the Lord from following the word of God. Before this quiet scene, we must look back on whether our zeal, too, is within the word.

The women who rested according to the commandment

“They rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment” (Luke 23:56).

The women confirmed the Lord’s tomb and the place where

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His body was laid, returned, and prepared spices and fragrant oils. That preparation did not lead immediately to visiting the tomb again, and Luke says that they rested according to the commandment. What we can hold on to with certainty is the fact that they decided their actions according to the word of God. They did not act as they pleased, going beyond the word, just because they had a loving heart.

Even for a person who serves the Lord, there are times when he must lay down his own thoughts. If we think that the more work we do, the better we necessarily serve the Lord, even hearing the word and examining our hearts may feel like an unnecessary delay. But what we must examine before the amount of our zeal is the question of whose will we are following. Luke's record, which found the reason the women rested in the commandment, shows where the heart of a person who serves must dwell.

This one verse is not a word teaching that we must keep the Sabbath ordinances in order to be saved. What we must first see here is the action the women actually took after the burial and the word that led that action. We must not make our love for the Lord an excuse for asserting our own zeal, but must also know how to stop our own movement before the will of God.

Decide before the word when to prepare and when to stop

"That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near" (Luke 23:54).

The day Jesus was buried was the Preparation Day, and the Sabbath drew near. Joseph's laying the Lord's body to rest and the women's preparing spices took place within this flow of time.

They did not try to finish everything at once; after preparing, they rested on the Sabbath. Even though work remained to be done, they stopped according to God's commandment.

In the service entrusted to us, too, there is always work left unfinished. Because there are people who have not heard the gospel and brothers with whom we must share our hearts, if we try to accomplish everything with our own labor alone, our hearts become impatient. When this heart grows, we come to rely on how much we ourselves have moved rather than relying on the Lord. Therefore, while being faithful in the task entrusted to us, we must clearly know the place of the Lord, who accomplishes salvation, and our place as those who receive that grace and serve.

We must not take the responsibility entrusted to us lightly on the grounds of being told to rest, but neither must we conclude that we, who cannot stop working, are people of good faith. The women actually prepared spices and actually rested according to the word. The two actions did not come from different hearts, but were the way they carried out matters concerning the Lord within the word of God. We, too, must diligently do the labor we can do, but must examine whether our own zeal is running ahead of the word.

We must remember this fact also when we judge those who serve together with us. Even though we cannot know a person's whole heart only from visible activity, it is easy to press a brother by the standard of our own pace. If we hear the Lord's word together and share the tasks entrusted to us, we can serve with one heart while considering each one's circumstances. We must not measure the heart that loves the Lord by the amount of busyness we ourselves have set.

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The salvation bestowed before our love

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

The reason we serve the Lord is that we received love first. God loved us, who were under sin, and sent His Son, and Jesus Himself embraced the problem of sin that we could not solve by ourselves. It is not that we worked without rest and changed God's heart, nor that the way of salvation was opened only after we showed sufficient devotion. God's love came to us first.

By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. Because He bore all the sins we commit from the time we are born until we die, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and received the judgment for those sins in our place, and He rose again from death and gave us eternal life. Therefore, a person who wants to receive the remission of sins must believe in Jesus, who accomplished salvation with the water and the Spirit, instead of counting his own labor. Our work cannot be something that adds a price lacking in the Lord's salvation.

When we believe in the Lord's love, our serving heart also changes. We do not think that we can approach God only on the days we have finished our work well, and even on the days we could not work enough because of weakness, we rely on Jesus, who remitted our sins. In that grace we gain strength in our hearts and take up the task entrusted to us again. A life of working as if driven in order to be loved and a life of serving in gratitude for the love already received start from different places.

That is why our rest, too, must not become a time of forgetting the Lord. Even while we stop the movement of our bodies, we can keep in our hearts the word of Him who loved us

first and think of that grace. Setting aside for a while the work we have to do does not mean that the Lord's salvation also stops. Only when the faith that relies on the Lord, who gave us life, is present both when we labor and when we rest will our hearts not be bound to our own ability.

The steps that headed for the tomb again after the rest

"Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared" (Luke 24:1).

After the Sabbath had passed, the women went to the tomb with the spices they had prepared. Since they had not abandoned their hearts toward the Lord while resting, at dawn on the first day their steps headed again for the place where the Lord had been buried. We cannot say that at this time they had fully realized the meaning of the resurrection and were waiting for it. The record that they went with the spices shows that they intended to care for the Lord's body, and the Lord, who had risen, had already accomplished a greater and more amazing thing than they had thought. At the tomb they came to hear the word *"Why do you seek the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5)*.

We, too, while loving the Lord, may not know all that He does. What is needed at such times is not an attitude of limiting the Lord's work by our own thoughts, but a heart that hears and believes the word the Lord gives. The news of the resurrection that the women came to hear at the tomb makes known the Lord's victory, which went beyond their sorrow and their understanding. How thankful we are for the fact that His

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salvation does not depend on the size of our understanding and labor!

Through the women who prepared spices and yet stopped, we learn that love does not always appear only as busyness. The heart toward the Lord can be contained both in working according to the word and in waiting before the word. Believing in Jesus, who loved us first and delivered us from sin and death, let us live a life of laboring and resting with the zeal of our service placed within that word. Even at the moment the movement of our hands stops, our hearts must remain with the Lord, who loved us. ✉

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CHAPTER

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You can download Rev. Paul C. Jong's Christian Books to Computer, Tablet or Smartphone.

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Remember the Lord's word before the empty tomb

< Luke 24:1–12 >

"Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."' And they remembered His words. Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened."

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The women prepared spices to apply to Jesus' body and went to the tomb at dawn on the first day of the week. The place they went to was the spot where the Lord's body had been laid, but the news they came to hear there was the word that the Lord had risen. Even the spices prepared with a loving heart could not reverse death, but Jesus had already overcome death and risen again. What the women needed before the empty tomb was not more preparation but remembering the word the Lord had spoken before.

The tomb where the body could not be found

"But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus" (Luke 24:2–3).

The women who reached the tomb saw that the stone had been rolled away, and they went inside but did not find Jesus' body. They were troubled by this. It was not that they realized the resurrection at once just by seeing the fact that the tomb was empty. We see in this scene that if we gauge what we have seen only by our own experience, we may rather worry even in the face of what God has accomplished.

The women were not people who had come to the tomb without loving the Lord. They had come with Jesus from Galilee, had looked at the place where He was buried, and, when the Sabbath was over, came with the spices they had prepared. Yet even with that much devotion, as long as they did not remember the word the Lord had spoken, the fact that the body was not there was a cause for worry. Here lies the reason that, along with the labor of love, there must be faith that believes the word of the Lord.

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We, too, easily judge the Lord's work by looking only at the circumstances familiar to us. In the face of death we think that everything is over, and when something happens that does not go as we wish, we regard even the hope the Lord has given as if it had disappeared. But the Lord is not One who works only within the range our judgment reaches. Even at the very moment the women were worrying, Jesus was already alive, and the Lord's victory did not vanish for the reason that they had not grasped it.

He is not One to be sought among the dead

"Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee'" (Luke 24:5–6).

The two men in shining garments asked the women, who were afraid and had bowed their faces to the earth, why they were seeking the living One among the dead. And they made known, *"He is not here, but is risen!" (Luke 24:6)*. The reason Jesus was not in the tomb is not that He had been moved from the place of death to another place of death. The Lord really rose again from death.

The Jesus we believe in is not One who left behind fine words and simply died. He is the Savior who came to this earth in the flesh, bore our sins and received the punishment for those sins, and rose again from death and is alive even now. The reason that a memory of respecting the Lord cannot by itself take the place of faith is that He is alive and gives us life. The women who had tried to care for the Lord's body laid in the tomb now had to hear the word of the Lord, who had overcome death.

This resurrection is not an amazing event far removed from us and unrelated to us. Because the very One who bore our sins rose again, to us who believe in the Lord, too, the hope has been given that death is not the end. If we try to do away with death by our own strength, we are at a loss, but if we believe in the Lord of life, we can entrust ourselves to Him. We must receive in our hearts the fact that Jesus, who overcame sin and death, is our Savior.

The word He had spoken before was fulfilled

"Saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' And they remembered His words" (Luke 24:7–8).

The two men did not make up a new and unfamiliar teaching for the women. They brought to mind the word Jesus had already spoken when He was in Galilee, that is, the word He had spoken, *"The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (Luke 24:7)*. The women then remembered the Lord's word. What the empty tomb before their eyes meant became clear within the Lord's word.

The Cross and the resurrection were not a matter of the Lord collapsing under the evil scheme of people and then unexpectedly rising up again, but something that came about just as the Lord had said beforehand. Before the Son of Man was delivered into the hands of sinners, the sin of sinners was first passed on to the Son of Man. Jesus came to this earth to save sinners and bore the sin of the world once and for all by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, and because He thus bore not only the sins of your past and mine but all the sins of our whole lives, He bore that sin and shed His blood and

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died on the Cross, receiving the judgment in our place. And just as He had said, He rose again in three days and gave us the remission of sins and new life.

Therefore, believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a matter of fashioning the form of salvation we desire and then expecting it. It is accepting, according to the word, how Jesus bore our sins, why He died, and whom He rose again to give life to. If we separate the Lord's baptism from the Cross, it becomes blurred who bore our sins, and if we do not believe in the resurrection, we cannot set our hope on the living Savior. We must believe in the salvation the Lord accomplished as one complete grace.

Even when the memory of our own faults and sins comes to mind, let us not begin by thinking about what more we must do for the Lord to accept us. We must first confirm in the word what the Lord has already done for us. Even if sins remain in our memory, Jesus bore all those sins and was judged, and rose again. When we believe in the salvation the Lord accomplished rather than in the fear that holds us bound, our hearts stand firm in grace.

Receive the news you have heard with faith

"And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened" (Luke 24:11–12).

The women did not keep the word they had heard to themselves. *"They returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest" (Luke 24:9)*. Luke records that among them were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and

Mary the mother of James. But the apostles did not believe, since their words seemed like idle tales, and Peter ran to the tomb and marveled as he saw only the linen cloths lying there. It was not that those who had long been with the Lord believed the news of the resurrection at once.

This record shows that faith cannot be replaced by one's own background in the life of faith. The fact that one has heard much of the word or has lived a life of faith for a long time cannot take the place of believing the word of the Lord that is being preached now. We must examine whether we are pushing away what the Lord has accomplished for the reason that it is unfamiliar to us. The news of the resurrection went beyond the range people easily accept, but it was the very thing Jesus had already spoken of.

The spices the women prepared were for the body of the Lord, who had been buried in the tomb, but the word they received at the tomb conveys life to those women and to all of us. The Lord overcame death and rose again, and He will raise again those who believe in Him. Instead of only continuing to worry before the empty tomb, let us remember the word of Jesus, who bore sin and rose again from death. When we believe that word, the One we must seek is not One who is among the dead but our Lord, who is alive even now. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The two who turned back from the sad road and returned to Jerusalem

< Luke 24:13–35 >

"Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, 'What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?' Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, 'Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?' And He said to them, 'What things?' So they said to Him, 'The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a

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vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see.' Then He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, 'Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.' And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?' So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, 'The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!' And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread."

The two people heading for Emmaus were talking with each other about what had happened in Jerusalem. To them, Jesus' death was something that had shattered their expectations, and the news of the empty tomb they had heard from the women had not yet become a clear joy either. But on that sad road, the risen Jesus drew near. The two did not recognize the Lord, but the

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Lord went with them and opened the Scriptures to them, and at last their steps turned back toward Jerusalem. Let us look together at what changed that road.

Those who were sad even with the Lord beside them

"So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, 'What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?'" (Luke 24:15–17).

Jesus drew near to the two people going to Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. Luke records that their eyes were restrained so that they did not recognize the Lord. He does not explain because of what clothing they did not know Him, or how His face had changed. What we must see is the fact that even though the living Lord was going with them, the two were still in the sorrow of having lost the Lord.

When Jesus asked what the conversation was that they were having with one another, they stood still with sad faces. Of the two, Cleopas answered by asking how He could not know the great thing that had happened in Jerusalem. They thought that they themselves knew the event and the other person did not, but the One standing before them was Jesus Himself, the very center of that event. Even if a person knows many facts, if he does not learn the meaning of those facts from the Lord, he may not be able to get out of sorrow.

We, too, at times speak familiarly of the things recorded in the word while missing the very salvation that word conveys. We know the fact that Jesus suffered and died, but if we do not

believe why He underwent that and the life He accomplished afterward, our hearts grow dark. We also try to acknowledge the fact that the Lord is with us only when our own circumstances improve. But the Lord is not One who bestows grace only after our understanding has become complete; He first draws near to those who are slow to believe and speaks to them.

In the face of a Cross different from their expectation

"But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened" (Luke 24:21).

They had known Jesus as a prophet mighty in word and deed, and had expected Him to be the One who would redeem Israel. But they said that the chief priests and the rulers had delivered Him to be condemned to death and had crucified Him. To them, their expectation toward the Lord and the death on the Cross seemed not to fit together. Even though the women had heard from the angels the news that the Lord was alive, the two had not yet come to understand the Cross through that news.

We easily think that if we believe in the Lord, everything must work out in the way we expected. Then, in the face of unexpected suffering, we come to think that even the Lord's promise has collapsed. But people's expectations are not in themselves God's plan of salvation. The two, who had seen the Cross only as a failure, had to learn that that very suffering was what the Christ had to undergo in order to save sinners.

A person cannot stand before God merely by a change of circumstances while the problem of sin remains as it is. Since the redemption we need is to be delivered from the punishment

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of sin, the Savior went the way of bearing that punishment. Within that very event over which the two were grieving, the work of giving life to sinners was already being accomplished. We, too, must not regard what the Lord has done as vain merely for the reason that our own expectations were thwarted.

The word of the Scriptures that leads from suffering to glory

"Then He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:25–27).

Jesus did not comfort the two merely by telling them to cheer up. Pointing out their hearts that were slow to believe all that the prophets had spoken, He asked whether the Christ ought not to have suffered and to enter into His glory. And beginning at the writings of Moses and all the prophets, He explained in detail the things concerning Himself that are written in the Scriptures. The way to set their hearts right lay not in making them forget the event but in making them know that event according to the Scriptures.

The suffering the Christ had to undergo was the suffering of bearing the sin of the world. When He began His public ministry, the Lord had the sin of all mankind passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, and that sin includes all the sins we commit throughout our whole lives. Because He bore that sin, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we

were to receive, and He rose again from death and entered into glory and gave us new life. When we know the fact that the Savior, who bore sin through His baptism, paid that penalty, we cannot see the Cross as the Lord's defeat.

The basis of the remission of sins does not lie in how much we have made ourselves better. It lies in the fact that Jesus accomplished the salvation God had promised, and we believe in Him and in what He accomplished. Since believing the written word is believing God, the Lord's salvation is not shaken just because our feelings have sunk. When we learn from the Scriptures who Jesus is and what He accomplished, our hearts, too, become free from our own judgment and come to stand in the Lord's grace.

Hearts that burned and eyes that were opened through the word

"Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?'" (Luke 24:31–32).

When they drew near to the village, the two constrained Jesus to stay with them. When the Lord went in and, while eating with them, broke bread and gave it to them, their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus, but the Lord vanished from their sight. The two looked back on how their hearts had burned while He opened the Scriptures to them on the road. That burning did not come from a vague excitement but was connected with the Lord's opening of the word to them.

We, too, must look at what gave rise to that feeling in our hearts rather than examining only whether our hearts are burning.

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We can be moved by people's words, and our hearts can be stirred by an atmosphere, but the faith that gives life to sinners comes from hearing through the word and accepting the salvation the Lord accomplished. If we make the size of our joy the basis of the remission of sins, every time our feelings cool we will feel as if we had lost salvation too. On the contrary, if we believe the word, even when our hearts are weak we can rely again on the salvation the Lord accomplished.

Now they had something to tell when they went back

"So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, 'The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!' And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread" (Luke 24:33–35).

The two did not spend the night there and then return slowly; they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. There the eleven apostles and the others were gathered together and were sharing the news that the Lord had risen indeed. The two also told about what had happened on the road and how they had recognized the Lord when He broke bread. Those who had left repeating their sorrow had now become people who had something to tell about the living Lord.

The Lord's word does not stop at giving joy to our hearts but makes us share the same grace with others. Because we are not people who produced salvation ourselves, we cannot boast of ourselves, and because we believe what the Lord has done, we come to preach Him. Like the two who turned back from the

road to Emmaus, let us, too, receive in our hearts the Jesus whom the Scriptures testify of. With the mouths that had only repeated a sad story, let us testify of the Lord, who remitted our sins and rose again, and share joy together with those who believe in Him. The road going down to Emmaus thus became the road going up to Jerusalem. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus, who rose again not as a spirit but in the body

< Luke 24:36–43 >

"Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, 'Peace to you.' But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, 'Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.' When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, 'Have you any food here?' So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence."

The Lord Himself stood in the place where the disciples were sharing the news that Jesus had risen. The Lord spoke of peace, but the disciples were terrified and frightened and thought they were seeing a spirit. Even those who had heard the good news, when they actually saw Jesus before their eyes, could not easily accept that He was alive. The Lord did not leave their fear and doubt as they were; He showed them His hands and feet, and He took food and ate in their presence. The Lord Himself made clear what kind of resurrection Jesus' resurrection was.

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The peace heard in the midst of the frightened disciples

"Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, 'Peace to you.' But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, 'Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?'" (Luke 24:36–38).

While the two who had returned from Emmaus were telling what they had experienced, Jesus stood in the midst of the disciples. Luke records that the Lord Himself was in their midst. It was not that the disciples discussed among themselves and made up Jesus' resurrection; rather, the risen Lord came to them and revealed Himself. The basis of faith lies in what the Lord has actually accomplished rather than in the size of the heart with which people hope.

Because the disciples were afraid and were harboring doubts in their hearts, Jesus, knowing their state, asked them why they were afraid and doubting. That question did not mean that they should cover up their fearful hearts and only pretend outwardly to be glad. The Lord exposed what they were thinking wrongly and showed them His hands and feet so that they would rightly know Him as the living One. He Himself made known the truth the doubting disciples needed.

When we hear the gospel, too, questions may arise in our hearts. There is no need to push the word away because it is hard to understand by our own thinking, or, on the contrary, to make ourselves out as if we had no questions at all. We must confirm in the Scriptures what the Lord said and what He accomplished, and receive His testimony. The way to obtain peace lies not in hiding doubts but in rightly knowing and believing in Jesus, who overcame sin and death.

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He rose again in a body that has flesh and bones

"'Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.' When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet" (Luke 24:39–40).

Jesus told them to look at His hands and feet, and told them to handle Him. He clearly said that a spirit does not have flesh and bones, but that He, whom the disciples were seeing, had them. That the Lord rose again does not mean that only His will or His teaching remained in the memory of the disciples. It means that Jesus, who had died on the Cross, rose again in the body, and the Lord made that very fact known to the disciples.

We live clothed in flesh, and we actually commit sins and meet death. Therefore, the salvation that delivers us from sin and death cannot end as a mere thought that comforts the heart either. Jesus came to this earth in a human body and bore our sins, and in that body He died and rose again. The word telling us to look at the Lord's hands and feet makes known to us that the salvation we rely on is something that was actually accomplished.

Because there was no sin in Jesus' soul, the Lord bore our sins in His own flesh. When He received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, the sin of the whole world was passed on to His body once and for all, and that sin does not stop at the sins of a few of us or the sins of one particular time but includes the sins that all people commit throughout their whole lives. That body, which bore all those sins, was hung on the Cross and, by shedding blood and dying, received the judgment for sin in our place, and that very body rose again from death, and He became our eternal Savior. The hands and feet the disciples saw were the very hands and feet that had been nailed to the Cross because of the sin of the world He had borne through

His baptism, and we who believe in this gospel, instead of paying the punishment for sin by our own efforts, rely on Jesus, who bore that punishment in His body.

Because the Lord rose again in the body, our bodies, which have received the remission of sins, will also live again in the future. The Lord who died for us and the Lord who gives us life are the same Jesus Christ.

The reason He ate fish before the disciples

"But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, 'Have you any food here?' So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence" (Luke 24:41–43).

Even after He had shown them His hands and feet, the disciples still did not believe for joy, and marveled. Luke records this complicated state of heart without hiding it. Even while seeing the Lord right then, they were not fully accepting the amazing fact. Jesus asked such disciples whether they had any food, and He took the piece of broiled fish they gave Him and ate it before them.

The Lord did not explain only with words but did things the disciples could confirm before their eyes. By letting them see His hands and feet and by eating food, He corrected their misunderstanding of thinking of Him as a spirit without flesh and bones. It was not that He confirmed the resurrection for them on the basis of the size of the joy they felt. The disciples' feelings moved between astonishment, fear, and joy, but the fact that the Lord was alive was an unchanging fact.

In our faith, too, the truth does not change according to the highs and lows of our feelings. On days when our hearts are full

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of joy and on days when our hearts sink, the fact that Jesus bore sin through His baptism and died in our place and rose again is the same. When we know and believe that fact through the Scriptures, even in moments when our hearts are weak we come to lean on the Lord again. Joy is the fruit we enjoy by believing the gospel, not evidence that we produce to show that the gospel is true.

Today we cannot offer fish in the same place as the disciples, but we are hearing the word of the Scriptures that conveys what they saw. Reading the record in which the Lord revealed Himself, we can believe that He really rose again. Rather than waiting, saying that we will believe only when some new sensory experience comes, we must treasure the evidence the Lord has already given. When we set our faith on the Jesus whom the Scriptures proclaim, our faith is not trapped in continually checking our own feelings.

The body He had them remember with the bread and the cup

The body that ate fish before the disciples was the very body the Lord had pointed to with the bread and the cup at the Last Supper a few days before. *"And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you'" (Luke 22:19–20).*

The reason the Lord broke the bread and said it was His body is that He had borne the sins of all the people of the world in that body, and the reason He said the cup was His blood is that He bore those sins and shed His blood on the Cross. Therefore,

when the disciples saw the hands and feet of the risen Lord and saw Him eating food, they saw the evidence that the body that had borne our sins and shed blood did not remain in death. Just as the remission of sins is not a comfort in our thoughts, so the resurrection is not something in our thoughts either, and both were actually accomplished in the same body.

Those who believe this fact also treasure the life of today. Rather than using the body and the time the Lord has given only for their own desires, they devote them to conveying the grace of the life they have received to other souls and to serving their brothers, and they preach the living Lord to those walking a hard road together with them. Because the One who bore our sins in His body is alive, we can also bear the labor of the present in Him.

At first the disciples were afraid even when they saw Jesus in their midst, but the Lord showed them His hands and feet and ate food in their presence. The One who establishes our faith is the Savior, who made Himself clearly known in this way. Let us receive His word and entrust ourselves to the Lord, who bore our sins and rose again. I hope that we, too, will enjoy, in the faith that believes in Him who is alive, the peace Jesus gave to the disciples. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Witnesses who will preach the word of the salvation that has been accomplished

< Luke 24:44–49 >

“Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.’”

After showing His living body to His disciples, Jesus explained that event with the word of the Scriptures. He did not stop at the fact that the disciples had seen, but made them know that what had happened to the Lord was the fulfillment of the promise God had written down. And, entrusting them with the work of witnesses who would preach the remission of sins, He

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told them to wait for the power the Father had promised. The Lord, who made them realize what He had accomplished and let them know what they were to preach, also promised the strength to carry out that work.

All that is written in the Scriptures must be fulfilled

"Then He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures" (Luke 24:44–45).

Jesus said, *"All things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me" (Luke 24:44)*. This was what the Lord had already said to His disciples before He suffered. In people's eyes, everything seemed to have collapsed while Jesus was arrested and died, but the Lord explained those events as the fulfillment of the promise. The will of salvation written in the Scriptures was actually fulfilled through Christ.

The Lord opened the hearts of the disciples so that they could understand the Scriptures. Reading the word with one's eyes and realizing within that word who Jesus is are distinct from each other. If we read the Scriptures only as words that back up our own thoughts, we end up holding on to our own efforts or our own righteousness even though there is the salvation the Lord accomplished. But if we read them as the word that points to Jesus, we come to see what God has done for sinners before we look for what man must do.

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We, too, need this realization. If, while saying that we have read the Scriptures for a long time and know many events, we have actually left the remission of sins to our own resolution, we have not rightly accepted the Lord's salvation. We must believe in our hearts that Jesus is the Savior who fulfilled the promise. Then the center of our life of faith also moves from continually checking how well we have done to relying on the grace the Lord accomplished and following His word.

From the suffering and the resurrection to the preaching of the remission of sins

"Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem'" (Luke 24:46–47).

What is written in the Scriptures did not stop at Christ suffering and rising again on the third day. It was also written that repentance that leads to the remission of sins in the Lord's name would be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The work of accomplishing salvation and the work of making that salvation known are in one flow. The disciples were not to remain merely being amazed and rejoicing by themselves; they had to preach what the Lord had done to other sinners.

What are we to repent of, and in whom are we to believe? We must turn from the heart that tried to solve sin with its own righteousness and from the thinking that did not believe the word of God, and believe in Jesus Christ, who accomplished salvation for us. Under the Old Testament sacrificial system, the sinner laid hands on the sacrificial offering to transfer sin, and the priest

performed the prescribed rites of atonement with the blood of the sacrifice. However, by receiving baptism from John, Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world once and for all and received the judgment for those sins on the Cross. Because He bore in this way even the sins we commit throughout our whole lives, He bore that sin and shed His blood and died on the Cross once and for all, receiving the judgment in our place; and He rose again on the third day and gave us the remission of sins and eternal life. The word that all that is written must be fulfilled was all fulfilled through this baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

To preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit is not to ask a person how many tears he has shed, or to demand that he toil until he has paid off all his sins. It is to preach how Jesus had sin passed on to Him, how He bore the punishment for that sin, and what kind of Savior He is as He lives today. A person who repents does not take his own sins lightly, yet he does not look for the basis of the remission of sins in his own sorrow. He believes in the name of the Lord who remitted sins and accepts His grace.

In the word that says all nations, there is no boundary that our hearts have set. People whose language and way of life are different also need the remission of sins, and people who are already accustomed to a religious life must also know the salvation Jesus accomplished. Therefore, we cannot shut the gospel up within ourselves, thinking only of the people familiar to us. The breadth of the gospel that the Lord bore the sin of the world and the breadth of the command to preach that gospel touch each other.

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A witness preaches what the Lord has done

"You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:48).

The Lord called the disciples witnesses of these things. They were not people who would preach a method of salvation they had made themselves. As people who knew the Lord's suffering and resurrection and had realized the meaning of the Scriptures, they were the ones who would make known what Jesus had accomplished. The authority of a witness lies not in putting forward his own excellence but in the fact that what he testifies of is true.

Today we, too, preach to others the salvation we have received through the word. We do not need to make up things we have not seen as if we had been there, nor must we put our own experience ahead of the Scriptures. We must clearly know the salvation of Jesus within the word the apostles testified of and recorded, and preach it with the faith that Jesus has remitted our sins, too. It is not to make the hearer bound to us, but to serve him so that he believes in the Lord who bore his sins.

That is why the purpose for which the Church gathers and shares the word must also be clear. The Church exists so that, when a sinner comes in, it may preach to him how Jesus removed that sin; but if it spends its strength boasting of how much the saints have done or exalting one another's positions, the news of the remission of sins is pushed to the back. Our work is to preach the gospel that the Lord has given life to sinners, and to help those who believe in that salvation follow the Lord's will together. We must not forget the fact that we are witnesses who will make known the salvation the Lord accomplished.

Wait for the power He will give from on high

"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

The Lord, who entrusted them with the great work of preaching to all nations, did not tell the disciples to run out at once in their own strength. He told them to stay in the city until they were endued with power from on high, since He would send what the Father had promised. The Holy Spirit whom Jesus had promised came upon the disciples, and relying on that power, they came to testify of the Lord's work. The start of the work of preaching the gospel does not depend on man's self-confidence.

The Lord gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to those who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore, we must not regard the Holy Spirit as a power we obtain by our own efforts. God gives the Holy Spirit to the heart that hears and believes the truth that Jesus removed our sins, and in that grace we believe the word and serve the gospel. We must not put special sensations or outwardly displayed zeal ahead of the promise of the Holy Spirit.

The command to wait, too, did not mean to give up the Lord's work; it was the word to rely on the power the Lord gives. Let us, too, not think that we can save souls with our own plans and strength alone while carrying out the work entrusted to us. Since the work of preaching the salvation that has been accomplished is also done within the Lord's help, we must pray together and preach the gospel along the way the Lord opens.

The Lord opened the hearts of the disciples so that they could understand the Scriptures, and set them up as witnesses. We, too, are people who have received salvation through that word and have been entrusted with that word. Turning from the heart that

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put forward its own righteousness, let us believe in the remission of sins Jesus accomplished and preach the Lord to the souls who do not yet know that grace. The name that gave us life is still being preached to all nations today, and we are witnesses of that work. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Even after the Lord departed, the joy and the praise continued

< Luke 24:50–53 >

“And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.”

When a beloved person departs from before our eyes, the empty place is felt keenly in the hearts of those who remain. Yet the disciples who saw Jesus off at the end of the Gospel of Luke returned to Jerusalem with great joy and praised God. The Lord had departed, so how could there be joy in them? It was because the Jesus they had seen off was not one held captive by death, but the Savior who had overcome death, risen again, and been carried up into heaven. When we know the salvation the Lord accomplished, the fact that He cannot be seen with our eyes does not mean that we have lost hope.

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He departed while blessing the disciples

"And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:50–51).

Jesus led the disciples out as far as Bethany and lifted up His hands and blessed them. Luke records that while the Lord blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. Since the Lord, who had passed through suffering and death and met His disciples again, departed while blessing them, in that last scene we see the will of the Lord, who loves His own people to the end.

When we think about this blessing, we must first know who it is that is giving the blessing to the disciples. It was not a person speaking kind words and wishing them well, but the Son of God, who had Himself solved the problem of sin and death, who blessed the disciples. The reason we can set our hope on the Lord's word is that He has already accomplished for us the life we need. It is not a promise we hold on to because our hearts are strong, but a promise the faithful Lord gives.

The blessing the Lord pronounced was not a blessing wished for only with words, but the salvation He had already accomplished. Jesus came to this earth and, receiving baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River, bore the sin of the whole world once and for all, and in it are also contained all the sins that you and I commit throughout our whole lives. Because He bore that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death and gave us who believe the remission of sins and new life. And as He went up into heaven, He left to us the word that records all these things and the Holy Spirit He had promised; so

the blessing the Lord gave is the grace of salvation, deeper than a momentary improvement of circumstances.

Therefore, we must not think that all the blessings we received from the Lord have disappeared just because difficulties have arisen in our lives. The Lord's remitting our sins and the eternal life He has given to the children of God are not things that vanish every time the circumstances before our eyes change. Even in the midst of difficulty, we can believe in the living Savior and ask for His help. When we remember the fact that the Lord departed while blessing His own people, the believing heart does not remain in the thought that it has been abandoned.

The Lord, who was carried up into heaven, is alive even now

"Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:26).

Just as the Lord Himself said on the road to Emmaus, the Christ who suffered has now entered into His glory. The ascension recorded in the Gospel of Luke does not mean that the Lord's existence vanished or that He remained only in the hearts of the disciples. The Lord rose again in the body and was carried up into heaven, and He is alive even now as King. Just as the death on the Cross was not the end of the Lord, so His departing from before our eyes is not the end of His grace toward us.

We are easily captivated by what is visible. We may feel that a person who displays power before our eyes is someone to rely on, while regarding the promise of the living Lord that the Scriptures testify of as a faraway story. But His faithfulness does not become smaller for the reason that we cannot see with our

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eyes the place where the Lord is. Rather, because the One who overcame death and entered into glory is our Savior, we set our hope on the Lord's power rather than on our own strength.

Those who believe in the ascended Lord also wait for the Lord to come again. That waiting is not a matter of setting some date and getting our hearts excited; it is believing that the One who saved us will fulfill to the end the life He promised. The Lord is not one who delivers us only from the punishment of sin and leaves us alone in the face of death. When we look to the Lord, who will give us the life of rising again, our present life, too, comes to be lived within the hope of meeting Him.

Returning to Jerusalem with great joy

"And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24:52).

The disciples worshiped Jesus and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. Jesus, who received their worship, is not merely a respected teacher but their Savior and God. The disciples did not face that moment only with the sense of loss that they had sent the Lord far away. Because they believed in what the Lord had accomplished and in Him who is alive, they returned rejoicing.

The Jerusalem they returned to was the very city where the Lord had earlier told them to stay. *"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49)*. The joy of the disciples did not end as an emotion that departed from that word and scattered each in a different direction; it went together with their steps of returning to the place the Lord had appointed.

The joy of believing in the Lord and a life of obeying the word were not separated from each other.

We, too, because we believe in the Lord, who gave us the remission of sins, as the Master of our lives, must not make the statement that we have received grace a ground for living as we please, but must treasure His word. Yet it is also wrong to think of obedience as paying the price of salvation. The reason the disciples could return with joy was not that they had first completed salvation, but that Jesus had already overcome death and risen again.

This joy does not mean a guarantee that the work entrusted to us will always be easy. While we serve the gospel, we may feel weakness and the waiting may grow long, but the basis for believing in the living Lord remains as it is. We are not people who decide in our hearts to follow the Lord only when circumstances are good. Because the life the Lord has given us is certain, we go forward step by step according to the word even in the place where we are today.

The waiting that continued in praise

"Were continually in the temple praising and blessing God" (Luke 24:53).

The Gospel of Luke ends with the word that the disciples *"were continually in the temple praising and blessing God" (Luke 24:53)*. Even while they could not see the Lord, they did not lose the praise they offered to God. For the reason for praise lay not only in the visible form of the Lord but in the salvation He had accomplished. Now the life entrusted to them was a life of believing in the living Lord and waiting while rejoicing together in that grace.

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Our praise, too, must not become a repayment offered only after we have obtained good circumstances. The basis of our thanksgiving is the fact that God has already sent His Son and had Him bear our sins, and raised Him from death and given us eternal hope. When your heart grows weary, think of this grace again and share the word with those who believe together with you. When we remember the Lord's salvation, praise becomes not a sound that dresses up our own mood, but words that confess the grace we have received.

What remained to the disciples after Jesus departed was not only an empty place. The Lord's blessing and the accomplished salvation, the promised power and the joy toward Him remained. Let us, too, believe in Jesus Christ, who entered into glory and is alive, and return to the place entrusted to us. Looking forward to seeing again the Lord who gave us life, I hope that you will show that faith through the thanksgiving and praise you offer together today. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Let us live today looking to the life of rising again

< Luke 24:36–43 >

“Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you.’ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.’ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, ‘Have you any food here?’ So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence.”

There are times when, even while confessing that we have received the remission of sins from the Lord, we cannot easily answer the question of what we hope for as we live from now on. We hope to finish safely the work entrusted to us today and for the difficulties of life to get a little better, but it is easy to forget the fact that beyond that there is the life the Lord has given. The event in which Jesus rose again in the body and showed His

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hands and feet to the disciples tells us that there is a life of rising again for us, too. When we keep this hope in our hearts, the eyes with which we look at today's life also change.

See our future in the body the Lord showed

"Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Luke 24:39).

Jesus clearly showed His own body to the disciples. When the disciples supposed Him to be a spirit, the Lord said that He had flesh and bones, and He also ate broiled fish before them. The resurrection was not a matter of discarding the body and remaining as some thought or memory. It was the Lord, who had died, living again in the body, and this fact also tells us who believe in the Lord what we are waiting for.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, our bodies are still weak. Since we grow tired when we work long, grow old, and also suffer illness, the fact that we have received the grace of salvation and the reality of the body may feel far apart from each other. But the Lord's salvation is not lacking for the reason that the body is weak now. For the Lord has not only given us the remission of sins but will also raise our bodies again in the future so that we may enjoy eternal life.

When we know this promise, we do not feel ashamed of our weak bodies or regard them as evidence that we have no faith. Now is still the time when the body wastes away and we undergo death, but that reality cannot determine the final form the Lord will give. Through the living body of Jesus that He showed to the disciples, we look to the power of the Lord, who will raise

us again. Before us there is a life we will share with the Lord even after our life on this earth has ended.

Therefore, in the confession that we believe in the resurrection, there must be expectation. We must not stop at acknowledging the event that happened to Jesus in the past, but must hope that He will give new life to His own people as well. How strong a body we maintain is not the basis of that promise. The fact that we are people who belong to Jesus, who rose again from death, is the basis for waiting for the life of rising again.

The One who died in our place rose again first

"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

The Scriptures say, *"Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20)*. It does not mean that only the Lord overcame death and the rest of the people have nothing to do with it. The Lord's rising again is connected to the hope that we who belong to Him will also live again. We who believe in the salvation Jesus accomplished are not people who watch His victory from afar, but people who will receive that life.

In order to know why the resurrection of Jesus has to do with us, we must also know why the Lord died. In order to give us new life, and first of all to remove our sins, the Lord received baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River and bore all the sin of mankind once and for all. Because the sins of you and me throughout our whole lives were passed on to Him at that time, the Lord bore that sin and shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive.

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And by rising again from death, He revealed that the Savior who gave the remission of sins is the very Lord of the resurrection and the Lord of life.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit that we rely on connects the Lord's work and our sins clearly in this way. My sins are not left out of the sins Jesus bore, and the death He received is not a death unrelated to my punishment. Therefore, I who believe in that Lord have been delivered from the judgment of sin and have obtained the life the Lord gives. Receiving the remission of sins is also a great blessing, but for this body to live again and live forever is a blessing greater than that, and that life, too, is not something one buys by piling up one's own merits, but grace received in the Savior who gave us life.

When we look back on our own lives, we may see shameful things and faults that cannot be undone. Because of those memories, there is no need to regard even the new life the Lord has given as having nothing to do with us. Believe the gospel that the Lord bore all sins, and stand in the grace of the remission of sins. The One who will raise us again is not one who waited for the excellence of our past, but the One who gave His own body for us who were under sin.

The corruptible body puts on incorruption

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:42–44).

Hoping for the life of rising again does not mean hoping that our present weakness will continue endlessly. The Scriptures say, *"The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:42)*, and *"It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power" (1 Corinthians 15:43)*. To put on a spiritual body does not mean that the body disappears altogether; it means that in the Lord who overcame death our bodies, too, will enjoy a life that will not decay.

This promise gives real hope to us who stand in the face of bodily pain and death. We cannot say that the Savior has forgotten us just because He has not removed our present weakness right away. For what the Lord will give is not merely a brief recovery that will wane and disappear again, but a life not bound by death. A person who knows that he will live again does not bow his knees in the face of the first death, and even when that moment comes, he does not become servile, because the life that follows is clearly guaranteed. Even while we ask for help in the midst of the difficulties of the body, we can also hold on, at the same time, to the promise that is greater than that.

We must also make this hope known to those near us who are suffering. Rather than evaluating their pain lightly or pressing them to overcome it right away by faith, we must care for them and remember together the promise of life the Lord has given. Even a person who believes in the Lord's resurrection may shed tears and feel fear. The way to serve a brother is not to make him hide those feelings, but to help him rely in his heart, together with us, on the Savior who overcame even death.

Hoping for the life of the resurrection does not mean regarding the life now given to us as of little worth. Our bodies, too, are precious because they are bodies the Lord will raise, and the time that remains is a precious opportunity to share grace. While waiting for the day we will meet the Lord, we must not

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turn away from the people we must care for today and the responsibilities entrusted to us. Faith that looks to eternal life does not discard the present but makes us use our present life rightly before the Lord.

The glory we will enjoy in the future sustains today's labor

"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

The Scriptures say that the sufferings of this present time, though not light, cannot be compared with the glory that will be revealed in the future. This word is not a demand to pretend that it is not hard. It is a promise that tells us the fact that the difficulties we are now going through are not the whole of our life. When we keep in our hearts the life the Lord will raise up again, we no longer judge the worth of our lives by the size of our suffering alone.

We who believe in the Lord, who rose again in the resurrection, labor as we preach the gospel and serve other souls. Even when the fruit we expected is not seen soon or we feel our own strength diminishing, if we remember the eternal life the Lord has given, we can keep from remaining only in discouragement. That life is not a reward we obtain by working longer, but grace that the Savior we already believe in will give. So, rather than boasting of the results of our labor, we come to rely on the Lord and carry out the work entrusted to us today.

At the beginning we asked what we hope for as we live. We who have received the remission of sins from the Lord are not people who look only to small peace in life, but people who will

live again together with Jesus, who overcame death. Keeping that life in our hearts, let us treasure the days that remain and serve the gospel. The Lord, who showed His hands and feet and made clear that He is alive, will raise us again, too, and that glory is waiting for us beyond today's weakness. ✉

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◇ About the Next Series

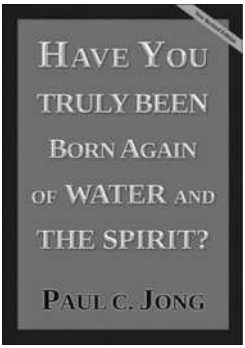
The ***'Biblical Exposition & Sermon Series from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit'*** will continue to be published following this book.

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.**

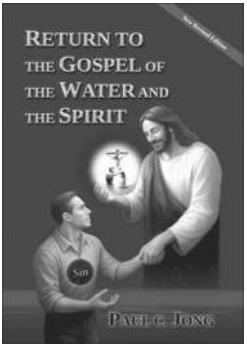
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

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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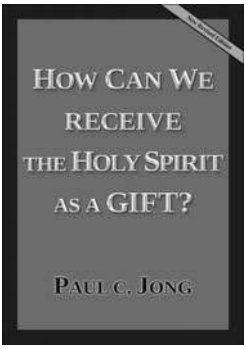
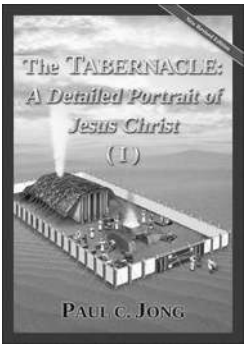
HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]



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]

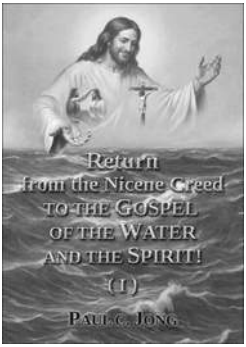


How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

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.

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.

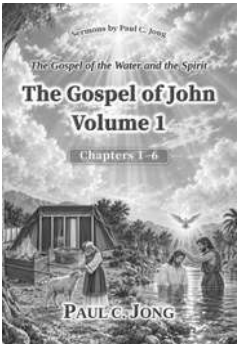
The baptism Jesus received from John was to fulfill the law of the sacrificial system found in Leviticus. That is, just as sin was transferred to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, the substance of that sacrificial law was fulfilled through Jesus's baptism.

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.

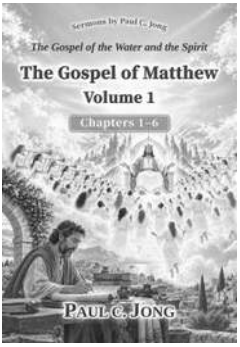
The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of John (3-Volume Series)



"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

John chapters 1–6 reveal who Jesus is. He is the Savior—the God who created all things, who Himself came in the flesh, received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, bore the sin of the world, received its judgment on the Cross, and rose from the dead, thereby saving us perfectly once and for all. The testimony of John the Baptist, the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus' words to Nicodemus about being born again, the Samaritan woman, the sick man at Bethesda, and the bread of life all point to the same One, and the Word is unfolded in light of the salvation accomplished by Christ Jesus. Those who believe in the work of salvation accomplished by Jesus, who is God, are born again of water and the Spirit and receive eternal life.

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Matthew (4-Volume Series)



The very first thing Jesus did as He began His public ministry was to receive baptism from John at the Jordan River. Through that baptism He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and after He was judged through the blood of the Cross, He rose again and fulfilled all righteousness. This book proclaims, in order, the baptism of Jesus, by which He fulfilled all righteousness; the promised salvation and the assurance of the remission of sins; Jesus, who called His disciples and gave the Sermon on the Mount; and a life lived by believing in the righteousness of God. Through the sermons of Pastor Paul C. Jong, which expound the genealogy and the birth, the worship of the wise men from the East, the temptation in the wilderness, the calling of the disciples, the Beatitudes, and the Lord's Prayer, it proclaims the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is the basis of the remission of sins, and the way of living by believing in that righteousness and praying to the Father.

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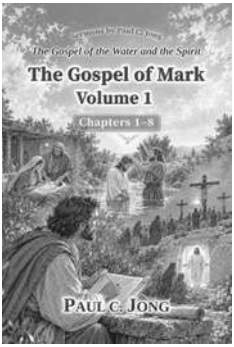
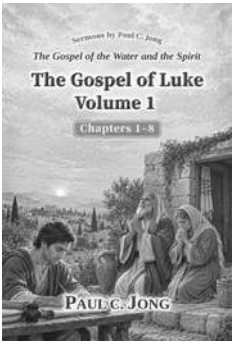
The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Mark (2-Volume Series)



Mark chapters 1–8 lead us to the confession, "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29). Christ means 'the Anointed One.' Jesus is the King who rules over us, the High Priest who remits sins, and the Prophet who preaches the truth of salvation. Jesus, the High Priest, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. I hope that, through the word of the Gospel of Mark, you will accept Jesus Christ, the Savior who is the King of kings, into your hearts.

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Luke (3-Volume Series)

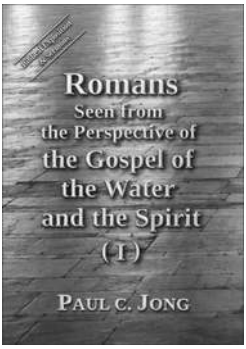


Where does the assurance that we have received the remission of sins come from? This book, which follows Luke chapters 1–8, looks at the birth of the Savior and the beginning of His work, and finds the answer in the written word. Jesus, who called sinners, is the One who came to take those sins upon Himself. Because all the sins of the world were passed on once and for all to the body that received baptism from John, Jesus received the judgment for our sins on the Cross by shedding His blood, overcame death, rose again, and accomplished salvation. When we know and believe this work He did for us, the assurance that wavered according to the state of our hearts becomes grounded in the word.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

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,

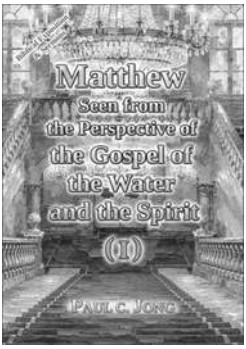
A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of 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)



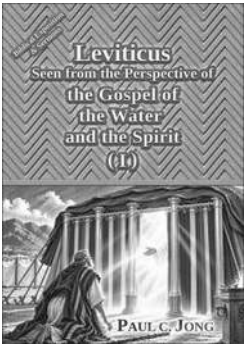
Why does sin still remain in your heart, even after believing in Jesus, reading the Bible for years, and attending church faithfully? Through Matthew chapters 1–4, this book answers clearly from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

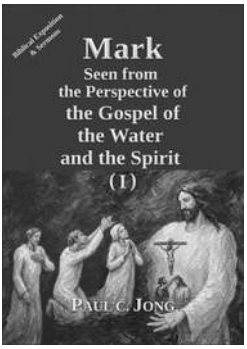


Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) examines how the Old Testament law of sacrifice prefigures the salvation of Jesus Christ, looking at the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering, as well as the consecration ceremony of the priests, Aaron's first sacrifice, and the incident of Nadab and Abihu.

The author, Pastor Paul C. Jong, has long preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and in this book, he also explains the eternal atonement Jesus completed with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, connecting it to the sacrifices of Leviticus.

How can a sinner be made sinless? This book gives a clear answer to that question through the Bible.

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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John Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

John seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) is a book that examines, through the entire Gospel of John, how the Word, who is God, came to this earth clothed in flesh and saved sinners from sin.

The author, pastor Paul C. Jong, has long preached, through the word of the Bible, "the gospel of the water and the Spirit" that Jesus Christ completed with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection. This book does not explain the signs and words of the Gospel of John as mere knowledge of the Bible or records of miracles, but guides readers to the faith by which they are saved from sin and obtain everlasting life by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

May everyone who opens this book meet Jesus Christ, of whom the Bible testifies, and obtain true life.

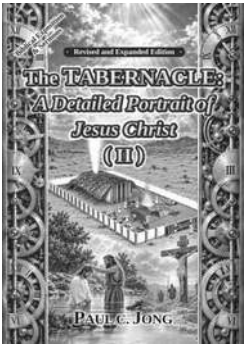
Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)

"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.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

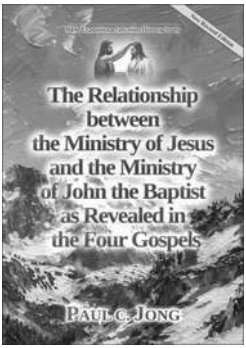
The TABERNACLE: A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (3-Volume Series)



God had the tabernacle set up in the wilderness in order to dwell among the people He had delivered out of Egypt.

Through the Biblical Exposition of Exodus chapters 25–31 and the sermons on the tabernacle, this book conveys the heart of God, who wants to make His sinful people holy and keep them near. The promise of salvation contained in the tabernacle was fulfilled when Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of that sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again. Looking into the utensils and sacrifices of the tabernacle and the office of the high priest, we come to know the meaning of the remission of sins received by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and of the eternal atonement. Through the tabernacle, we seek to know God's love for us and to share the joy of living together as His people.

The Relationship between the Ministry of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptist as Revealed in the Four Gospels [New Revised Edition]



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.

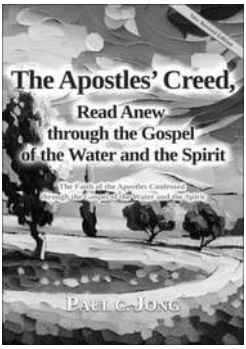
This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through 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]

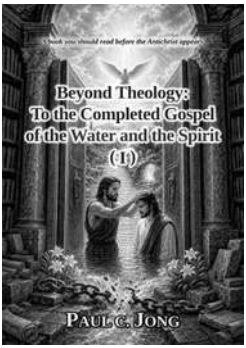


As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission 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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Our The New Life Mission is distributing Pastor Paul C. Jong's spiritual books in 'printed book' form through coworkers who have been born again by water and the Spirit.

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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 had long been suffering because the problem of his sin remained unresolved. In the midst of this suffering, he came to believe that Jesus, by being baptized by John the Baptist, had the sin of the world passed on to Him once for all, received its judgment in our place through His blood on the Cross, and rose from the dead.

For about 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, and publishing sermon collections and Biblical Exposition Series that expound the Bible chapter by chapter, based solely on the Word of God.

His works continue to be published and have been translated into more than 110 languages, reaching readers in over 160 countries. E-books and audiobooks are available free of charge at www.bjnewlife.org, while paperback editions can be purchased on Amazon.

You can download Rev. Paul C. Jong's Christian Books to Computer, Tablet or Smartphone.

Who opened the way for sinners to approach God?

"The veil of the temple was torn in two" (Luke 23:45)

The veil that was torn when Jesus was crucified shows that the way to approach God, which had been blocked by sin, was opened. It is not that we sinners became righteous by ourselves and so became qualified to approach God. So that God could receive us, Jesus Himself removed our sins.

The sin of the world that was passed on to Jesus once and for all through the baptism He received from John contains all the sins we will commit in our whole lifetime. Because Jesus, who received the punishment for that sin in our place, shed His blood and died on the Cross, the price of sin has already been paid, and the Savior, who rose again from death, has given life to us who believe. Therefore, the remission of our sins is not something that needs anything more added to it in the future to be complete. Believe this grace that the torn veil shows, and come boldly to God by the way that Jesus has opened.

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