

Biblical Exposition
& Sermons

Luke

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

(I)

PAUL C. JONG



**“For there is born to you
this day in the city of David
a Savior,
who is Christ the Lord.”
(Luke 2:11)**

Through *“Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)”*, you will come to know and believe in the work of salvation that Jesus Christ, who came as the Savior of sinners, personally accomplished, and thereby attain complete salvation.

Jesus, the King of kings, came to this earth in the flesh to save sinners. When John the Baptist, the last high priest who came to prepare the way of the Lord, baptized Jesus, all the sins of mankind were passed onto Jesus. Bearing all those sins, Jesus was judged and died on the Cross, and then rose from the dead, thereby delivering sinners from all their sins.

To know and believe in this salvation, which God promised and actually accomplished through Jesus Christ—this is the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Gospel of Luke.

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

**Biblical Exposition
& Sermons**



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*This is a book that everyone must seek out
and read now,
before the Antichrist appears,
as this world is heading toward destruction.
You must believe now.*

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Luke

Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)

PAUL C. JONG



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**A Ministry of THE NEW LIFE MISSION
SEOUL, KOREA**

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

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First Edition: 2026

Published: September 2026

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Scripture quotations used in this book are from the ‘*New King James Version (NKJV)*’, ‘*American Standard Version (ASV)*’.

ISBN 978-89-282-6305-9

Illustration: Young-ae Kim

Reviewed: Elizabeth

Translator: Elizabeth

Printed in South Korea

Cover art generated with AI and retouched

Hephzibah Publishing House

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Seoul, Korea

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

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

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

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

PAUL C. JONG



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Preface

To open the Gospel of Luke is not merely to read an old religious document. It is to hear what God has done in history to save sinners, and to receive and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ completed as the word of salvation for me. Luke, as a disciple of Jesus, carefully examined from the very beginning the testimony handed down by the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, and then the ministers of the word had handed down, and then recorded in order what Jesus Christ did and taught. The Gospel of Luke is not a book that rests the ground of salvation on religious feelings or human effort; it is the word that calls us to know and believe the salvation God actually accomplished.

Volume 1 of the Gospel of Luke covers Luke chapter 1 through chapter 6. Beginning with the promise of God given to Zacharias, it examines the Savior laid in a manger and the ministry of John the Baptist, who prepared the way of the Lord. It then handles the ministry of Jesus, who preached the gospel of the kingdom of God and called sinners, and the life of faith that hears His word and puts it into practice. All these words testify of Jesus Christ, who came to save us.

The salvation begun with the promise of God

This salvation did not begin from man's resolve or effort; it began with the promise and the word of God. Elizabeth was too old to bear a child, but she conceived John according to the promise of God. Mary did not know how she, a virgin, could

bear a child, but she believed that God would accomplish what He had spoken. These events show the fact that salvation is not achieved by man's ability or merit. God remembered His own covenant and fulfilled it Himself. Faith is not firmly believing in one's own ability or possibility. It is believing the fact that though I cannot, God surely accomplishes what He has spoken.

Luke chapter 1 conveys together the birth of John the Baptist and the announcement of the birth of Jesus, and yet clearly distinguishes the position and mission of the two. John is a man sent to prepare the people and to testify of Christ. Jesus is the Son of God, who is God come to this earth clothed in flesh, and the Lord, who saves sinners. Therefore all of John's ministry points not to himself but to Jesus. In chapter 2, just as God promised, Jesus is born in Bethlehem and laid in a manger. The shepherds hear the news the angel delivered and go to find the baby Jesus, and Simeon and Anna recognize that He is the Savior sent by God. The Son of God came to this earth in a low and poor form and came to find us, who were under sin and death.

The salvation completed by the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and the resurrection

In Luke chapter 3, John the Baptist cries out to return to God without relying on lineage or religious pride, and then baptizes Jesus. John is not the Savior; he is the man sent to testify of Jesus and, as the representative of mankind, to baptize Him. This book examines the sacrificial system of the Old Testament and the testimony of the Gospels together, and delivers the gospel of the water and the Spirit: that when Jesus received baptism from John, He took charge of the sin of mankind, paid the price of that sin on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising again. Therefore

what we must rely on is not our own goodness or merit but the salvation Jesus accomplished perfectly.

In Luke chapter 4, Jesus overcomes the temptation in the wilderness with the word, and makes plain His own mission of preaching the gospel to the poor and setting at liberty the captives and the oppressed. The demons depart before the authority of Jesus, and the sick are healed. The gospel is not a means for gaining only the riches and success of the world and the comfort of the flesh. It is the power that saves the soul that was under the rule of sin and Satan and makes it one of God's people. Therefore we must not seek Jesus to gain what we want in the world, but believe in Jesus, who came to save us from sin, and live within the salvation He has given.

Luke chapter 5 shows how the gospel is delivered to those who had failed, were sick, and were despised by people. Peter caught no fish all night, but obeying the word of Jesus he catches a great number of fish. Through this he realizes the power of Jesus, falls down before Him, and confesses that he is a sinner. But Jesus does not cast such a Peter away; He calls him as a disciple who will catch men. The leper is made clean, the paralyzed man experiences the authority of Jesus to remit sins, and Levi the tax collector leaves the tax office following the call of the Lord. Before the Lord there is no reason to hide or excuse the fact that one is a sinner. It is because Jesus did not come to praise the person who thinks himself righteous, but came to call the person who admits he is a sinner, to save him and give him new life. When we do not rely on our own good deeds but admit that we are sinners, we can believe the gospel of salvation Jesus accomplished.

In Luke chapter 6, Jesus heals the sick and restores life, and tells us to love our enemies and to display the mercy of God the Father. He also teaches that the person who hears His word and

does it is like a man who built his house on the rock. This word does not mean that we should obtain salvation by man's good deeds or merit. We must first believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus Christ saved sinners with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The person who believes that gospel and has received the remission of sins does not boast of his own good deeds or seek only the riches and comfort of the world. He hopes for the eternal kingdom of God, obeys the word, and lives to deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit to those who do not yet know this salvation. This is the fruit of faith that appears in the saved person.

A life that believes and preaches the completed salvation

To help the reader understand the word rightly, believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and deliver that gospel to others, this book has organized each chapter into 'Biblical Exposition,' 'Questions and Answers,' and sermons. The Biblical Exposition examines the flow of the text and the gospel of the water and the Spirit revealed in it. The Questions and Answers sort out the background of the text and its theological issues, untangling the parts that are hard to understand. The sermons show how this word has been proclaimed in the faith of the saints, in the life of the church, and on the field of gospel preaching. The purpose of this whole course does not stop at piling up Bible knowledge. It is to help the reader know clearly who Jesus Christ is and how He completed salvation, look back on his own faith through the faith and failures of the characters, and believe that salvation as his own salvation, so as to enjoy the joy of the remission of sins.

I hope that everyone who reads this book will trust God, who surely fulfills His promises, and believe in his heart the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished by receiving baptism from John to take charge of our sin, dying on the Cross, and rising again. I hope that you will no longer look only at your own guilt and shortcomings and condemn yourself, but enjoy the joy of calling God Father within the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

I also hope that you will serve the gospel within the church God has established, and boldly preach the gospel to those who do not yet know this salvation. I pray that while you read this book, the Holy Spirit will lead you to understand the word rightly, to be assured of the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished, and to live obeying the word without doubting your salvation even in hardship. ☒

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General Introduction

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General Introduction

Who wrote the Gospel of Luke?

The author of the Gospel of Luke is Luke, who was a Gentile physician. Within the text of this Gospel there appears no passage where the author directly reveals his own name. Yet from the early Church down to today, the Church has consistently confessed the author of this book to be Luke, and that confession is by no means a groundless conjecture. The internal evidence the text itself contains, the inseparable continuity with the Acts of the Apostles, and the united testimony of the early Church fathers interlock with one another and plainly reveal that this Gospel came from the hand of Luke. Confirming the author is not a matter of mere academic curiosity. It is precious because it is the starting point for understanding with what eyes and what heart this Gospel testifies of Jesus Christ.

The author the text itself testifies of

The preface of the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:1–4) begins with the most refined and formal Greek sentence in the New Testament. The author makes plain that he was not a person who witnessed the events of Jesus from the beginning, but a person who diligently investigated and set in order what the eyewitnesses and the ministers of the word had delivered. The confession, *“Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us”*

(*Luke 1:1–2*), shows that the author places himself not as an apostle but as a faithful investigator of the following generation.

This self-introduction pairs exactly with the opening of the Acts of the Apostles. Acts 1:1 says, “*The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach*”, and clearly points to the book written before, namely the Gospel of Luke, as his own work. Two books dedicated to the same recipient Theophilus are connected in the form of one preface, so the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are, as it were, a two-volume history planned by one author.

In style, vocabulary, and theological concern, the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are amazingly joined as one. Both books enjoy using medical and precise expressions, emphasize prayer and the Holy Spirit, and share a concern toward the poor and the Gentiles. Such agreement cannot be explained as coincidence, and it confirms that one author recorded the two volumes under one great design. Therefore, when the fact that the author of Acts is Luke is acknowledged, the author of the Gospel of Luke is also naturally settled as Luke.

Luke, a Gentile physician

In Colossians 4:14 the Apostle Paul writes, “*Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you*”, letting us know that Luke was a physician. This short mention matches amazingly well with the features that run through the whole Gospel of Luke. The careful attention to the sick and the weak, the precise description that handles the diseases of the body, and the warm gaze that examines the state of a person’s body and heart are fully sufficient to be seen as coming from the hand of a physician.

Above all, Luke is known as the only Gentile among the authors of the New Testament. In Colossians chapter 4, Paul, mentioning the coworkers who were with him, separately

distinguishes those who are of the circumcision (Colossians 4:10–11), and Luke is not included in that list of the circumcision. This arrangement strongly suggests that Luke was not a Jew but of Gentile origin. The very fact that God established one Gentile and had him record the gospel of salvation for all mankind is, as it were, an advance announcement of the spirit of the salvation of all peoples that this Gospel contains.

His background as a Gentile determined the way the Gospel is narrated. For readers unfamiliar with Jewish customs, Luke explains Hebrew and Aramaic expressions in Greek, marks the time an event took place by the reigns of the Roman emperor and governors (Luke 3:1), and arranges the life of Jesus Christ in a way the readers of the Greek world could understand. This was the writer's heart, seeking to reveal that the gospel is not the possession of any one people but the gift of God for all people in the whole world.

The fact that Luke was a physician is quietly confirmed in the accounts of healing he recorded. He expresses the degree of a fever concretely as "*a high fever*" (Luke 4:38), describes the states of various diseases in detail, and narrates the process of recovery accurately. Such precision of observation comes from the eyes of a physician who has long watched the human body and its pain. God had a person with just such a background testify of Jesus Christ, the true Physician who came to heal mankind sick with sin.

A faithful coworker of Paul

Luke was a faithful coworker who accompanied the Apostle Paul on his missionary journeys. In the Acts of the Apostles there appear the so-called "we" passages (Acts 16:10–17, 20:5–21:18, 27:1–28:16), where the author narrates himself not as a

third-person observer but as a first-person companion. The expression “*immediately we sought to go to Macedonia*” (Acts 16:10) shows that the author was actually present at the scene of that ministry, crossing the sea by ship together with Paul.

Even at the moment Paul was writing his last letter, imprisoned, Luke kept his side. Paul’s confession, “*Only Luke is with me*” (2 Timothy 4:11), testifies to the faithfulness of Luke, who remained to the end in the lonely prison from which others had departed. Through this long companionship Luke learned deeply from Paul the gospel of justification by faith and the truth of the salvation of all peoples, and that learning seeped into every part of this Gospel to reveal the grace of God toward lost sinners.

The essence of the gospel Luke learned from Paul was justification by faith, that is, the truth that a person is justified not by the works of the law but only by faith. This truth is beautifully embodied throughout the Gospel of Luke in the stories of tax collectors and sinners being saved only by the grace of Jesus. In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9–14), Jesus’ word that the tax collector who humbled himself and sought the mercy of God was justified is exactly in line with the gospel of grace Paul preached.

The united testimony of the early Church

Not only the internal evidence of the text but also the external testimony of the early Church confirms Luke as the author. The Muratorian Canon, compiled in the latter half of the second century A.D., specifies this Gospel as the work of Luke the physician. Irenaeus introduced Luke as the companion of Paul and the one who left in a book the gospel Paul preached, and Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and various other Church fathers continued the same testimony. The fact that churches

belonging to different regions and generations testified with one voice like this tells us that this tradition came from a sure root close to the apostolic age.

The benefit that confirming the author gives us is clear. We come to know that this Gospel was recorded not by the hand of one of the twelve disciples who followed Jesus in person, but through the pen of a Gentile physician who faithfully investigated and set in order their testimony. God prepared this very person in order to reveal the fleshly humanity, of Jesus and the universality of salvation toward all mankind. Therefore, knowing Luke as the author becomes the first step of opening our hearts toward the gospel of the Son of Man Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save the lost.

The fact that the early Church had no dissent in receiving this Gospel as canon is also important. Even in an age when various heretics were mutilating or picking and choosing from the Scriptures, the orthodox Church firmly acknowledged the Gospel of Luke as a true Gospel with apostolic authority. This shows that this Gospel is connected with the apostolic tradition through Paul, and that the Church was convinced from the beginning that its testimony was trustworthy.

Explain the person Luke,

To read the Gospel of Luke rightly, it is helpful to consider what kind of person the one who recorded this book was. The Bible does not devote many pages to Luke, but through a few short mentions and the two massive works he left, we can amply picture his character, his faith, and his mission. Luke was a man who combined learning and faithfulness, a man who, though a Gentile, loved the gospel of Christ with all his heart, and a man

who had a warm gaze toward the lowly and the sick.

A physician who cares for the weak

Luke's occupation was a physician (Colossians 4:14). In the ancient world the physician was the person who faced the human body and its pain most closely. That the Gospel of Luke describes the scenes of healing more attentively than the other Gospels and handles the weakness and recovery of the body in detail is not unrelated to this background of his. He was a man who had together the eye that observes a person's pain and the heart that sympathizes with that pain.

His gaze, trained as a physician, seeped also into the way he beheld Jesus Christ. Luke portrays Jesus as the true Physician, who heals the sick and sets at liberty those who are oppressed. It is no coincidence that the figure of the true Healer who came toward mankind sick with sin, that is, the Savior who came to take charge of sin, the fundamental disease of the soul, is revealed vividly at the tip of Luke's pen.

Luke, who as a physician handled human life and health, was above all a man who knew deeply the dignity and worth of a person. That he recorded so minutely the love of Jesus toward women and children and the sick and the marginalized is not unrelated to this character of his. The heart that counts one person's life precious was the very thing that communed deeply with the heart of God, who seeks one lost person.

The fact that Luke was a physician opened his eyes to behold Jesus as the true Physician. He who had handled the diseases of the flesh realized more deeply than anyone that Jesus came to heal sin, the deepest disease of man. The grace of Jesus Christ, the true Healer toward mankind sick with sin, is testified vividly through his pen.

A learned historian

Luke was a man equipped with outstanding culture and learning. His Greek is evaluated as the most polished and literarily accomplished within the New Testament. In particular, the preface of the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:1–4), follows exactly the refined manner of historical writing of the Greek world of the day, showing that the author was an intellectual who had received a considerable level of education.

He was not merely a man who handled sentences well; he had the attitude of a historian who investigates facts accurately and sets them in order. The confession, “*it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus*” (Luke 1:3), tells us that he was a man who faithfully collected and verified the testimonies of the eyewitnesses and recorded them in order. This attitude of his, seeking to record accurately, becomes a firm foundation that establishes the historical certainty of the gospel.

The accuracy Luke had as a historian is confirmed today in many respects. The Roman official titles he mentioned, the geography of the regions, the routes of the voyages, and the customs of the day have been shown to agree with fact down to fine details. Such accuracy firmly establishes trust in his testimony as a whole. If he was a man faithful even in minor historical facts, his testimony concerning the core events of the gospel is all the more worthy of belief.

This diligence Luke had as a historian becomes a firm ground for our faith today. He did not pass on rumors; he verified the testimonies of eyewitnesses and recorded them, and he set the events in order and left them as a trustworthy history. Our faith is built upon such sure testimony.

A companion in missions together with Paul

Luke was a longtime coworker of the Apostle Paul. The “we” passages of Acts show that he was with Paul on his second and third missionary journeys and on the perilous voyage toward Rome (Acts chapter 16 and following). Since joining Paul’s company at Troas, Luke passed together through many scenes of danger and hardship and witnessed in person the process of the gospel spreading into the Gentile world.

He was a man who kept Paul’s side all the more in hard times, not only in comfortable ones. That Paul, imprisoned before his martyrdom, wrote “*Only Luke is with me*” (2 Timothy 4:11), testifies to Luke’s unchanging loyalty. Such faithfulness shows that he ministered not to win the recognition of men but with a heart that loved the Lord and the gospel.

An evangelist with a warm heart

Luke was a man accurate in the truth and yet warm in heart. In his Gospel, the figure of Jesus who weeps with those who weep, embraces the cast-out, and counts the tears of a sinner precious is drawn especially often. This lets us surmise that the author’s own warm nature is steeped in the narration.

That he carefully contained the stories of women, the stories of Gentiles, and the stories of the poor was from a heart wanting to convey that the grace of the gospel reaches all people. Luke bore the heart of an evangelist, desiring to deliver the grace he himself had received as a Gentile to all who were in the same situation.

A humble servant of Gentile origin

Luke was the only Gentile among the authors of the New Testament. Though he was not of Jewish blood, he believed in and served with all his heart the God of Abraham and His Son

Jesus Christ. This fact testifies with his very life to the truth that the gospel is never shut inside the fence of one people. That he, a Gentile, was called to record the gospel of salvation for all peoples reveals how wide and great the grace of God is.

Above all, Luke was a humble servant who never put himself forward. He honestly admitted that he was not an eyewitness, did not claim the authority of an apostle, and did not even reveal his own name in the text. The heart of this servant, who lowered himself so that Jesus Christ alone would be exalted, was devoted wholly to testifying of the Son of Man Jesus, who came to seek and to save the lost. His life itself quietly reflects the spirit of the gospel he recorded, namely the grace of the Savior, who saved sinners by lowering Himself.

Luke's Gentile background and humility suit exquisitely the two great themes of this Gospel: the universality of the salvation of all peoples and grace toward the lowly. At the tip of the pen of this servant, who lowered himself and exalted only Christ, the paradox of the gospel, that whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted, was drawn most beautifully.

The fact that God established one Gentile and had him record the gospel for all peoples testifies, in itself, to the spirit of the gospel. Luke's life and writings are a living proof of the truth that the grace of God breaks down the wall between Jew and Gentile and reaches all mankind.

When was the Gospel of Luke written?

It is not easy to state definitively in exactly which year the Gospel of Luke was written, but when the various circumstances are put together, it can be seen as having been written generally

in the A.D. 60s. In particular, the fact that the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are a two-volume work by one author provides a decisive clue for estimating the date of writing. If we examine the situation at the point where Acts ends, we can narrow down to some extent when these two books were written.

The clue the ending of Acts gives

The Acts of the Apostles closes with the scene of Paul staying in a rented house in Rome and preaching the gospel (Acts 28:30–31). Yet this book makes no mention at all of such weighty events as Paul’s martyrdom, the great fire of Rome, or the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. If it had been written after these events had already taken place, the author could not have passed over such important matters in silence.

This point strongly suggests the possibility that Acts was written at a point when Paul’s Roman imprisonment had not yet ended, that is, around A.D. 62. And since Acts presupposes the Gospel of Luke, which is “*The former account*” (Acts 1:1), it is natural to see the Gospel of Luke as having been written before it, roughly between A.D. 60 and 62.

That Acts ends abruptly, as if unfinished, also supports this estimate. The author appears not to be trying to complete the story, but to have left the events as they were up to the point at which he was writing. If the outcome of Paul’s trial or the things after it had already been known, the author would have had no reason not to include them in the record.

The fact that the Gospel of Luke and Acts are consecutive works by one author gives great help in estimating the date. If the last scene of Acts is during Paul’s Roman imprisonment, then the Gospel of Luke, written earlier, would have been completed before that. In this way the relation of the two books becomes a clue that sheds light on the date of writing of each other.

A record from before the destruction of Jerusalem

The event in which the temple of Jerusalem was demolished by the Roman army in A.D. 70 was an exceedingly weighty turning point in the history of Judea and the early Church. In the Gospel of Luke the words in which Jesus prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem are recorded (Luke 21:20–24), but they take, throughout, the form of prophecy about what is to come. The tone is not that of looking back on an event already fulfilled, but the tone of prophecy looking ahead to the judgment that is to come.

This feature supports that the Gospel of Luke was written before the destruction of Jerusalem actually took place, that is, before A.D. 70. The point that Jesus' prophecy carries its weight as prophecy just as it stands is strong evidence showing that the time of this Gospel's writing preceded that event.

If this Gospel had been written after the destruction of Jerusalem, the author would have emphasized that Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled to the letter and stated that fact explicitly. But the Gospel of Luke contains no such retrospect of fulfillment and delivers only the prophecy itself. This is a passage that quietly testifies that this Gospel was written before that event.

The point that Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem still remains as prophecy before its fulfillment raises, if anything, the credibility of this Gospel. It is because this is not a case of dressing up an event as prophecy after it happened, but of a word actually prophesied in advance being preserved and handed down. Jesus' prophecy was later fulfilled to the letter in A.D. 70.

A period when the eyewitnesses were still alive

The A.D. 60s were only some thirty years removed from the event of Jesus' crucifixion. Around this time many people who

had witnessed the ministry of Jesus in person were still alive. Luke diligently collected and investigated the testimonies of these very eyewitnesses (Luke 1:2–3), and recorded this Gospel.

The Gospel of Luke was written while the eyewitnesses were still living, that is, while there were still people able to verify its testimony. If its contents had differed from the facts, it would have been refuted at once. This circumstance strongly supports that the events the Gospel of Luke conveys are truly trustworthy.

This period was also the time when Paul and various apostles were still active, an age when the early Church was growing vigorously and spreading the gospel. The fact that this Gospel was recorded in the very midst of such an active community of faith shows that its testimony was joined to the living memory of the Church.

The conclusion of the A.D. 60s,

Putting all these circumstances together, the most reasonable view is to see the Gospel of Luke as written between A.D. 60 and 62, or, taken broadly, within the 60s. This period was around the time Paul was imprisoned in Rome, an environment fitting for Luke, who was keeping his side, to investigate and set in order the testimonies of many eyewitnesses.

The question of the date does not stop at the mere confirmation of historical fact. The fact that the Gospel of Luke was written at a time not far removed from the events of Jesus, while many eyewitnesses were still alive, confirms how trustworthy the testimony of this Gospel is. The gospel of the Son of Man Jesus, who came to seek and to save the lost, is the truth built upon such a sure historical foundation.

Where was the Gospel of Luke written?

Exactly where the Gospel of Luke was written is not stated in the text of the Bible, so it is hard to state definitively. Yet if we put together the movements of the author Luke, the tradition of the early Church, and the circumstances of the period in which this Gospel is thought to have been written, we can weigh a few strong candidate places. Examining the place of writing helps us understand against what environment and readership this Gospel was born.

Rome, a strong candidate

The most widely accepted view is that this Gospel was written in Rome. As examined above, the Gospel of Luke appears to have been written in the early A.D. 60s, when Paul was imprisoned in Rome, and at this time Luke had sailed with Paul as far as Rome (Acts 27:1–28:16). and was keeping his side (Colossians 4:14). Rome, as the center of the empire, was a place where he could meet various eyewitnesses and materials, and it also fits well with the character of this Gospel directed toward Gentile readers.

The view of a Roman writing also harmonizes with the spirit of the salvation of all peoples with which this Gospel is open toward the Gentile world. The picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ being carefully recorded and sent from the heart of the empire to Theophilus, a Gentile of high standing, shows symbolically the universality of the gospel.

The view that it was written in Rome also fits well with the point that this Gospel, with readers of the Roman world in mind, marks the dates of events by the reigns of the Roman emperors. That the gospel of salvation for the whole world was recorded in the heart of the empire shows symbolically that the gospel was

going out beyond the small fence of the land of Judea into the whole world.

If we follow the view of a Roman writing, we come to understand this Gospel as the news of salvation proclaimed from the heart of the empire toward the whole world. Around the time Paul was boldly preaching the gospel in Rome (Acts 28:31), Luke at his side recorded the life of Jesus Christ and left it for later generations. Rome was the gateway through which the gospel stretched out into the whole world.

The view of a Caesarean writing

Some scholars raise the possibility that this Gospel was written in Caesarea. Before being transferred to Rome, Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea for two years (Acts 24:27), and during this period Luke also appears to have stayed in that vicinity. Caesarea was close to Jerusalem and Galilee, a place advantageous for contact with those who had witnessed the ministry of Jesus in person.

According to this view, Luke would have had the opportunity, while staying in Caesarea, to collect and investigate in person the testimonies concerning the life of Jesus. The conjecture is that the work of investigation he revealed in the preface, “*having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first*” (Luke 1:3), was carried out at this very time and place.

Caesarea was a port city where the residence of the Roman governor was located, a place where the Jewish and Greek worlds met. If Luke met those who had witnessed the ministry of Jesus here and collected their testimony, it becomes a natural background for the diligent investigation he revealed in the preface. However, this view too is not conclusive, so the discussion about the place of writing remains open.

The strength the Caesarean view holds is the point that this

place was close to Jerusalem and Galilee and advantageous for contact with those who knew the ministry of Jesus in person. If the diligent investigation Luke revealed in the preface took place here, the testimonies he collected would have been very close to the scene of the events.

A writing environment interlocked with Paul's journeys

The place where the Gospel of Luke was written is inseparably connected with the movements of the author Luke. Luke went to and fro among many regions accompanying Paul's journeys, and wherever he went he could meet people who knew the ministry of Jesus and the testimony of the early Church. This broad journey of his was in itself an environment second to none for collecting materials.

In particular, the periods when Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea and in Rome would have been time for Luke to set in order the testimonies he had collected and to devote himself to writing in a comparatively stable environment. Whichever place we settle on, this Gospel was born in the very midst of the mission field where the gospel was stretching out beyond the land of Judea into the whole world.

In this way the Gospel of Luke is a Gospel born on the mission field. In the midst of the ministry that was going out into the Gentile world carrying the gospel, the life of Jesus Christ, the source of that gospel, was carefully recorded. This shows that this Gospel was written from the beginning with a heart for evangelism and missions.

The truth more important than the place

Thus concerning the place of writing there are various views, including Rome and Caesarea, but it is hard to settle on any one. What is clear, however, is the fact that this Gospel was recorded

in an environment bordering the Gentile world beyond the land of Judea, with a heart of salvation toward all mankind.

Wherever the place of writing was, the truth this Gospel testifies of is not bound to any one place. The gospel of the Son of Man Jesus, who came to seek and to save the lost, works with the same power whether in Rome or in Caesarea, and in this place where we stand today. The salvation of Jesus Christ, who bore the sin of the world by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan and paid its price on the Cross, is the river of life that flows toward every place in the whole world.

To whom was the Gospel of Luke sent?

The Gospel of Luke is a book dedicated to a person named Theophilus. In the preface Luke reveals that “*it seemed good*” to him “*to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus*” (Luke 1:3), making plain that this Gospel was recorded toward one particular person. But being dedicated to one person does not mean its readership is limited to only one person. Taking the individual Theophilus as its channel, this Gospel stands open toward countless Gentile readers in the same situation as he, and toward the Church of every generation.

The person named Theophilus

The name “*Theophilus*” means in Greek ‘one who loves God’ or ‘one loved by God.’ Seeing that Luke calls him “*most excellent*” (Luke 1:3), Theophilus was most likely a person of high standing who held considerable position in Roman society. Seeing that Acts uses the same title for Roman governors (Acts 23:26, 24:3, 26:25), this honorific is considered to reflect an actual office or rank.

That Theophilus was a person who had already received some measure of instruction about the Christian faith is also revealed in the preface. Luke states his purpose, “*that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed*” (Luke 1:4), and this shows that Theophilus already knew the story of Jesus by hearing, yet wanted that knowledge to stand on a still firmer rock.

There are various views on whether Theophilus was an actual person or a name symbolizing every person who loves God. Yet seeing that the concrete honorific “*most excellent*” is attached, he was most likely a person who actually existed. Still, because of the symbolism the meaning of his name carries, Theophilus is at the same time also read as a figure representing every believer who receives this gospel.

The fact that Luke dedicated to Theophilus not only this Gospel but also the Acts of the Apostles lets us surmise that there was a relationship of deep trust and love between the two. Luke, sincerely desiring that this one person’s faith stand firm, carefully recorded and sent two massive books.

A person representing the Gentile readers

That Theophilus was a Gentile is very important for understanding the character of this Gospel. Luke explains the Jewish feasts and customs, adds notes to place names, and marks events by the chronology of the Roman Empire. Such consideration is for Gentile readers unfamiliar with Jewish tradition, and it lets us surmise that Theophilus was the very representative of such readers.

The very fact that the life of Jesus Christ was carefully recorded and sent to one Gentile of high standing testifies that the gospel was going out beyond the fence of the Jews toward all the peoples of the whole world. Theophilus was like a

firstfruit standing before that wide door of grace.

The careful consideration Luke extended for Gentile readers reveals the character of the gospel itself. God wanted the news of salvation delivered in a way that not one people but all peoples could understand. This devoted writing toward Theophilus reflects just as it is the heart of God's salvation, open toward all mankind.

Moreover, the fact that this Gospel was dedicated to Theophilus shows that the gospel is open to all people regardless of social position or rank. Whether to a high official of Rome or to a shepherd in the fields, the salvation of God comes with the same grace. Luke testifies of the gospel of the salvation of all peoples, embracing both the high and the low.

A dedication toward one already instructed

That Theophilus was a person who had already been instructed in the gospel is important for understanding the character of this Gospel. Luke took up his pen not for someone encountering the gospel for the first time, but for a person who already knew of Jesus by hearing yet wished to establish that knowledge still more firmly. That is, this Gospel is at once a primer of faith and a solid rock that firms up the assurance of the one who already believes.

This carries great meaning for us today as well. We too already know many things about Jesus by hearing, but it is another grace for that knowledge to be established as unshakable assurance. As it did for Theophilus, the Gospel of Luke is God's gift given to establish for us also the certainty of the things we have been instructed in.

Beyond one person, to the whole Church

Though this Gospel was dedicated to the one man

Theophilus, its message is never confined to one individual. The word of God has the nature of flowing in through one channel and spreading out to the whole Church. The assurance Theophilus received is the assurance received together by the countless Gentile believers who were in the same situation as he, and by all of us who read this Gospel today.

Therefore each of us who reads this Gospel becomes, as it were, another Theophilus. Whoever is called as one who loves God and longs for what he has been instructed concerning Jesus Christ to become more certain is a recipient of this Gospel. The story of the Son of Man Jesus, who came to seek and to save the lost, was recorded to establish unshakable assurance of salvation for us today, as it did for Theophilus.

Until this Gospel reached our hands, God preserved this letter toward the one man Theophilus as the treasure of the whole Church. This shows that the word of God is never shut up in one age or one person, but flows on across the generations and gives birth to life. When we open this Gospel today, we inherit the very same assurance Theophilus received.

What was the purpose for which Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke?

The purpose of the writing of the Gospel of Luke is distinct. Unlike the other Gospels, the author directly stated his purpose in the preface. Luke declares that he recorded this book “*that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed*” (Luke 1:4). That is, helping believers like Theophilus, who had already heard and known the gospel, to build unshakable assurance upon the truth they had been instructed in was the fundamental purpose of this Gospel. This

purpose becomes the spirit that runs through this whole Gospel.

To establish the certainty of the things instructed

In the preface Luke reveals that he is a man “*having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first*” (Luke 1:3). The reason he investigated so carefully and set things in order in sequence was one alone: to let the reader know that the gospel he had been instructed in stands not on a made-up story or a vague rumor but on firm historical fact.

“*That you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed*” (Luke 1:4) is the declaration that compresses this purpose. Faith must be not a momentary lift of emotion but conviction built upon certain facts. Through accurate investigation and orderly narration, Luke sought to show the reader that the gospel concerning Jesus Christ rests upon an unshakable rock.

This purpose of Luke’s becomes a deep comfort to us today as well. In the journey of faith, moments of wavering and doubt are bound to come. But our faith stands not on the ups and downs of emotion but on the certain fact of salvation that God actually accomplished in history. The Gospel of Luke shows us this very sure foundation and sets the wavering heart firmly on the rock.

This purpose is joined exactly to the reason we read the Scriptures today. We have already heard about Jesus, but we long for that knowledge to grow into unshakable assurance. The Gospel of Luke is God’s gift placed in our hands to establish this very assurance.

Trust through historical accuracy

Luke sets the life of Jesus accurately in the history of the day. He identifies the appearance of John the Baptist as “*in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate*

being governor of Judea” (Luke 3:1), and connects the birth of Jesus with the census decree of “*Caesar Augustus*” and “*while Quirinius was governing Syria*” (Luke 2:1–2). This manner of nailing the record to actual persons and events firmly establishes the historical trustworthiness of the gospel.

This attitude of Luke’s, seeking to record accurately, testifies that the gospel is not a myth but an event that actually happened. The fact that the Son of God came into the very middle of actual history, at a particular time and a particular place, and saved sinners is the firm ground of our faith.

The point that the gospel is historical fact fundamentally defines the character of our faith. We believe not a religious notion or moral lesson that people have made up, but the event of salvation God actually performed at a point in history. Luke’s accurate narration testifies that these events truly took place, confirming that our faith is not in vain.

Luke also sets the birth of Jesus within the great stream of history, the census decree over the whole Roman world (Luke 2:1–3). This shows that the coming of the Savior was not a myth detached from world history but an event that took place in the very middle of actual history. God governs the history of the world and sent His Son at His appointed time.

The gospel of salvation toward all peoples

In the purpose of the Gospel of Luke there is deeply steeped a heart to reveal the universality of salvation toward all mankind. Luke records the genealogy of Jesus tracing back not to Abraham but to Adam, the ancestor of all mankind (Luke 3:38), proclaiming that Jesus is not the Messiah of the Jews only but the Savior of all mankind. The confession contained in the song of Simeon, “*A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel*” (Luke 2:32), confirms this purpose in song.

Luke's deep concern toward the poor, women, tax collectors, sinners, and Gentiles, those marginalized in the society of the day, is also joined to this purpose. The salvation of God is not limited to a particular class or people but stands wide open to every lost one. Luke took up his pen to testify with certainty of this very grace of the salvation of all peoples.

This universality of salvation toward all peoples becomes a great hope for us today as well. We too were once Gentiles who did not know God, those outside the covenant. But in Jesus Christ we also have been called to be the people of God. The door of the salvation of all peoples that the Gospel of Luke testifies of stands wide open toward us today as well.

This heart of the salvation of all peoples in the Gospel of Luke reaches its climax in Jesus' last command. This command, that the gospel of repentance and the remission of sins must be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47), proclaims that the gospel must reach to the end of the whole world. This command is a mission given to us today as well.

The grace that seeks and saves the lost

The purpose of the Gospel of Luke gathers, in the end, into one verse. *"The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10) Luke wanted to make known with certainty to Theophilus and to every reader that Jesus Christ came into the world for this very work. Therefore the one who reads this Gospel comes to realize that he himself is the lost one who has been sought.

Jesus took the sins of all mankind upon His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan, at last paid the price of those sins in full on the Cross, and by rising again from the dead on the third day confirmed that this salvation is true. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The

“certainty” Luke sought so carefully to establish is this very gospel, namely the completed salvation of Jesus Christ, who took over sin through John the Baptist and died on the Cross to save us. Only when we stand upon the certainty of this gospel does our faith become an unshakable rock.

When we hold fast the certainty of this gospel, we come to enjoy an assurance of salvation that does not waver in any situation. It is because our salvation hangs not on our feelings or merits but on the firm fact Jesus already completed at the Jordan and on the Cross. The Gospel of Luke sets us upon this very rock-like assurance.

Explain the content especially emphasized in the Gospel of Luke

The Gospel of Luke is the longest of the four Gospels and contains the widest range of content, and within it flow in several strands distinctive features not found in the other Gospels. Luke, a Gentile physician and historian, beheld the life of Jesus Christ from the viewpoint of salvation toward all mankind, and portrayed more warmly than anyone the grace of God toward those who were low and marginalized in the world. These features of content make this Gospel a truly gracious Gospel.

The universality of the salvation of all peoples

The most striking feature of the Gospel of Luke is the universality of salvation. Luke records the genealogy of Jesus tracing back not to Abraham, the ancestor of the Jewish people, but all the way to Adam, the ancestor of all mankind, and to God (Luke 3:38) This is an arrangement that proclaims that Jesus is not the Messiah of the Jews only but the Savior of all the

descendants of Adam, that is, of all mankind.

The song of Simeon sings this universality beautifully. *“Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel”* (Luke 2:31–32) Even in introducing the ministry of John the Baptist, Luke quotes the word of Isaiah, *“all flesh shall see the salvation of God”* (Luke 3:6), emphasizing that salvation stands open to all people in the whole world.

This universality reaches its climax in Jesus’ last command. The risen Jesus said that *“repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”* (Luke 24:47). This declaration, that the news of salvation begun in Jerusalem must flow out to all the nations of the whole world, confirms again at the end the spirit of the salvation of all peoples that the Gospel of Luke bore from the beginning.

Such universality becomes a great comfort to us today as well. Whatever people we belong to, and in whatever situation we are, the salvation of God stands open toward us. The gospel of the salvation of all peoples that the Gospel of Luke testifies of proclaims that no one in the world is excluded from this grace.

Concern toward the poor and the lowly

The Gospel of Luke especially emphasizes God’s special concern toward those who are poor and oppressed in the world. The scene in which Jesus, in the synagogue at Nazareth, proclaimed as His own mission the word of Isaiah, *“He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor”* (Luke 4:18), foretells the direction of this whole Gospel.

In the Sermon on the Plain Jesus declared, *“Blessed are you poor”* (Luke 6:20), and through the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31) He teaches the danger of riches and

the justice of God. Luke records the fact that the news of the Savior's birth was delivered first to shepherds, whom the world counted as nothing (Luke 2:8–14), showing that the grace of God comes to the lowly.

Luke also records distinctly the warnings directed at riches. In the parable of the foolish rich man (Luke 12:16–21), Jesus says that the rich man who was enlarging his barns and setting his mind at ease received the judgment of his life being taken away that very night. This teaches that riches cannot be true security, and that a life rich toward God is true richness.

Grace toward women and tax collectors and sinners

The Gospel of Luke contains especially abundant stories of women. Mary and Elizabeth, the prophetess Anna, the women who served Jesus, the sinful woman who poured out the fragrant oil (Luke 7:36–50), Martha and Mary, and many other women appear throughout this Gospel. Treating so precious the women who held a low place in the society of the day reveals that all people are precious before God.

The stories of grace toward tax collectors and sinners are also a great feature of the Gospel of Luke. The story of the tax collector Zacchaeus being saved (Luke 19:1–10) and the parable of the prayers of the tax collector and the Pharisee (Luke 18:9–14) appear only in the Gospel of Luke. So too the parables of the lost coin and the lost son (Luke 15:8–32), and it is only the Gospel of Luke that tells these three parables woven into one together with the parable of the lost sheep. These stories testify movingly that Jesus became the friend of sinners and came to seek the lost.

What these stories have in common is that those whom the world counted unworthy are saved only by the grace of Jesus. Zacchaeus, the woman who poured out the fragrant oil, and the

tax collector received the grace of salvation not by their own merit but by faith and love toward Jesus. Through these stories Luke testifies movingly that salvation hangs not on a person's qualification but on the free grace of God.

The Gospel of prayer and the Holy Spirit and praise

The Gospel of Luke introduces the prayer life of Jesus so often that it is called the Gospel of prayer. When He received baptism, before He chose the twelve apostles, on the Mount of Transfiguration, in Gethsemane, and even on the Cross, Jesus always prayed (Luke 3:21, 6:12, 9:29, 22:41–44, 23:34). Also, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is emphasized from beginning to end, and the conception, the baptism, and the ministry of Jesus are all deeply connected with the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel of Luke is also the Gospel of praise. Beautiful songs, such as Mary's song the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55), Zacharias' song the Benedictus (Luke 1:68–79), the song of the angels (Luke 2:14), and Simeon's song the Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2:29–32), fill the opening of the Gospel. These songs are hymns that burst out in worship with the joy of the salvation God accomplished.

In this way prayer and the Holy Spirit and praise are three streams that run through the Gospel of Luke. Jesus communed with the Father in prayer, ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit, and the grace of that salvation burst out in praise. These three streams join together to make this Gospel a truly devout and gracious Gospel. These three are elements that can never be left out of our life of faith today as well.

Luke emphasized these three streams because salvation does not stop at being understood as doctrine but is enjoyed in life. The life of communing with God in prayer, living by the power of the Holy Spirit, and answering the grace of salvation with

praise is the fitting form of the one who has received the gospel.

The gospel all these features point to

All these features of content in the Gospel of Luke gather, in the end, toward one truth: the truth that Jesus Christ came as the Savior of all mankind, and came especially to seek and to save every sinner lost in the world. That warm gaze toward the poor, women, tax collectors, sinners, and Gentiles reflects none other than the heart of God's salvation toward all mankind.

Jesus took charge of the sins of all these lost ones Himself by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan, and paid the price of those sins in full on the Cross. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The stories of grace toward the lowly that the Gospel of Luke portrays are living proofs showing how this completed gospel of salvation actually comes to the lost.

Explain the characteristics shown in the style and narrative manner of the Gospel of Luke

The Gospel of Luke is a book that stands out singularly in the New Testament for its literary accomplishment, no less than for the richness of its content. Luke, a Gentile physician and cultured historian, portrayed the life of Jesus Christ with refined Greek and an elaborate structure. These literary features were not mere beautiful ornament; they became the vessel for conveying the truth of the gospel more surely and persuasively.

Precise and refined Greek

The Greek of the Gospel of Luke is evaluated as the most fluent and elevated in the New Testament. In particular, the preface (Luke 1:1–4) is a long introduction in a single sentence

following the orthodox narrative manner of the Greek literature of the day, displaying without reserve the author's outstanding command of the sentence. Such a style shows that this Gospel was recorded toward cultured Gentile readers.

And yet Luke skillfully shifts his style according to the situation. In the first two chapters, which handle the Jewish background, he uses a tone deeply tinged with the Hebraic color of the Old Testament, and in narration toward the Greek world he moves to a refined Greek style. Such flexibility of style shows how seasoned a writer Luke was.

Luke was not only fluent in Greek but also deeply familiar with the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Thus he could freely command the majestic tone of the Old Testament as needed. Such linguistic capacity shows that he was a cultured Gentile and at the same time a man versed in the word of God.

Such literary accomplishment plays a precious role as the vessel that carries the truth of the gospel. Beautifully polished sentences open the reader's heart, and an elaborate structure delivers the truth in order. Luke devoted his literary talent wholly to testifying of Christ alone.

The beautiful songs

One of the striking literary features of the Gospel of Luke is the beautiful songs that adorn the opening of the Gospel. Mary's song (Luke 1:46–55), Zacharias' song (Luke 1:68–79), the song of the angels (Luke 2:14), and Simeon's song (Luke 2:29–32) are called, after their first words in Latin, the Magnificat, the Benedictus, the Gloria, and the Nunc Dimittis, and they live on in the worship of the Church to this day.

These songs richly reflect the language of the Psalms and the prophetic books of the Old Testament, and yet they sing the joy

of the new salvation accomplished by the coming of Christ. Mary's song, that God exalts the lowly and fills the hungry with good things (Luke 1:52–53), seems to compress into poetry the spirit of grace this whole Gospel conveys.

These songs are not merely beautiful poems; they contain deep theology. Mary's song sings that God is the One who faithfully fulfills His covenant, Zacharias' song praises the history of redemption, and Simeon's song proclaims the light of salvation toward all peoples. Within these songs is already contained the seed of the gospel the whole Gospel of Luke will convey.

Vivid parables and stories

The Gospel of Luke contains an especially rich store of distinctive parables and stories not found in the other Gospels. The parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), the parable of the lost son (Luke 15:11–32), the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31), and the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9–14) are jewel-like stories that can be met only in the Gospel of Luke.

These parables carry the literary power of portraying vividly the psychology and situation of their characters. The story of the prodigal son returning to his father's embrace engraves the forgiveness and love of God on the heart more intensely than any theological explanation. Through the power of story, Luke plants the truth of the gospel deep in the reader's breast.

The manner of story Luke loved to use was to convey the truth not by explaining it as abstract doctrine, but by placing it within concrete persons and events. Such a narrative manner plants the truth in the hearts of all people, learned and unlearned alike. By showing through story how the grace of God comes upon one person's life, Luke makes the gospel a living thing.

In particular, the parable of the good Samaritan engraves what true love of neighbor is, and the parable of the lost son engraves how great the forgiveness of God the Father is, more deeply than any sermon. Luke planted the truth in the heart with the power of story, opening a channel of the gospel that changes the lives of countless people to this day.

Orderly structure and the flow of the journey

The Gospel of Luke is structured, as a whole, along one orderly flow. In particular, at the center of this Gospel sits the long journey account of Jesus going up toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51–19:27). This journey, which begins with the declaration *“when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem”* (Luke 9:51), takes as the backbone of its narrative Jesus’ resolute steps toward the Cross.

The structure of this journey reveals literarily that the suffering and death of Jesus were not an accident but the path of obedience He walked of Himself toward the will of God. In this way the literary features of the Gospel of Luke all press on toward one summit. That summit is the completed salvation the Son of Man Jesus Christ accomplished, namely the salvation in which He bore the sin of the world by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan and paid its price on the Cross. Luke’s beautiful sentences and elaborate structure were, in the end, instruments for testifying most surely of this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

This journey structure of the Gospel of Luke also forms a correspondence with the Acts of the Apostles. If in the Gospel of Luke Jesus went up toward Jerusalem, in Acts the gospel goes out from Jerusalem toward the end of the earth. In this way the two books form one great narrative with Jerusalem as the axis,

portraying literarily the flow of salvation spreading from one city to the whole world.

The point that this journey account forms the center of the Gospel of Luke shows that Jesus' journey toward the Cross is the heart of this Gospel. The great trunk of this Gospel is the Son of Man, who came to seek and to save the lost, pressing on resolutely toward the Cross of Jerusalem to complete that salvation.

This journey toward Jerusalem also shows where the heart of Jesus was turned. His eyes were always turned toward the Cross that would save us. In every step He took, leaving comfortable Galilee and going up to Jerusalem of suffering, was contained His love toward the lost.

What does the Gospel of Luke say about the Holy Spirit?

The Gospel of Luke is one of the books in the New Testament that emphasizes the Holy Spirit most often and most distinctly. Before dealing in earnest with the descent of the Holy Spirit and His power in the Acts of the Apostles, which he would record later, Luke already places the ministry of the Holy Spirit throughout the Gospel, showing that the whole life of Jesus Christ is deeply interlocked with the Holy Spirit. To Luke, the Holy Spirit was the power of God leading the history of salvation, and the presence accompanying the ministry of Jesus from beginning to end.

The Holy Spirit who led the birth

The Gospel of Luke is filled from the start with the working of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist received the prophecy that

he would be born “*filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb*” (Luke 1:15), and to Mary was given the word, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you*” (Luke 1:35), making plain that the conception of Jesus came about by the Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and blessed Mary (Luke 1:41–42), Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied (Luke 1:67), and Simeon, led by the Holy Spirit, welcomed the baby Jesus in the temple (Luke 2:25–27) Luke records in fine detail that all these events surrounding the coming of the Savior took place within the working of the Holy Spirit.

All this working of the Holy Spirit surrounding the coming of the Savior shows that the salvation of Jesus Christ was accomplished from the beginning within the perfect cooperation of the triune God. The Father planned, the Holy Spirit brought about the conception, and the Son came, having become man. From the very opening of the Gospel, Luke testifies of this mystery in fine detail.

This working of the Holy Spirit unfolds still more greatly afterward in the Acts of the Apostles. The Holy Spirit, who led the conception and the ministry of Jesus, after Pentecost comes upon the whole Church and causes the gospel to be spread to the end of the earth. Luke prepares for this ministry of the Holy Spirit from the Gospel onward, joining the two books into one.

The Holy Spirit who accompanied the ministry of Jesus

When Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan, Luke records that “*the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him*” (Luke 3:22). Afterward Jesus, “*being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness*” (Luke 4:1), and overcame the

temptation.

Beginning His public ministry, Jesus applies to Himself the word of Isaiah, *“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor”* (Luke 4:18). In this way Luke emphasizes that all the ministry of Jesus was accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit, showing that the history of salvation is inseparably connected with the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The fact that Jesus ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit shows that He, as true man, lived relying on the Holy Spirit. This becomes a deep lesson for us believers today as well. Just as Jesus fulfilled the Father’s will in the power of the Holy Spirit, we also can live following the will of God only when we rely on the Holy Spirit.

In the Gospel of Luke, the Holy Spirit appears from beginning to end as the power of God leading the history of salvation. From the conception to the ministry, and to the promise after the ascension, the Holy Spirit accompanies the work of accomplishing and testifying of the salvation of Jesus Christ. This ministry of the Holy Spirit spreads out wide toward the whole Church in the Acts of the Apostles.

Prayer and the promise of the Holy Spirit

The Gospel of Luke emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is a gift given in answer to prayer. Jesus teaches, *“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”* (Luke 11:13), making plain that the Holy Spirit is the best gift God gives to His children.

Also, Jesus promises the disciples, for when they are seized in tribulation, *“The Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say”* (Luke 12:12), and before ascending He

commands, *“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). This promise is fulfilled in the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in Acts, showing that the two books are joined as one story.

That the Gospel of Luke closes with such emphasis on the Holy Spirit is to lay a bridge toward the Acts of the Apostles, which follows. The power from on high that Jesus promised as He ascended is fulfilled in the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In this way the Gospel of Luke and Acts are joined into one story through the promise of the Holy Spirit and its fulfillment.

In this way the teaching of the Gospel of Luke concerning the Holy Spirit flows naturally into the Acts of the Apostles. The Holy Spirit Jesus promised came at Pentecost, and the disciples who had been afraid were changed into bold witnesses. The Holy Spirit today also comes upon the one who believes the gospel and gives new life and power.

The gospel the Holy Spirit points to

The reason the Gospel of Luke emphasizes the Holy Spirit so much is that the Holy Spirit is inseparably connected with the gospel of salvation. That the conception, the baptism, and the ministry of Jesus were all accomplished in the Holy Spirit means that the Holy Spirit Himself testifies that Jesus came as the Savior of all mankind following the will of God the Father.

By receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan, Jesus took on His body the sins of all the people of the world. At that moment the Holy Spirit came upon Him like a dove. This was God Himself sealing that this work is His will, and that the true Offering, who would save all mankind, was established in this place. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Holy

Spirit testifies in our hearts of this completed salvation Jesus Christ accomplished, and assures the one who believes that gospel of the remission of sins and new life. The Holy Spirit Luke emphasizes is the very presence of God that seals this gospel of salvation.

What is the content of the prayers of Jesus shown in the Gospel of Luke, and what do they teach us?

The Gospel of Luke is commonly called the Gospel of prayer. It is because, compared with the other Gospels, it introduces the prayer life of Jesus far more often, and at every important juncture of His ministry. Luke records in fine detail that Jesus, at every decisive moment, went alone before God and prayed, teaching us how Jesus, who had perfect humanity, communed with the Father, and how we ought to pray.

Prayers offered at every juncture of His life

Luke places the prayers of Jesus at every important turning point of His ministry. When He prayed after receiving baptism from John, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended (Luke 3:21–22), and before choosing the twelve disciples He continued all night in prayer to God (Luke 6:12) He also prayed alone before asking His disciples who He was (Luke 9:18), and His glorious transfiguration on the Mount of Transfiguration also took place while He was praying (Luke 9:29)

In this way, Jesus always went first before God ahead of important decisions and events. This shows that even Jesus, the Son of God, lived in unceasing communion with the Father, and teaches us that we must entrust every weighty moment of life to God in prayer.

This prayer life of Jesus teaches us again what prayer is. Prayer is not an emergency measure sought only in urgency, but communion that walks every moment of life together with God. If even Jesus, the Son of God, did not let go of this communion for a moment, we can well gauge how necessary prayer is for us.

The prayers of Gethsemane and the Cross

The place where the prayer of Jesus was revealed most deeply and most desperately was the garden of Gethsemane. *“Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done”* (Luke 22:42) Luke records that Jesus, striving and laboring, prayed more earnestly, and His sweat became like drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke 22:44)

Even on the Cross the prayer of Jesus did not stop. The prayer, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do”* (Luke 23:34), was a prayer of forgiveness for those who were nailing Him, and the last prayer, *“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit”* (Luke 23:46), was a confession of complete obedience and trust. These prayers show together the Savior’s love toward sinners and His perfect obedience toward the Father.

These prayers show that Jesus, even in extreme suffering, did not let go of trust toward the Father and love toward His enemies. This prayer, in which He sought forgiveness for those who were killing Him and entrusted His last breath into the Father’s hands, was the holiest prayer in human history.

When one of the criminals hanged beside the Cross begged Jesus to remember him, Jesus promised, *“today you will be with Me in Paradise”* (Luke 23:43). This scene, in which He saved one lost soul even at the place of death, shows that the prayer and ministry of Jesus were turned toward the lost to the very end.

Jesus, who taught prayer

Jesus not only prayed Himself but also taught His disciples to pray. When the disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1–4). Then, through the parable of the friend who came at midnight (Luke 11:5–8), He taught prayer that asks persistently, and encouraged them, “ask, and it will be given to you” (Luke 11:9).

Jesus also spoke the parable of the unjust judge and the widow to teach that “*men always ought to pray and not lose heart*” (Luke 18:1), and through the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee (Luke 18:9–14) He showed the true form of humble prayer. These teachings tell us with what heart and posture we must come before God.

The core of the prayer Jesus taught was to call God Father and to ask that His will be done. The Lord's Prayer teaches us above all to seek first the name and the kingdom and the will of God. This shows that prayer is not a means of achieving our desires but a channel of grace that aligns our hearts with the will of God.

This teaching of Jesus tells us today also the true posture of prayer. We must humbly seek the mercy of God, ask persistently, and above all seek first that the will of God be done. Such prayer is the true prayer God delights to receive.

The power of prayer together with the Holy Spirit

In the Gospel of Luke, prayer is deeply interlocked with the working of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus prayed after receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit came upon Him (Luke 3:21–22), and God promised to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (Luke 11:13). In this way prayer is the channel for receiving and enjoying the power and presence of God.

Just as Jesus communed with the Father in prayer and ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit, we also can live drawing on the power of God through prayer. Prayer is the seat of grace that turns our weakness into the power of God. Jesus' command to always pray and not lose heart (Luke 18:1) is valid for us today as well.

The gospel the prayers of Jesus point to

The prayers of Jesus do not stop at being a devout example. At the bottom of those prayers flowed obedience seeking to accomplish the Father's will to save all mankind. When He prayed in Gethsemane, "*not My will, but Yours, be done*" (Luke 22:42), Jesus, bearing the sin of the world, resolved to drink the cup of the Cross.

Jesus had already taken over the sins of all mankind onto His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan, and in the prayers of Gethsemane and the Cross He went forward on the path of paying that price of sin in full. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. All the prayers of Jesus were, in the end, turned toward the completion of this will to seek and to save the lost. Therefore His prayers were the deepest expression of His love toward us.

What does the Gospel of Luke say about the word of God?

The Gospel of Luke pays deep attention to the word of God. Luke understood the ministry of Jesus Christ as the event in which the word of God is proclaimed and fulfilled, and he handles in fine detail how that word takes root and bears fruit in the human heart. In this Gospel, the word of God is presented as

the power of salvation and as the source of life that a person must surely hear and keep.

Jesus as the fulfillment of the word

The Gospel of Luke portrays the coming of Jesus as the event in which the word of the Old Testament Scriptures is fulfilled. The scene in which Jesus, after opening the scroll of Isaiah and reading it in the synagogue at Nazareth, declared, “*Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing*” (Luke 4:21), clearly shows that the word of God was being fulfilled in Jesus.

The record that after His resurrection, with the two disciples going to Emmaus, “*beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself*” (Luke 24:27), also makes plain that all the Scriptures testify of Christ and are fulfilled in Him. To Luke, the word of God was the living word that points to Jesus Christ and is accomplished in Him.

That Jesus made plain that all the Scriptures testify of Himself shows that the word of God is, in the end, one unified revelation pointing to Christ. From Genesis to Malachi, the whole Old Testament prophesied and prefigured the Messiah to come, and all of it was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Therefore to read the Scriptures rightly is to discover Christ in them.

The record that the hearts of the disciples going to Emmaus burned within them as Jesus opened the Scriptures to them (Luke 24:32) shows that the word of God carries the power to bring a person’s heart to life when it is made plain in Christ. When we meet the Christ to whom all the Scriptures point, our hearts too come alive and burn.

The blessedness of hearing and keeping the word

The Gospel of Luke repeatedly emphasizes the blessedness

of hearing and keeping the word of God. When a woman called blessed the mother who bore Jesus, Jesus answered, *“More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”* (Luke 11:28) This taught that a life obeying the word, rather than the relation of blood, is the true blessedness.

In the story of Martha and Mary as well, Jesus said of Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and heard His word, that she *“has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her”* (Luke 10:42). He counted hearing the word more precious even than busy serving. In this way Luke shows repeatedly that hearing the word is the root of faith.

Such teaching makes clear the priority of faith. In our lives there are many things to do, but above all else, hearing the word of God and staying before it is the best part. It is because true faith grows from hearing the word.

The word the parable of the sower makes plain

In the parable of the sower Jesus makes its meaning plain: *“The seed is the word of God”* (Luke 8:11). And He explains that the seed sown on the good ground means *“those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience”* (Luke 8:15). This teaches that the word of God is the seed sown in the human heart, and that the fruit differs according to the state of the heart that receives that word.

Through this parable Luke emphasizes, together with the power of life the word of God carries, the responsibility of the person who receives that word. The word carries the power that surely brings forth fruit, but for that fruit to be borne, one must hear the word with a noble and good heart and hold it fast with patience.

This parable throws an important challenge to us today as well. Though the same word is sown, its fruit differs according

to the heart on which it falls. If the heart is carried away by the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and pleasures, the word does not bear fruit; but if one receives the word with a noble and good heart and holds it fast with patience, it surely bears abundant fruit.

The wisdom of building the house on the rock

Jesus likened the one who hears the word and does it to a man who built his house on the rock. *“Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock” (Luke 6:47–48)* This shows that not stopping at hearing the word but actually doing it is true faith.

Though the flood arises and the stream beats against it, the house built on the rock does not fall. The person who has set his life upon the word of God is not shaken in any trial. Through this teaching Luke tells us that hearing the word and doing it is the unshakable foundation of life.

The gospel the word points to

The word of God that the Gospel of Luke emphasizes moves, in the end, toward Jesus Christ and the salvation He accomplished. All the Scriptures testify of Christ (Luke 24:27), and in Jesus that word is fulfilled (Luke 4:21) Therefore to hear and keep the word of God is to believe and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The core of that gospel is this. Jesus took charge of the sins of all mankind by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan, and saved us by paying the price of those sins in full on the Cross. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The word of God is the seed of life that plants this completed salvation in our hearts, and when we receive this word with a good heart and

believe it, we come to bear the fruit of salvation.

Explain the figure of Jesus Christ obeying the will of God, shown in the Gospel of Luke

One of the deepest features of the Jesus Christ the Gospel of Luke portrays is His figure of obeying wholly the will of God the Father. Jesus, who had perfect humanity, submitted Himself wholly as a man before the Father's will, and that obedience reached at last to the death of the Cross. Luke carefully draws this journey of obedience across the whole Gospel, showing how Jesus accomplished the will of God.

Obedience from childhood

The obedience of Jesus appears from His childhood. That Jesus at twelve years old, staying in the temple, said, *"Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"* (Luke 2:49) shows that already at that young age He bore a heart turned toward the Father's will. At the same time He returned to His parents, and it is recorded that He *"was subject to them"* (Luke 2:51), growing up in obedience within the order of God.

Luke records that Jesus *"increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men"* (Luke 2:52). This reveals that Jesus, growing as true man, was wholly fulfilling a life of obedience to the Father's will.

This process of growth shows clearly that Jesus was true man. He did not come down from heaven in a completed state; He was born as a man, passed wholly through the life of a man, and walked the path of obeying the Father. Because there was this life of obedience, He could know our weakness and become the true Savior who would stand in our place.

It is also worth noting that only Luke recorded the visit of the twelve-year-old Jesus to the temple. This short account is a precious testimony showing that Jesus already knew His mission at a young age, and at the same time grew up obeying His parents within the order of God.

The obedience that overcame temptation

When He was tempted by the devil for forty days in the wilderness, Jesus drove back all those temptations with obedience to the Father's will (Luke 4:1–13). Each time the devil told Him to turn a stone into bread, offered to give Him the authority of the world, and enticed Him to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, Jesus answered with the word of God and kept the place of obedience, serving God only.

This victory in temptation was the event that confirmed Jesus' resolve not to pursue His own will or the glory of the world, but to walk only the way of salvation the Father had appointed. In the place where Adam fell by disobedience, Jesus, the second Adam, won the victory by obedience.

The victory in the wilderness was the prelude to the journey toward the Cross. Jesus drove back the temptation of the glory of the world and the easy way, and chose only the way of suffering and salvation the Father had appointed. Because there was this resolve of obedience, He could at last press on without wavering along the way of salvation, bearing the sin of the world.

Resolute steps toward Jerusalem

At the center of the Gospel of Luke sits the long journey in which Jesus goes toward Jerusalem. The word, "*when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem*" (Luke 9:51), shows that Jesus, though He knew the suffering of the Cross awaiting Him, went

resolutely toward that way.

This journey was not flight but steps of obedience. Jesus knew that He would take charge of the sin of the world at the time and place the Father had appointed, and He went up to Jerusalem of His own accord to accomplish that will. In these resolute steps is contained the complete obedience of Jesus toward the will of God.

In the course of this journey Jesus foretold His death several times, and yet did not stop on that way. These steps, in which He did not draw back though He knew the suffering set before Him, were obedience that sprang only from His love to save us.

Through this journey account Luke shows that the obedience of Jesus was not a moment's decision but continual obedience accomplished through a long journey. Jesus went toward the Cross confirming the Father's will at every step. This unwavering obedience accomplished our salvation.

A life that put the Father's will first

The whole life of Jesus was a life of obedience that put the Father's will first. He set His whole heart not on His own comfort or glory but on accomplishing the mission the Father had entrusted. From the word of His childhood, "*Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?*" (Luke 2:49), this heart of obedience was already flowing.

Such obedience was not compulsion forced upon Him but voluntary obedience welling up from love toward the Father. Because Jesus knew that the Father's will was the very way of saving all mankind, He gladly gave Himself to that will. This obedience of love forms the foundation of our salvation.

Obedience even to the Cross

The obedience of Jesus reaches its summit in Gethsemane.

The prayer, “*not My will, but Yours, be done*” (Luke 22:42), was a confession of complete obedience that laid His own will down wholly under the Father’s will. And that obedience was completed in the death of the Cross.

Jesus had already borne the sins of all the people of the world on His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan, and in obedience to the Father’s will He paid that price of sin in full on the Cross, and by rising again from the dead He confirmed the salvation that obedience accomplished. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Through the disobedience of Adam, sin and death came upon all mankind, but through the complete obedience of Jesus, the second Adam, salvation and life have been opened to us. The obedience of the Son of Man Jesus, who came to seek and to save the lost, is the firm rock of our salvation.

As what kind of Messiah does the Gospel of Luke introduce Jesus, and in what passages is that clearly revealed?

The Gospel of Luke clearly testifies that Jesus Christ is the Messiah the Old Testament Scriptures had long promised, that is, the Savior sent by God. Through the whole of His life, from the birth of Jesus to His resurrection, Luke shows that Jesus is the very Christ Israel had waited for, and further, the Savior of all mankind. Yet the Messiah Luke portrays was a Savior different from the expectation of the world, one who seeks out and serves the lowly.

The Messiah proclaimed from His birth

The Messiahship of Jesus is confirmed by heaven’s

proclamation from His birth. The angel Gabriel announces to Mary, *“the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David”* (Luke 1:32), foretelling that the baby to be born is the Messiah who will succeed to the throne of David. The angel who appeared to the shepherds also proclaims, *“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”* (Luke 2:11).

In the temple, Simeon, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, took the baby Jesus in his arms and praised, *“For my eyes have seen Your salvation”* (Luke 2:30), and of the prophetess Anna also it is recorded that she *“spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem”* (Luke 2:38). In this way Luke firmly establishes the Messiahship of Jesus through the various testimonies surrounding His birth.

What these various testimonies emphasize as one is the fact that the Messiahship of Jesus was confirmed not by human judgment but by heaven’s proclamation. The angels and devout people led by the Holy Spirit testified with one voice of this baby as the Savior and the Christ. This shows that the Messiahship of Jesus is a sure truth that came from God.

What is especially worth noting in this birth account is the fact that the coming of the Savior took place in the lowest place, a manger (Luke 2:7) That the Messiah who came as the King of all mankind was born in the most humble place is a sign showing from the very start that He came to seek and save the lowly.

Also, that John the Baptist leaped in the womb (Luke 1:41) and welcomed the Messiah to come, and that Anna and Simeon testified of the baby Jesus in the temple, show that the devout, old and young alike, had waited for this Messiah with one heart. The long waiting was answered at last.

The Messiah revealed through His ministry

After reading the word of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus declared, “*Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing*” (Luke 4:21), publicly making plain that He is the anointed Messiah. That very ministry of preaching the gospel to the poor and setting at liberty the oppressed was the sign of the Messiah.

When Peter confessed, “*The Christ of God*” (Luke 9:20), Jesus acknowledged it, and yet immediately went on to say that He must suffer and be killed and be raised the third day (Luke 9:22) This shows that Jesus is not the Messiah as a political victor, but the Messiah who would accomplish salvation as the suffering Servant.

The miracles and teachings of Jesus were one and all signs of the Messiah. The power with which He healed the sick, cast out demons, and raised the dead was the proof showing that the kingdom of God had come in Him. To the disciples John the Baptist sent, Jesus pointed to these very signs and confirmed that He is the Coming One (Luke 7:22)

The Messiah as the suffering Servant

The Messiah Luke portrays was quite different from the expectation of the world. Many Jews of the day expected as Messiah a political liberator who would deliver the nation from the oppression of Rome. But Jesus went not toward a throne but toward the Cross, and rather than reigning, He served and gave His own life as a ransom.

After His resurrection Jesus said, “*Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?*” (Luke 24:26), making plain that the suffering of the Messiah was the predestined will of God. The Messiah took charge of the sins of all mankind by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan, and paid the price of those sins on the Cross. Therefore the suffering

and death of the Cross were not His failure but the way of victory by which He accomplished salvation as the Messiah.

That Jesus refused the way of a political liberator and chose the way of suffering was because the true problem of mankind lay not in the oppression of Rome but in sin. The deepest chain that binds a person was not oppression from outside but the sin within. Jesus walked the way of the suffering Servant to solve this very problem of sin at its root.

This way of lowering that Jesus walked was something the wisdom of the world could not understand. Yet through this very lowering God accomplished the greatest salvation. The Cross was not the failure of the Messiah but the power and wisdom of God, who saved all mankind.

The Messiah who came as the Savior of all peoples

The Messiah the Gospel of Luke portrays was not the King of Israel only but the Savior of all mankind. Simeon, holding the baby Jesus, sang of Him as “*A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles*” (Luke 2:32), and the genealogy of Jesus reaches back to Adam, the ancestor of all mankind (Luke 3:38) This shows that the Messiahship of Jesus is directed beyond one people toward the whole world.

The risen Jesus commanded that “*repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*” (Luke 24:47). The fact that the Messiah promised to Israel was in truth the Savior who came to save all mankind is fully revealed here.

The gospel the Messiahship points to

The Messiahship of Jesus that the Gospel of Luke testifies of points, in the end, to the completion of salvation toward all mankind. Jesus came as the King who would succeed to the

throne of David, and as the Savior who would take charge of the sin of the world as the suffering Servant. The place where these two figures meet as one is the Cross.

Jesus the Messiah took over the sins of all mankind onto Himself by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan, and completed salvation by paying the price of those sins in full on the Cross and rising again from the dead. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Messiahship of Jesus shines truly not in splendid conquest, but within this humble and complete work of redemption, in which He sought out the lost, took charge of their sins in their place, and saved them.

The Messiahship of Jesus comes down, in the end, to the completion of salvation toward all mankind. He, the King who succeeds to the throne of David and the suffering Servant, lowered Himself for us and accomplished salvation by taking charge of our sins. Whoever believes in this humble Messiah comes to enjoy the grace of salvation.

Where in the Gospel of Luke are the Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus Christ fulfilled?

The Gospel of Luke repeatedly emphasizes that the life of Jesus Christ is the event that fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures. Luke shows that His birth, His ministry, and His suffering, death, and resurrection were all the accomplishment of the plan of God prophesied long before through the prophets. This emphasis on fulfillment confirms that Jesus is the true Messiah whom all the Scriptures testify of.

The fulfillment of the prophecies concerning His birth

The birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of several Old Testament prophecies. The angel told Mary that the baby to be born would succeed to “*the throne of His father David*” (Luke 1:32), and this was the fulfillment of the prophecy that an eternal King would come from the seed of David (2 Samuel 7:12–16). That Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the city of David (Luke 2:4–7), also connects with the prophecy concerning the birthplace of the Messiah.

The song of Zacharias sings this fulfillment clearly. The expressions “*The oath which He swore to our father Abraham*” (Luke 1:73) and “*As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets*” (Luke 1:70) make plain that the coming of Jesus is the event in which the covenants given to Abraham and to David, and the prophecies of the prophets, are fulfilled.

Such fulfillment shows that the coming of Jesus was not an impromptu event but the realization of the plan of salvation God had prepared long before. The promise given to Abraham and the covenant given to David passed through hundreds of years and were accomplished in Jesus Christ. God is the faithful One, who surely fulfills what He has promised.

When we behold such fulfillment, we are moved by the faithfulness of God. If a promise given hundreds of years before was fulfilled without the slightest deviation, the promise of salvation given to us today will also surely be fulfilled. Fulfilled prophecy is the firm ground of our hope.

The fulfillment of the prophecies concerning His ministry

The ministry of John the Baptist is introduced as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah: “*The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD*” (Luke 3:4). Through this quotation Luke makes plain that John the Baptist

is the prophet who prepares the way of the Messiah.

That Jesus, in the synagogue at Nazareth, after reading the word of Isaiah chapter 61, *“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor”* (Luke 4:18), declared, *“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”* (Luke 4:21), was His public proclamation that the prophecy concerning the ministry of the Messiah was being fulfilled in Him.

That both the ministry of John the Baptist and the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus are introduced as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy shows that the plan of God’s salvation was prepared long before and accomplished at the exact time. This precise interlocking of prophecy and fulfillment reveals the unity of the whole Bible.

The fulfillment of the prophecies concerning His suffering and death

Jesus made plain that His suffering and death also were the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. His saying, *“this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: And He was numbered with the transgressors”* (Luke 22:37), was His word that the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 53 concerning the suffering Servant would be fulfilled in Him.

In this way the suffering of Jesus on the Cross was not an accidental tragedy but the event in which the plan of redemption, prophesied long before through the prophets, was accomplished. Through this, Luke makes clear that the death of Jesus was the fulfillment of salvation accomplished within the appointed will of God.

That Jesus applied to Himself Isaiah’s prophecy of the suffering Servant shows that He received that suffering as the will of God. Isaiah chapter 53 sings that He bore our iniquities

and gave us peace, and Jesus carried the Cross to fulfill this very prophecy.

Christ prefigured as the Lamb

The Old Testament Scriptures prefigured the Christ to come in various ways. The Passover lamb (Exodus chapter 12), the sacrificial system of the tabernacle, and the bronze serpent in the wilderness (Numbers chapter 21) were all shadows showing in advance the Savior who was to come. That the Gospel of Luke places the death of Jesus around the Passover (Luke 22:1 and following) naturally reveals the connection with this prefiguration.

All these types pointed to the Christ who would come as the Lamb without blemish and take charge of the sin of the world. The sacrificial system of the Old Testament was repeated because none of it could take away sin completely, and only Jesus Christ fulfilled all those types as the perfect Offering, offered once and for all.

The fulfillment of all the Scriptures made plain by the resurrection

The risen Jesus made plain Himself that all the Scriptures testify of Him and were fulfilled. To the two disciples going to Emmaus, *“beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself”* (Luke 24:27), and to the disciples He 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).

The climax of this fulfillment is the completion of salvation. Jesus took charge of the sins of all mankind by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan, paid their price on the Cross, and accomplished salvation by rising again from the dead. This

was the fulfillment of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, to which all the prophecies of the Old Testament had pointed. Luke testifies that all the Scriptures were fulfilled as one in Jesus Christ, confirming that our salvation was accomplished within the eternal plan of God.

The risen Jesus opened the Scriptures to the disciples so that they would become witnesses of this fulfillment and preach the gospel to the whole world. When one is convinced that the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in Christ, that conviction leads on to bold testimony. When we today also look upon this fulfillment with faith, we hold fast the certainty of our salvation.

Why is the Gospel of Luke also called ‘the Gospel of the Son of Man’?

The Gospel of Luke is commonly called by the byname ‘the Gospel of the Son of Man.’ This is because the Gospel of Luke especially emphasizes the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ and portrays Him as the son of a man, that is, the Son of Man. Luke movingly testifies of how Jesus, the Son of God, came as true man, carried together the weakness of man, became the friend of the lowly and of sinners, and saved all mankind.

The Gospel that emphasizes His perfect humanity

The Gospel of Luke draws the human aspects of Jesus in singular detail. It records at length the birth and growth of the baby Jesus (Luke chapter 2), and narrates that Jesus “*increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*” (Luke 2:52), showing that He grew up as true man. This reveals that Jesus is the Son of God and at the same time perfect man.

The figures of Jesus growing weary and praying, shedding tears and being tempted (Luke 19:41, 22:44) also testify of His true humanity. Luke draws Jesus not only as a transcendent being in the glory of heaven, but as the Son of Man, who knows our weakness from the same position as ours.

The perfect humanity of Jesus is an element that can never be missing in our salvation. Because the sin man committed had to be paid by man, God came, having become man. Only Jesus, who became true man, could stand in our place and act in our stead. The humanity of Jesus that the Gospel of Luke emphasizes is the firm foundation of our salvation.

At the same time Luke also testifies clearly that Jesus is not merely a man but the Son of God. That He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), received the Father's acknowledgment from heaven (Luke 3:22), and holds the authority to heal diseases and to remit sins shows that He is true God. Jesus is perfect God and at the same time perfect man.

This true man Jesus whom the Gospel of Luke portrays becomes a great comfort to us. He is the One who knows in His own body our hunger and weariness, our sorrow and temptation. To Him, who knows our weakness, we can come boldly and seek grace and help.

The genealogy reaching back to Adam

The character of the Gospel of the Son of Man is revealed distinctly in the genealogy of Jesus as well. Luke does not stop the genealogy of Jesus at Abraham but traces it back to "*the son of Adam, the son of God*" (Luke 3:38). This shows that Jesus is not the Messiah of the Jewish people only, but the true man representing all the descendants of Adam, that is, all mankind.

Jesus, the second Adam, came to restore by obedience what the first man Adam lost by disobedience. This genealogy

reaching back to Adam symbolically confirms that Jesus came as the true man who would bear the sin and weakness of all mankind.

The Son of Man who seeks the lost

In the Gospel of Luke, the title “*the Son of Man*” is deeply connected especially with the ministry of seeking and saving the lost. In the house of the tax collector Zacchaeus, Jesus declared, “*the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10). This word is the declaration that compresses the mission of the Son of Man that the Gospel of Luke portrays.

Jesus the Son of Man ate with sinners, became the friend of tax collectors and sinners, and embraced those the world had cast off. He came not to judge people from a high place, but came down to the low place to seek and to save the lost. This is the true figure of the Son of Man that Luke portrays.

This figure of the Son of Man Jesus seeking the lost is beautifully expressed in the picture of the shepherd who goes out to find the one lost sheep. Like the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine and goes out to find the one that is lost, Jesus never gives up one lost sinner. This is the heart of Jesus, who came as the Son of Man.

The Son of Man who became the friend of sinners

Jesus, who came as the Son of Man, gladly took upon Himself to be the friend of sinners. To the point that people slandered Him, “*Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!*” (Luke 7:34), Jesus ate and drank with those the world had cast off and remained among them.

This shows that Jesus, who came as the Son of Man, is the Savior who does not judge people from a high place, but comes down to the low place and is with sinners. He who became true

man stood in our place and bore on His own body our weakness and sin. This love, by which He became the friend of sinners, is the very core of the Gospel of the Son of Man.

The gospel the Son of Man points to

The reason the Gospel of Luke is called the Gospel of the Son of Man is, in the end, that this Gospel testifies of the Son of Man Jesus, who came to save all mankind. Only Jesus, who became true man, could take charge of man's sin in his place, and as true man He could pay the price of that sin in our stead.

Jesus the Son of Man took the sins of all mankind on His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan, and saved the lost by paying the price of those sins in full on the Cross. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as the word says, "*the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10), Jesus, who came as the son of a man, put Himself in the same position as ours and is the true Savior who saved us.

Divide the overall structure of the Gospel of Luke, and explain the main content of each part

The Gospel of Luke unfolds in order, from the birth and preparation of Jesus Christ, through His ministry in Galilee, the long journey toward Jerusalem, and on to His suffering, death, and resurrection in Jerusalem. If, following this flow, we divide the outline of this Gospel into six large parts and examine them, we can survey at a glance the footsteps of the Son of Man Jesus, who came to seek and to save the lost.

The preface and the birth account (Luke 1:1–2:52)

The Gospel of Luke begins with an elaborate preface dedicated to Theophilus (Luke 1:1–4). Then the stories of the births of John the Baptist and of Jesus unfold in detail. From the annunciation of the angel Gabriel, the visit of Mary, the births of John the Baptist and of Jesus, the worship of the shepherds, and the presentation in the temple, to the visit of the twelve-year-old Jesus to the temple, this part is full of the testimonies of heaven and earth surrounding the coming of the Savior.

Especially in this part are contained beautiful songs, such as Mary's song, Zacharias' song, and Simeon's song, singing in worship the joy of the salvation God accomplished. The working of the Holy Spirit appears throughout, testifying that the birth of the Savior was accomplished within the will of God.

This part embraces heaven and earth, old Zacharias and young Mary, the aged in the temple and the shepherds in the fields, testifying of the coming of the Savior with many voices. This opening, which proclaims with such rich testimony that the Savior the whole world had long waited for has come at last, becomes the prelude to the whole Gospel that follows.

The preparation for His ministry (Luke 3:1–4:13)

This part handles the course of preparation for the public ministry of Jesus. First, John the Baptist preaches the baptism of repentance in the wilderness and prepares the way of the Lord. Then Jesus, by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan, takes over the sins of all mankind onto His own body. At that moment the Holy Spirit comes upon Him and the voice of the Father is heard from heaven (Luke 3:21–22).

Then the genealogy tracing back to Adam is presented (Luke 3:23–38), showing that Jesus is the representative of all mankind, and the scene follows in which He overcomes the temptation of

the devil for forty days in the wilderness (Luke 4:1–13) With this, the preparation for Jesus to open the door of His ministry with obedience is completed.

The Galilean ministry (Luke 4:14–9:50)

Jesus begins His ministry in earnest in Galilee. He proclaims His mission with the word of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–21), heals the sick and casts out demons, calls His disciples, and preaches the gospel of the kingdom of God. The Sermon on the Plain (Luke chapter 6), various parables, and the miracles of raising the dead are contained in this part.

At the summit of this ministry, Peter confesses Jesus as “*The Christ of God*” (Luke 9:20), and on the Mount of Transfiguration the glory of Jesus is revealed (Luke 9:28–36) Jesus foretells His suffering and death and resurrection. And to pay the price of the sin of the world He had already taken charge of by receiving baptism from John, He sets out on the journey toward the Cross.

The journey toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51–19:27)

This long journey account, which forms the central part of the Gospel of Luke, begins with the declaration “*when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem*” (Luke 9:51). Going on toward Jerusalem, Jesus gives many teachings and parables.

The parable of the good Samaritan, the Lord’s Prayer, the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin and the lost son, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, and other precious teachings contained only in the Gospel of Luke unfold in the course of this journey. This journey is the very steps of obedience toward the Cross, the part where the heart of the Son of Man seeking the lost is revealed most richly.

The last week in Jerusalem (Luke 19:28–21:38)

With Jesus' entry into Jerusalem the last week begins. He enters humbly, riding on a donkey (Luke 19:28–40), cleanses the temple (Luke 19:45–46), and teaches daily in the temple. During this period Jesus disputes with His adversaries and speaks of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and of the end.

In this part Jesus weeps as He looks upon Jerusalem (Luke 19:41–44), revealing the heart of God toward that city. Even before the world's rejection, the steps of Jesus, seeking to accomplish salvation, do not stop.

The suffering and death and resurrection (Luke 22:1–24:53)

The climax of the Gospel of Luke is the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This part is the place where Jesus, who had taken the sins of all mankind on His body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan, now pays that price of sin in full. The Last Supper and the institution of Communion, the prayer of Gethsemane, the arrest and trials, and the death of the Cross are recorded in order. On the Cross Jesus prays forgiveness for His enemies, promises Paradise to the criminal hanged with Him, and commits His spirit to the Father (Luke 23:34, 43, 46)

And at last the morning of the resurrection dawns. From the empty tomb, His appearing to the disciples going to Emmaus, His making plain to the disciples the fulfillment of all the Scriptures, and on to the ascension, this part testifies of the completion of salvation. Jesus bore the sin of the world by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan, and paid its price on the Cross. This finale, in which that redemption is confirmed by the resurrection, is the very completion of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Luke records even the scene of the risen Jesus eating food with the disciples (Luke 24:41–43), emphasizing the reality of the resurrection. This confirms that the resurrection of Jesus was not a vision or a spiritual notion but an actual event of rising again in the body. Upon this sure resurrection our living hope is built.

What is the key verse that leads the whole Gospel of Luke, and what does that verse say?

The central verse of the Gospel of Luke is “*The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10). This one verse most fully compresses the spirit and purpose of the whole Gospel of Luke. This word, which Jesus Himself proclaimed in the house of the tax collector Zacchaeus, makes clear why He came into the world, and for whom He came.

The verse proclaimed within the story of Zacchaeus

This verse appears at the end of the story of Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector. Zacchaeus was rich, yet because he was a tax collector he was treated as a sinner by the people. When he climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus, Jesus called him and stayed at his house. While the people murmured that Jesus had gone to lodge at a sinner’s house (Luke 19:7), Jesus saw the changed heart of Zacchaeus and declared, “*Today salvation has come to this house*” (Luke 19:9).

It was in that very place that Jesus said, “*the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10). This verse is a great declaration that goes beyond the story of the salvation of the one man Zacchaeus and proclaims the purpose of the whole coming of Jesus.

The story of Zacchaeus shows vividly the meaning of this verse. Jesus Himself sought out the chief tax collector at whom people pointed their fingers as a sinner, and stayed at his house. The world had cast him off, but Jesus sought him. The heart of the Son of Man seeking the lost is contained just as it is in this one man's story of salvation.

That Zacchaeus, after meeting Jesus, resolved to give half of his goods to the poor and to restore fourfold what he had taken by false accusation (Luke 19:8) shows that true salvation leads on to a changed life. The one who has been sought by Jesus becomes a new person. The grace that seeks the lost is the power that makes a person new from the root.

The heart of God toward the lost

This verse condenses the heart of God toward the lost that flows throughout the Gospel of Luke. As revealed in the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin and the lost son (Luke chapter 15), God is the One who pours out His whole heart to find one lost person. Jesus was the very embodiment of the love of God, who came to seek that lost one.

The world turned away from tax collectors and sinners and the poor and the marginalized, but Jesus sought them out and became their friend. This love that seeks the lost is the essence of the gospel that the Gospel of Luke testifies of from beginning to end.

In these parables God is portrayed as the One who rejoices together with His neighbors when He has found what was lost. Jesus' word that there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7) shows how greatly God rejoices over the salvation of each one of us.

When the Pharisees murmured that Jesus receives sinners and eats with them (Luke 15:2), Jesus answered with these very

three parables of finding what was lost. This shows how different the heart of God is from the judgment of the world. The world condemns the sinner, but God delights to seek and save that sinner.

The meaning contained in the title the Son of Man

That this verse begins with the title “*the Son of Man*” also carries deep meaning. Jesus is the Son of God, and at the same time He came as the son of a man, that is, as true man with perfect humanity. Because He became true man, He could take charge of man’s sin in his place, and could come down to man’s place and seek the lost.

Jesus, who came as the Son of Man, did not call people from a high place; He came down in person to the low place and went out to seek the lost one by one. This humble love is the heart contained in the title the Son of Man.

The title “*the Son of Man*” also points, in the book of Daniel in the Old Testament, to the glorious One coming with the clouds of heaven (Daniel 7:13) Jesus is the son of man who lowered Himself, and at the same time the Son of Man who will come in glory. The place where these two figures meet as one is the Jordan and the Cross and the resurrection. In that place of lowering, where He bore the sin of the world by receiving baptism from John and paid its price on the Cross, the glory of the Son of Man was revealed. The Son of Man, who saved us by His lowering, will at last come again in glory.

In this way the title the Son of Man holds together the lowering and the exaltation. The Son of Man, who came to the low place to seek the lost, will come again in glory after completing that salvation. Between these two comings, we enjoy the grace of the salvation already accomplished and wait for the Lord who will come again.

The theme verse that runs through the whole Gospel of Luke

The reason this verse is counted as the central verse is that this one verse fully contains the theme of the whole Gospel of Luke. The universality of the salvation of all peoples, the concern toward the poor and sinners, the love of God seeking the lost, and the ministry of the Son of Man with perfect humanity are all condensed within this one verse.

So it is with the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin and the lost son (Luke chapter 15), so with the stories of the tax collector Zacchaeus and the woman who poured out the fragrant oil, and so with the criminal beside the Cross receiving the promise of Paradise. Every story of the Gospel of Luke gathers, in the end, into this one verse, the ministry of the Son of Man seeking and saving the lost.

The gospel the central verse points to

This central verse points, in the end, to the core of the gospel that saves all mankind. That Jesus came to seek and to save the lost means that He took charge of those sinners' sins in their place and paid the price of those sins in their stead. It is because the seeking must be completed in salvation.

The Son of Man Jesus took the sins of all mankind on His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan, and by paying the price of those sins in full on the Cross and rising again from the dead on the third day, He saved the lost completely. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Within this one verse, "*the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10), is contained the whole gospel of Jesus Christ, who came to us, took charge of our sins, and saved us.

The Old Testament quoted in the Gospel of Luke

Although the Gospel of Luke was written toward Gentile readers, it quotes and reflects the Old Testament abundantly in order to present the life and ministry of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. Not only by direct quotation but by melting the language and images of the Old Testament into every part, Luke confirms that Jesus is the true Messiah whom all the Scriptures testify of. Below we will examine the main Old Testament texts quoted and reflected in the Gospel of Luke.

The Old Testament reflected in the birth and childhood accounts

The first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke are filled with the language of the Old Testament Scriptures. Mary's song (Luke 1:46–55) deeply reflects the prayer of Hannah in 1 Samuel chapter 2, singing the grace of God, who exalts the lowly and brings down the proud. Zacharias' song (Luke 1:68–79) embraces the oath sworn to Abraham (Genesis chapter 22), the covenant of David, and the prophecies of various prophets, praising the fulfillment of salvation.

Simeon's song (Luke 2:29–32) reflects the language of the book of Isaiah, singing of Jesus as "*A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles*" (see Isaiah 42:6, 49:6). Also, the scene of bringing Jesus to the temple to present Him (Luke 2:22–24) follows the purification ordinance and the ordinance of presenting the firstborn in Exodus and Leviticus (Exodus chapter 13, Leviticus chapter 12), showing that Jesus was born under the law.

The fact that the opening of the Gospel of Luke is woven with the language of the Old Testament shows that the coming

of Jesus was not a new event severed from the Old Testament but the fulfillment of the salvation prepared long before. Hannah's song leads into Mary's song, the covenant of Abraham into the praise of Zacharias, testifying that the whole Old Testament has flowed toward the coming of Christ.

That Luke began the Gospel with the language of the Old Testament to this extent was to show even Gentile readers that the coming of Jesus is the fulfillment of the salvation long promised by the God of Israel. The very fact that a Gentile author emphasizes the fulfillment of the Old Testament testifies that this salvation is directed toward all mankind.

The Old Testament quoted at John the Baptist and the beginning of the ministry

Introducing the appearance of John the Baptist, Luke quotes the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 40. "*The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight*" (Luke 3:4) is the word of Isaiah chapter 40 verse 3 and following, and quoting it at greater length than the other Gospels, he takes in even the promise of the salvation of all peoples, "*all flesh shall see the salvation of God*" (Luke 3:6).

The word Jesus read in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:18–19) carries the content of Isaiah chapter 61 verse 1 and following and of Isaiah chapter 58. This quotation, "*The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor*", proclaims that Isaiah's prophecy concerning the ministry of the Messiah was fulfilled in Jesus. Also, in the temptation in the wilderness, Jesus quoted the words of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:13, 6:16) and drove back the devil (Luke 4:4, 8, 12)

In particular, that Luke quoted Isaiah chapter 40 at greater length than the other Gospels, taking in even the verse "*all flesh*

shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6), shows well his intention to emphasize the universality of the salvation of all peoples. Within the prophecy of the Old Testament, the promise of salvation toward all mankind was already contained.

Also, the point that in the temptation in the wilderness Jesus drove back the devil all three times with the words of Deuteronomy shows that the word of God is the power that overcomes temptation. Jesus overcame the enticement only by holding fast the written word. This teaches us also that the word is the most powerful weapon of the spiritual fight.

The Old Testament quoted in His teachings and disputes

Old Testament quotations appear often in the teachings of Jesus as well. When a lawyer asked the way of eternal life, Jesus asked back what is written in the law. Then he joined Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 and answered, *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself”* (Luke 10:27), and Jesus acknowledged that his answer was right (Luke 10:28)

When He entered Jerusalem, the multitude cried out the word of Psalm 118:26, *“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!”* (Luke 19:38), and when He cleansed the temple, Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 and rebuked them, *“My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves”* (Luke 19:46). Also, in the dispute about the resurrection, on the ground of the word of Exodus chapter 3, He made plain that God is the God of the living (Luke 20:37)

The fact that Jesus quoted the Old Testament Scriptures so freely and with such authority shows that He is the Master of all the Scriptures. Jesus was not only a teacher who knew the Scriptures well; He was the very Messiah the Scriptures testify of.

The Old Testament quoted at His suffering and death

Jesus made plain that His suffering and death were the fulfillment of the Old Testament. After the Last Supper, Jesus quoted the word of Isaiah 53:12, “*And He was numbered with the transgressors*” (Luke 22:37), saying that the prophecy concerning the suffering Servant would be fulfilled in Him. When He foretold that the adversaries would reject the cornerstone, He quoted Psalm 118:22, “*The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone*” (Luke 20:17).

The last prayer Jesus offered on the Cross, “*Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit*” (Luke 23:46), was His taking over, just as it is, the word of Psalm 31:5. In this way Luke shows in fine detail that even to the last moment of Jesus the word of the Old Testament Scriptures was being fulfilled.

The fact that Jesus understood and received His suffering as the fulfillment of the Old Testament is very important. He did not carry the Cross under compulsion; He knew the plan of salvation of God prophesied long before and fulfilled it willingly. Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the suffering Servant was wholly fulfilled in Jesus.

The fulfillment of all the Scriptures confirmed by the resurrection

The risen Jesus made plain Himself that all the Scriptures testify of Him and were fulfilled. To the two disciples going to Emmaus, “*beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself*” (Luke 24:27), and to the disciples He 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 His declaration that the whole Old Testament, divided into

the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms, testifies of Christ.

All these Old Testament Scriptures quoted and reflected in the Gospel of Luke point, in the end, in one direction: the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in which Jesus Christ bore the sin of the world by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan and saved all mankind by paying its price on the Cross. That salvation, long prophesied and prefigured by the whole Old Testament from Genesis to the Psalms and the prophetic books, was wholly fulfilled in the Son of Man Jesus, who came to seek and to save the lost. Through this fulfillment of the Old Testament, Luke testifies that our salvation was surely accomplished within the eternal plan of God.

Through this testimony of fulfillment, Luke plants assurance in Theophilus and in every reader. The coming and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ were not chance but the plan of God prophesied by all the Scriptures. When we stand upon this assurance, our faith becomes a rock that is never shaken. ☒

CHAPTER

1



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Luke Chapter 1

seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Introduction

In Luke chapter 1, the promises of the Old Testament and their fulfillment appear in many scenes. God promised to send John the Baptist, who would prepare the way of the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah; to cause Jesus Christ, who would inherit the throne of David, to be born of a virgin; and to shine the light of the remission of sins according to the covenant He had made with Abraham. Luke chapter 1 testifies that those promises are not notions or myths but facts that began to be fulfilled within history.

Now, we intend to read this chapter from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. In this chapter, the scenes of Jesus receiving baptism from John, or dying on the Cross and rising again, do not yet appear. However, the way of that salvation is clearly prepared. John the Baptist is born as the one who would go before the Lord, prepare the people, and make known the salvation that comes through the remission of sins. Jesus comes as the Son of God and as the horn of salvation that God raised up in the house of David. The praises of Mary, Elizabeth, and Zacharias show that this salvation is accomplished not by human merit or ability but by the word and

mercy of God.

Therefore, Luke chapter 1 is not merely a preface announcing the births of two babies. It is the beginning of the gospel that shows how God prepared, within one plan, both the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist and the saving ministry of Jesus Christ.

1. It is the gospel built on certain facts (Luke 1:1–4)

“Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed” (Luke 1:1–4).

Luke does not introduce the gospel as human imagination or religious sentiment. He examined carefully from the very first the things that the eyewitnesses had delivered, and wrote them down in order, so that Theophilus might know the certainty of the things he had been instructed in. The gospel is based not on vague comfort or man-made doctrine but on the facts that God has accomplished in history.

This starting point is important for understanding the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The remission of sins is not a psychological conviction that a person gains by persuading his own mind. It is to know and believe, through the written word, the actual work of salvation—that Jesus came in the flesh, received baptism from John, died on the Cross bearing the sin of the world, and rose from the dead. Faith does not replace the facts; it accepts the facts that God has accomplished.

2. It is John who would make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:5–17)

“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.’” (Luke 1:5–17).

The birth of John was prepared within the concrete history of the days of Herod and within the background of a priestly family—Zacharias, a priest of the division of Abijah, and Elizabeth, a daughter of Aaron. Luke testifies that John’s role did not arise by chance but belongs to the plan of salvation that

God had ordained long beforehand.

John is not the Christ. He is great in the sight of the Lord, and he is the prophet who would go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, turn the people back to God, and prepare them for the Lord. The mission of Elijah promised in Malachi 4:5–6 leads to the mission of John the Baptist in Luke 1:17. His ministry is not to bind people's attention to himself, but to turn them to Jesus Christ who comes after him.

The importance of John also lies exactly here. The messenger who would prepare the way in Malachi 3:1 is foretold in Luke 1:76, and the voice in the wilderness in Isaiah 40:3 is directly connected to John the Baptist in Luke 3:4. John preached repentance, baptized Jesus, and testified of Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Luke chapter 1 shows the root of all that ministry within the promise of John's birth.

3. Even when man fails to believe, God fulfills the word He promised (Luke 1:18–25)

“And Zacharias said to the angel, ‘How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.’ And the angel answered and said to him, ‘I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time.’ And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five

months, saying, ‘Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.’” (Luke 1:18–25).

Zacharias, looking at his own old age and his wife’s years, could not believe the angel’s words. The text judges his question to be not a simple request for information but unbelief. As a result, he became unable to speak until the day the Word would be fulfilled. However, Zacharias’s unbelief could not nullify God’s promise. When the time came, Elizabeth conceived, and the words God had spoken were fulfilled just as they were.

Here, faith is not a human power that produces God’s power. God is the One who promises and who fulfills that promise. Man must not make his own experience and ability the absolute standard, but must accept what God has done. The remission of sins, too, is not something a sinner makes possible by his own effort; it is the grace that God has accomplished in Christ and lets us receive by faith.

4. He is the King of David’s line, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:26–38)

“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, ‘Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!’ But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He

will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’ Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’ And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.’ Then Mary said, ‘Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her” (Luke 1:26–38).

If the birth of John was a special work God performed for an old couple, the conception of Jesus is a greater work of salvation accomplished by the Holy Spirit. The promise of the virgin conception in Isaiah 7:14 was fulfilled in the event of Jesus being conceived by the Holy Spirit. Also, the promise of David’s throne in 2 Samuel 7:12 and 16 is fulfilled in Luke 1:32–33 in Jesus, who will reign as King forever. The promise of the Seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15 is also connected to the coming of Jesus in the whole flow of the gospel. The Son of God came as true man in order to accomplish salvation in His own body on behalf of sinners.

Mary’s question was not treated the same as Zacharias’s question. The angel rebuked Zacharias for not believing, but to Mary he explained the work of the Holy Spirit and the power of God. Mary did not believe only after understanding every incomprehensible process; she accepted the word of God and entrusted herself as the servant of the Lord.

This scene is also connected to faith today. If a person holds only to his own experience, he may find it hard to accept even the word that Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world

through the one baptism He received from John, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and became the perfect Savior through His resurrection. However, salvation depends not on human common sense but on the facts God has testified to through the written word. Just as Mary accepted the Word, sinners must receive the salvation that God has accomplished in Jesus Christ by faith, just as the Word says.

5. It is the blessedness of the woman who believed the words the Lord had spoken (Luke 1:39–45)

“Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.’” (Luke 1:39–45).

When Mary greeted Elizabeth, the babe leaped in her womb for joy, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth acknowledged Jesus, who was not yet born, as her Lord, and found the reason Mary was blessed in the fact that she had believed the words the Lord had spoken.

The center of the blessing lies not in the greatness of Mary as a person but in the word of God she accepted and in the Lord who was in her womb. It is the same with salvation. Blessed faith is not a faith that boasts of one’s own zeal or religious career; it is a faith that accepts the fact that the words the Lord has spoken

will surely be fulfilled. The Holy Spirit does not exalt human merit but testifies of who Jesus Christ is and what He would accomplish.

6. He is God who exalts the lowly and remembers His covenant (Luke 1:46–56)

“And Mary said: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever.’ And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house” (Luke 1:46–56).

Mary’s praise exalts God rather than herself. God regards the lowly maidservant, scatters the proud, exalts the lowly, and fills the hungry with good things. This reversal does not mean a mere exchange of social positions. The one who exalts himself before God and holds on to his own righteousness cannot receive grace, but the one who knows his own lowliness and need rejoices in the Savior and receives God’s mercy.

Mary, too, calls God her Savior. She is not a savior who bestows grace but a person who received grace. God did great things for her. In the remission of sins as well, a person must not exalt himself with his own good deeds and repeated religious acts, but must believe and rejoice in the great things God has

done through Jesus' baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

Mary's praise, in Luke 1:55, remembers the promise God made to Abraham and to his seed. This calls to mind together the blessing of all nations in Genesis 22:18 and the mercy to be shown to Abraham in Micah 7:20. The prophecy of Zacharias that follows proclaims still more clearly, in Luke 1:72–73, that holy covenant and the oath sworn to Abraham. The coming of Jesus is not the beginning of a new religion that suddenly appeared. It is the event in which the covenant God gave to Abraham and the salvation He promised through the prophets are fulfilled within history. The true seed of Abraham are not those who boast of their lineage or their own righteousness but those who receive by faith the salvation God has promised.

7. It is John, born according to the name God had spoken (Luke 1:57–66)

“Now Elizabeth’s full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her. So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. His mother answered and said, ‘No; he shall be called John.’ But they said to her, ‘There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name.’ So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, ‘His name is John.’ So they all marveled. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, ‘What kind of child will this be?’ And the hand of the Lord was with him” (Luke 1:57–66).

God's word was fulfilled not only in John's birth but also in the naming of the child. The custom of the relatives sought to follow the father's name, but Elizabeth and Zacharias followed the name the angel had delivered. When Zacharias wrote "John" on the writing tablet, his mouth was opened and he praised God.

This scene shows a faith that puts the word of God before human tradition. John's identity and mission did not come from the the expectations of his family or society, but from the name and calling God had given. The people kept this matter in their hearts and saw that the hand of the Lord was with the child. The way of salvation God had prepared did not arise by following human custom; it proceeded according to the Word.

8. He is the horn of salvation raised up in the house of David (Luke 1:67–75)

"Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: 'Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life'" (Luke 1:67–75).

The gaze of Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, did not rest on his own son alone. Just as promised in Psalm 132:17, in Luke 1:69 Zacharias first praised the horn of salvation raised up in the house of David—Jesus Christ. John is not the horn of salvation but the prophet who prepares the way before Him. The power of

salvation that redeems sinners and delivers them from the hand of their enemies belongs to Jesus, who comes as the descendant of David.

This salvation is the mercy of God, who remembered the promise spoken by the prophets and the oath sworn to Abraham. After delivering sinners, God does not keep them still bound in fear and condemnation. The purpose of salvation is that the delivered may serve before the Lord in holiness and righteousness without fear. Holiness and righteousness are not conditions a sinner must first accumulate to obtain salvation; they are the result of being enabled to serve before God as one who has received the salvation of Jesus Christ.

9. It is the knowledge of the remission of sins and the way of peace (Luke 1:76–80)

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace.’ So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel” (Luke 1:76–80).

Zacharias now prophesies directly about John’s mission. As the prophet of the Highest, John goes before the Lord and prepares His ways. In particular, he is the one who would make known to the Lord’s people the salvation that comes through the remission of sins. The remission of sins becomes clear not through vague feelings but through knowing how God has removed sin.

Later, John baptized Jesus and testified that He is the Lamb

of God who takes away the sin of the world. John is not a savior who removes sin; he is the prophet who passed the sin of the world on to Jesus by baptizing Him and made known the way of the remission of sins by testifying of Him. Therefore, exalting the role of John is not exalting him above Jesus. It is acknowledging, according to the Scriptures, how God prepared the saving ministry of Jesus through John.

The great light prophesied in Isaiah 9:2 and the Sun of Righteousness prophesied in Malachi 4:2 lead to Jesus, the Dayspring of Luke 1:78–79, and He guides those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death into the way of peace. For those who feared God because of sin, true peace comes when the problem of sin is solved. Because Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and rose from the dead, those who believe these facts obtain the remission of sins and peace with God.

How was the salvation through the remission of sins, which Luke chapter 1 foretold, fulfilled?

Luke chapter 1 prophesies that John would go before the Lord, prepare His way, and make known to the Lord's people the salvation that comes through the remission of sins. That prophecy leads to concrete events in the public ministry of Jesus.

The Gospel of Luke records the testimony of the Holy Spirit and of God the Father at the time of Jesus' baptism as follows.

“When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, ‘You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.’” (Luke 3:21–22).

In these two verses Luke does not repeat the name of the one

who baptized, but the preceding context records John's ministry of baptism. The parallel passage in Matthew states explicitly that Jesus was baptized by John and connects its meaning with the righteousness of God.

“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).

John testified of Jesus, who had been baptized, as follows.

“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).

This event is connected with the atoning sacrifices of the Old Testament. Just as a sinner laid his hands on the sacrificial offering to pass his sins on to it and the offering was judged by shedding its blood, John, who was prepared as the representative of mankind, passed the sins of all mankind on to Jesus by baptizing Him, and Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world once and for all through that baptism. Therefore, John could testify that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Bearing the sin of the world that He had taken upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, Jesus went to the Cross, and by shedding His blood and dying He received the judgment of sin. And by rising from the dead, He overcame sin

and death and became the perfect Savior of those who believe.

“Who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification” (Romans 4:25).

Therefore, the incarnation of Jesus, the baptism He received from John, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection are one saving ministry that cannot be separated from one another. The incarnation is the event in which He came clothed in a body to take the place of sinners; the baptism is the event in which He received baptism from John and took upon Himself the sin of the world; the Cross is the event in which He received the judgment of that sin; and the resurrection is the event that revealed the perfection of that salvation. Luke chapter 1 prepares John and Jesus within God’s promise before all these things began.

What does it mean to be born again of water and the Spirit?

Jesus said to Nicodemus.

“Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’” (John 3:5).

The Apostle John says that the testimony of the water, the blood, and the Spirit is one.

“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 5:6–8).

The water refers to the baptism Jesus received from John, and the blood refers to His receiving on the Cross the judgment of the sin He had taken upon Himself through that baptism. The Holy Spirit testifies that this salvation is the truth of God. To

believe not in the water alone, nor in the blood of the Cross alone, nor in the work of the Holy Spirit alone, but to believe as one, within the testimony of the Holy Spirit, in the salvation that Jesus accomplished by the water and the blood—this is the faith of being born again of water and the Spirit.

Being born again is not a matter of heightening one's religious emotions or erasing one's sins little by little through repeated acts of repentance. When a sinner knows through the written word that he is a sinner before God, and believes the fact that Jesus took upon Himself all his sins through the baptism He received from John, paid the full price of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead, his heart obtains the remission of sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. Through this faith a person is moved from the old status of a sinner to a new life clothed in the righteousness of God.

The fact that Mary accepted the word of God does not mean that she became the agent of the work of salvation. God did great things for her. In the same way, those who are born again do not put forward their own faith as merit. They only accept, through the Word, the salvation God has already accomplished in Jesus Christ. Faith is not a human work that completes salvation; it is the response of a heart that receives the completed salvation.

Jesus Christ, who came according to the promise and shone the light of the remission of sins

Luke chapter 1 shows how God's promises began to move as the work of salvation. Luke examined carefully the facts that had been fulfilled and recorded them with certainty. God prepared John in the priestly family of Aaron and sent him before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah. Jesus, conceived by the Holy Spirit, is the Son of God who would inherit the throne of David forever, and the horn of salvation

raised up in the house of David.

Mary's praise and Zacharias's prophecy point toward one center. God regards the lowly and brings down the proud, and remembering the covenant He made with Abraham, He redeems His people. John prepares the way of that salvation and makes known the knowledge of the remission of sins. Jesus is the Master of that way and the One who actually accomplishes salvation.

The light of the remission of sins foretold in Luke chapter 1 shone fully in Jesus' baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world; on the Cross He received the judgment of that sin; and by rising from the dead He justified those who believe. Those who believe this gospel of the water and the blood through the testimony of the Holy Spirit come out of darkness and the shadow of death and walk the way of the remission of sins and peace.

Therefore, Luke chapter 1 does not tell us to look to human ability. Neither the old age of Zacharias and Elizabeth nor the fact that Mary was a virgin could stop the word of God. Neither can the deep sin and helplessness of sinners nullify the salvation God has accomplished. No word from God is without power. Those who believe in Jesus Christ, whom God sent according to His promise, and in the salvation He accomplished by the water and the blood receive the remission of sins, serve God without fear, and are guided into the way of peace. ☒

Questions and Answers on Luke Chapter 1

[Question] 1. What does Luke chapter 1 contain?

Luke chapter 1 shows how God began to fulfill in history the salvation He had promised, and how He prepared the coming of Jesus Christ and John the Baptist, who would prepare His way. It can be divided broadly into five parts.

First, verses 1–4 state the purpose for which the Gospel of Luke was written. Luke examined carefully from the very first the things concerning Jesus and then recorded them in order. It was so that Theophilus might know that what he had been taught was certain.

Second, verses 5–25 record the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist. The promise is given that a son will be born to Zacharias and Elizabeth, who were childless, and that he will take on the work of preparing the Lord's people. Zacharias becomes unable to speak because he does not believe these words, but according to the word of God, Elizabeth conceives a son.

Third, verses 26–38 record the announcement of the birth of Jesus. The angel Gabriel declares that the virgin Mary will conceive a son by the Holy Spirit, and that this Son is the Son of God and the King who will inherit the throne of David and reign forever. Mary faces something hard to understand, but she accepts the word of God.

Fourth, verses 39–56 show Mary's visit to Elizabeth and the praises of the two women. At Mary's greeting, John leaps in Elizabeth's womb, and Elizabeth blesses Mary and the baby she

has conceived. Mary praises the mercy and power of God, who regards a lowly person like herself and fulfills the promise given to Abraham.

Fifth, verses 57–80 record the birth of John the Baptist and the prophecy of Zacharias. When the child is born and receives the name John, Zacharias’s mouth is opened. Zacharias praises God, who comes to His people and saves them, and prophesies that John will go before the Lord and prepare the people. John grows and becomes strong in spirit, and lives in the deserts until the day he appears before the people.

Luke chapter 1 places the news of the births of John and Jesus side by side, but it does not put the two in the same position. John is the prophet who prepares the way of the Lord, and Jesus is the promised King and the Lord who will save His people. Therefore, the center of this chapter is not the marvelous birth stories themselves but the fact that God actually began, at the appointed time, the salvation He had promised long ago. Rather than human ability or the feelings of our own hearts, we must believe the written word of God and receive Jesus, who came according to that word, as our Savior.

[Question] 2. Luke 1:1–3, with what attitude did Luke record the Gospel of Luke?

“Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus” (Luke 1:1–3).

Luke recorded the Gospel of Luke with a very careful, faithful, and responsible attitude.

First, Luke treated the things concerning Jesus not as stories made up by human thinking but as facts that had actually taken place. He did not put forward the claims he wanted to make; he sought to record accurately what God had done in history.

Second, Luke respected what the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word had delivered. He did not speak of every event as though he had witnessed it himself. He accepted what those who had seen and heard Jesus' words and ministry from the beginning had handed down, and he sought to preserve their testimony faithfully. This shows that Luke valued the facts he had received before his own thoughts.

Third, Luke examined all things carefully from their very origin. He did not pick out only some stories or prominent events to record; he investigated closely how things began and through what course they came to pass. His recording even the background of the births of John the Baptist and Jesus was to show from the beginning how the work of salvation was prepared and begun.

Fourth, Luke recorded what he had investigated in order. He did not simply gather various stories together; he arranged them in an orderly way so that the reader could rightly understand the flow and meaning of the events concerning Jesus.

Luke's attitude can therefore be summed up as honesty about the facts, faithfulness to the testimony of the eyewitnesses, diligence in thorough examination, and a sense of responsibility to convey the content in an orderly way. The Gospel of Luke is not a book that records vague human imagination or religious legend. It is the word in which what God accomplished through Jesus Christ was carefully examined and recorded. Therefore, we too must not put our own thoughts or the feelings of our

hearts first, but must read the word Luke faithfully recorded and believe in Jesus revealed in that word.

[Question] 3. Luke 1:4, what does Luke say is the reason he sent this writing to Theophilus?

“That you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed” (Luke 1:4).

Luke sent this writing so that Theophilus might know that what he had already been taught was certain.

Theophilus was not a man who knew nothing of the word concerning Jesus. He was a man who had already received teaching about Jesus and the gospel. However, having been taught something and knowing and believing clearly that it is a true fact can be two different things. Luke recorded the Gospel of Luke so that Theophilus might understand more accurately what he had been taught and have the conviction that it was a trustworthy fact.

For this, Luke examined the things concerning Jesus carefully from the very first and faithfully arranged what the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word had handed down. By recording in order everything from the background of the births of John the Baptist and Jesus to Jesus’ words and ministry, His death, and His resurrection, he kept Theophilus from being shaken by people’s rumors or uncertain claims.

Therefore, the certainty spoken of here does not simply mean gaining much knowledge. It is to know clearly that the salvation God accomplished through Jesus Christ actually took place, and that the gospel one has been taught is the true word. Luke wanted Theophilus’s faith to stand firmly on the word that had been carefully examined and recorded, not to remain on vague

feelings or human claims.

We also must not rely only on our own thoughts or the feelings of our hearts when we believe in Jesus. We must confirm in the written word the work of salvation God accomplished through Jesus Christ and believe it. When we know and believe the word rightly, we are not shaken by people's words and false teachings, and we can live in the conviction that the gospel we believe is true.

[Question] 4. Luke 1:14–17, what work would John, who comes before the Lord “*in the spirit and power of Elijah*,” do?

“And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:14–17).

The angel declared that John, who was to be born, would turn many people back to God and do the work of preparing a people to receive the Lord.

First of all, John's birth would be a joy not only to Zacharias and Elizabeth but to many people. He would be great in the sight of the Lord, drink neither wine nor strong drink, and be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. This means that John was a servant set apart and prepared for God's special purpose even before he was born.

The first work entrusted to John was to turn the children of Israel back to God. At that time, many people claimed to serve God while opposing the word of God in their hearts. John had to expose their sins and cry out for repentance, so that those who had left God would return to Him.

The second work was to go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah. John the Baptist is the Elijah prophesied in the Old Testament to come. This does not mean that the old prophet Elijah was born again in the flesh, but that John carries out the same prophetic mission in the spirit and power of Elijah. Just as Elijah turned the people of Israel, who had fallen into idols, back to the living God, John also turned the hearts of the people back to God.

The third work was to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and to turn those who had opposed the word of God to the wisdom of the just. He had to awaken stubborn hearts, turn back the broken hearts between people, and lead those who had opposed God's will to accept the righteous word.

The purpose of all this ministry was to prepare a people for the Lord. John was not a savior who came to make people believe in himself; he was a servant who would testify of Jesus Christ, who was to come after him, and prepare the way to receive Him. The angel's announcement later took concrete shape in John's ministry of crying out for repentance, baptizing Jesus, and testifying of Him.

Therefore, we must not stop at John himself. Through John's cry we must realize our own stubbornness and sin and return to God, and we must believe in Jesus Christ, whom he prepared for and testified of, as our Savior. John is the servant who prepared the way of the Lord, and Jesus is the Lord who came by that prepared way and saved His people.

[Question] 5. Luke 1:28–38, how did Mary come to assurance as she talked with the angel?

“And having come in, the angel said to her, ‘Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!’ But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’ Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’ And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.’ Then Mary said, ‘Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her” (Luke 1:28–38).

Mary did not accept the angel’s words from the beginning without any question. She was troubled, pondered, and asked questions, but after hearing the word of God and the explanation the angel delivered, she came to believe that word and obey.

First, Mary was troubled at the angel’s greeting and thought deeply about what it meant. Being called a highly favored one and told that the Lord was with her—she, an ordinary virgin—she could not immediately understand what it meant. Mary neither passed over the angel’s words lightly nor hastily

interpreted them according to her own thinking.

Second, the angel explained that Mary had found favor with God and would bear a Son and call His name Jesus. He also told her that this Son would be called the Son of the Highest and would receive the throne of David and reign forever. Mary came to hear that what she had to bear was not a merely personal matter but a matter related to the salvation God had promised.

Third, Mary asked how she could bear a son when she did not know a man. This was not a declaration that she would refuse the word of God; it was a question asking how that thing would come about. The angel, too, did not rebuke Mary for unbelief, but explained that the child would be conceived as the Holy Spirit came upon her and the power of God overshadowed her.

Fourth, the angel told Mary of her relative Elizabeth as an example she could confirm. The fact that Elizabeth, who had been considered unable to have a child, was already in the sixth month with a son showed that even what is impossible for man can be done according to the word of God. The angel declared that there is nothing God's word cannot accomplish.

After hearing these words, Mary no longer looked only at her own circumstances and human ability. She humbled herself as the servant of the Lord and accepted that what God had spoken would be fulfilled in her just as He said. Mary's assurance did not come from vague emotion or self-suggestion. She heard God's promise, received the explanation of how it would be done, confirmed the work of God that had already appeared in Elizabeth, and then accepted that word by faith.

We, too, do not understand all of God's word from the beginning. When something is not understood, we must not hold only to our own thoughts or refuse the word, but must examine God's will carefully in the written word. And when the word of God has been clearly confirmed, we must lay down our own

judgment like Mary and accept it by faith. True assurance comes not from firmly holding on to our own feelings but from believing the faithful God and His word.

[Question] 6. Luke 1:39–42, what happened to Elizabeth when Mary came to visit?

“Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!’” (Luke 1:39–42).

When Mary entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth, three things happened.

First, the babe in Elizabeth’s womb leaped. That child was John the Baptist, who would prepare the way of Jesus. Though John was not yet born, he leaped in the womb when the voice of Mary’s greeting was heard. Elizabeth then explains this as the babe leaping for joy.

Second, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Before Mary came, Elizabeth had not directly heard what the angel had said to Mary. Nevertheless, being filled with the Holy Spirit, she came to know that Mary and the baby in her womb were blessed. Therefore, Elizabeth’s response was not merely an emotion of welcoming a relative or words congratulating a pregnant woman. It was recognizing and proclaiming, by the Holy Spirit, what God was doing.

Third, Elizabeth blessed Mary and the child in her womb with a loud voice. Her calling Mary blessed does not mean

exalting Mary herself as an object of faith. It was because Mary had received God's grace, believed the word, and come to conceive the promised Jesus. The One who is central in Elizabeth's praise is also not Mary but Jesus, who was in Mary's womb.

This event showed that the words the angel had delivered to the two families were actually being fulfilled. Elizabeth, though old and unable to have a child, conceived John, and in the virgin Mary, too, Jesus was conceived according to the word of God. That John leaped in the womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit at the meeting of the two women was a sign that God Himself was preparing the coming of John and Jesus.

However, we must not regard this event as a general phenomenon that every believer must experience repeatedly. It is a unique sign in the history of salvation that revealed the coming of Jesus Christ and the mission of John the Baptist, who would prepare His way. Rather than continually demanding special phenomena, we must believe, through the word that records this event, the fact that God sent John according to His promise and sent Jesus Christ as the Savior.

[Question] 7. Luke 1:46–55, how did Mary praise God after hearing Elizabeth's words?

“And Mary said: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of

their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever.’” (Luke 1:46–55).

Mary’s praise is not a song exalting herself; it is praise exalting God, who regarded her in her lowliness and fulfills the salvation He promised. Its content can be divided broadly into four parts.

First, Mary praised the Lord with her soul and rejoiced in God her Savior. She did not say that she came to conceive Jesus because she was especially excellent or righteous. Rather, she regarded herself as a lowly servant and confessed that God had looked upon her in that lowly state. The reason people would call Mary blessed is also not Mary’s own merit but that the mighty God did great things for her.

It is also important that Mary called God her Savior. Mary, too, was a person who needed to receive God’s salvation and mercy. She was not one who bestows salvation but one who received the grace of salvation. The One exalted in Mary’s praise is not Mary but God, who regarded her.

Second, Mary praised God’s holiness and mercy. God is mighty, and His name is holy. At the same time, He shows mercy to those who fear Him, and He does not end that mercy in one generation but continues it from generation to generation. Mary did not let what had happened to her remain only a personal blessing; she widened it in praise as the grace God shows to all who fear and rely on Him.

Third, Mary praised the power of God, who brings down the proud and exalts the lowly. God scatters those who are proud in the imagination of their hearts and puts down from their places those who rely on their own authority. On the other hand, He

exalts those who know that they are lowly and lacking and rely on God, and He fills the hungry with good things.

These words do not mean that those who have possessions are unconditionally cast off and the poor are automatically saved. They are words warning against the pride that boasts of one's own strength and possessions before God and considers itself to lack nothing. Those who know their spiritual poverty and seek God's grace are filled, but those who consider their own righteousness and ability sufficient go back empty-handed.

Fourth, Mary praised the faithfulness of God, who remembers and fulfills His promise. God had mercy on His people Israel and helped them, and He did not forget the promise He had given long ago to Abraham and to his seed. Jesus being conceived in Mary's womb was not something that happened suddenly; it was God fulfilling the promise of salvation He had given to the fathers.

Therefore, Mary's praise proclaims the grace that regards the lowly, the justice that brings down the proud, the mercy that fills the hungry, and the faithfulness of God, who surely fulfills His promise. We, too, must not boast of our own goodness and ability but must acknowledge before God that we are lacking. And we must believe, rejoice in, and praise God, who sent Jesus Christ according to the promise given to Abraham and opened the way of salvation.

[Question] 8. Luke 1:57–63, what was the name that Zacharias and Elizabeth gave the baby, contrary to the wish of their relatives?

“Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. When her neighbors and relatives heard

how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her. So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. His mother answered and said, ‘No; he shall be called John.’ But they said to her, ‘There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name.’ So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, ‘His name is John.’ So they all marveled” (Luke 1:57–63).

Zacharias and Elizabeth named the newborn baby John.

When Elizabeth bore a son, her neighbors and relatives rejoiced together over how God had shown great mercy to her. On the eighth day, when they came to circumcise the child, the people would have called him Zacharias after the name of his father. However, Elizabeth did not follow their wish but said clearly that the child should be called John.

The relatives thought it strange, for there was no one in the family called by that name. So they made signs to Zacharias, who could not speak, asking what he would have the child called. Zacharias asked for a writing tablet and wrote on it that the child’s name was John. When Elizabeth and Zacharias both gave the same name, the people marveled.

They did not choose the name John merely because they wanted a different name for the child. It was because God had already appointed that name through the angel.

“But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John’” (Luke 1:13).

At first, Zacharias became unable to speak because he did not believe the angel’s words. However, when the child was born as promised, he accepted the words God had spoken and followed God’s command rather than the custom of the relatives.

Elizabeth also was not shaken by people's opinions and gave the very name God had appointed.

Therefore, the name John is not a simple family choice; it shows that the child's birth and mission were within the will of God. His life was not for fulfilling his parents' expectations or the family's tradition, but for fulfilling the mission God had entrusted to him—to prepare the way of the Lord.

We, too, when the word of God is clear, must not put human customs or the opinion of the majority before the word. Like Zacharias and Elizabeth, we must lay down our own thoughts and follow by faith what God has spoken. Accepting the will God has appointed is the obedience of true faith.

[Question] 9. Luke 1:68–69, what is said to be the reason Zacharias praised God?

“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David” (Luke 1:68–69).

Zacharias praised God because God had not forgotten His people but visited them, and had raised up a horn of salvation in the house of David to redeem them.

Zacharias had received John, the son he had long waited for. However, his praise did not stop at the joy of gaining a son in his old age. Through John's birth he saw that the work of salvation God had promised long before was beginning. God sent John to have him prepare the way of the Savior, Jesus Christ, who would come after him.

The word “*visited*” means that God does not turn away from His suffering people but comes to them and saves them. “*Redeemed*” means setting a person who has become a slave

free by paying the price. Zacharias praised God for coming to deliver His people from sin and from the oppression caused by their sin.

In “*horn of salvation*,” the horn signifies strength and victory. The horn of salvation therefore means a mighty Savior who is able to save God’s people. This Savior is not John but Jesus Christ, who comes as the descendant of David. John is the prophet who prepares the way of salvation, and Jesus is the King who bestows salvation on His people.

When Zacharias gave this praise, Jesus was not yet born. Even so, he praised God as having already raised up the horn of salvation. Because God’s promise is surely fulfilled, he proclaimed with assurance what was yet to be accomplished as though it had already been accomplished.

Therefore, the greatest reason Zacharias praised God is not only that he personally gained a son. It is that the time had come for God to keep His promise, send the Savior Jesus Christ, and save His people from sin. We, too, must not only give thanks for the personal grace we have received from God, but must look to and praise the great grace of God, who sent Jesus Christ and saved us.

[Question] 10. Explain Zacharias’s prophecy concerning John’s mission shown in Luke 1:76–78.

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us” (Luke 1:76–78).

Zacharias prophesied that his son John, as the prophet of the

Most High God, would go before the Messiah to prepare the way of the Lord, and would make known to God's people the salvation that comes through the remission of sin.

First, John was called to be "*the prophet of the Highest.*" A prophet is not a person who conveys his own thoughts or will but a person who conveys the word he has received from God. John received the mission of announcing that the Savior God had promised had drawn near, and of turning people's hearts to Him.

Second, John had to go before the Lord and prepare His way. In the wilderness he pointed out sin, urged repentance, and made the people ready to receive the Messiah. However, John himself was not the goal of that way. He was a forerunner who did not let people stay with him but made them look to Jesus Christ, who was coming after him.

Third, John had to make known to the Lord's people the salvation that comes through the remission of sins. This does not mean that John himself was the savior. The One who remits sins and accomplishes salvation is Jesus Christ, and John was the one who clearly testified of who He is. Sinners had first to realize their own sins and to know and believe in Jesus, who would save them from those sins.

John was born into a priestly family descended from Aaron and, as the representative of mankind, received the mission of baptizing Jesus. That baptism was the ministry of passing the sins of mankind on to Jesus, just as the high priest in the Old Testament laid his hands on the sacrificial offering and passed the people's sins on to it. In this way John carried out a mission like that of the last high priest of the Old Testament. This prophecy was concretely fulfilled later through John's ministry. John carried out the mission of baptizing Jesus so that He would take the sin of the world upon His own body, and he testified of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Jesus received baptism from John and took upon Himself the sin of the world, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and by rising from the dead accomplished the salvation of those who believe. John was the witness who prepared this way of salvation and made it known to people.

The sending of John and Jesus began from the mercy of God. Those who sat in the darkness of sin and death could not find the way of salvation by themselves, but God first sent John to prepare the way, and sent Jesus Christ, the “*Dayspring*,” to shine the light of salvation on them.

Therefore, John’s mission was not to gather people’s attention to himself but to lead sinners to Jesus Christ. We, too, must clearly know and believe through John’s testimony that Jesus is the One who took our sins upon Himself and accomplished salvation. ☒

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Let us know and believe in John the Baptist

< Luke 1:1-17 >

“Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed. There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you

a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'"

"Man shall not live by bread alone"

As I travel to many places and meet people, I see that even while living in an age of material abundance, people are severely famished. There are many who wander about in severe famine and thirst, wondering how they might get even a cup of water to drink. Though they are rich physically, their souls are so poor; I see so very many souls wandering at the point of death and dying of famine. Some want to eat this food but cannot, while we eat the word of God every day—we are truly blessed people.

Our God said, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4). When Jesus was tempted while fasting for forty days, the first gate He passed through was precisely the test He received concerning eating. Satan the Devil pointed to stones and told Him that if He was the Son of God, He should make these stones become loaves of bread and eat. Then Jesus answered, *"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'"*. Man can never live by bread alone; only when he also has the word that comes out of

the mouth of God can he live. He must eat bread as well, but for a person truly to live, he must eat the word of God.

What man truly needs is the word of God. How thankful a thing it is that God has enabled us to eat the food of this earth and at the same time to eat God's food and truth! There is no telling how many people do not know how precious this word is and cannot eat it though they want to. Some live without even knowing that the word exists, and many others know that the word exists and yet wander here and there, living without eating the word. When I think of that, I feel once again that we, who live hearing and eating the word of God, are truly blessed people.

Because man has a body, he must eat what is of the earth; but because he also has a spirit, he must eat what is of heaven as well, and only then can he enjoy satisfaction in both. All the words that come out of the mouth of God are recorded here, and we live eating that recorded food of heaven. This is not originally ours; it is a blessing God has given. I feel anew how precious and thankful it is that the brothers and sisters of our church and all the saints of God's church live eating this word.

How precious it is that within God's church we can call on the name of the LORD and call on the name of the Lord, praise what He has done and pray before Him, and share spiritual fellowship like this, seeing and hearing the word! I, too, feel anew how precious it is to be able to see and share the word of God and have fellowship with the saints. Yet there are many who do not know this preciousness, and so the thought came into my heart that I should teach them how precious it is.

Luke writes to Theophilus from the very first

Luke, who recorded the Gospel of Luke, was a physician. This Luke recorded the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. The opening of Acts also says, “*The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach*” (Acts 1:1); so the Gospel of Luke is the writing Luke wrote and sent to Theophilus.

Theophilus was a man who held a high office and believed in Jesus. The twelve disciples, who had seen and experienced Jesus with their own eyes, passed His word on by word of mouth, and there were many workers who took up the pen to record it just as they had seen it. Luke, too, examined all these things carefully from the very first, and thought it good to write to the most excellent Theophilus an orderly account. It was so that he might know the certainty of the things in which he had been instructed.

In the days of the early Church there was what is called apologetics, and Luke, a disciple of Jesus Christ, also made various defenses in his day. Some people wrote writings slandering those who believed in Jesus Christ, claiming that they lived drinking blood; but Luke argued that it was not actually drinking blood—it was commemorating, over the wine, the blood Jesus Christ shed on this earth. When such wicked writings reached people in high office, they believed those writings as they were, and persecution came upon those who believed in Jesus. For when people read a book, they believe it just as it is written. That is why Luke, to let him know the truth with certainty, recorded everything from the very source, one by one, and wrote and sent it to the most excellent Theophilus.

Zacharias and Elizabeth, of the priestly division of Abijah

Verse 5 of the passage says, *“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years”* (Luke 1:5–7). That was in the days of Herod, king of Judea. Just as our country once had a time when it was under the rule of Japan, it is speaking of the time when Israel was under the rule of Herod.

What the division of Abijah is can be known from 1 Chronicles chapter 24. It says, *“Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. And Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children; therefore Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests”* (1 Chronicles 24:1–2). Nadab and Abihu, the firstborn sons of Aaron, died while offering profane fire before God, and Eleazar and Ithamar took on the office of the priesthood. In the days of David, the descendants of Aaron were divided into twenty-four divisions, and the order in which they would serve in the sanctuary was appointed; the division of Abijah was the eighth of them.

Since one person could not always take on the work of praying for the people of Israel before God and carrying out the duties of the priesthood, the divisions were divided and the turns were appointed in this way. In the days of Herod, king of Judea, the priest who belonged to the division of Abijah was Zacharias, and his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. The two had no child and were advanced in years, but they were righteous

before God.

In the Bible, righteous people appear in the Old Testament as well. Strictly speaking, this part belongs to the Old Testament, for it is before Jesus appeared. These two walked blamelessly in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, and they were people who truly believed in the work of the Old Testament in which a lamb was slaughtered and the atonement for the year was offered. They believed the fact that the Messiah who was to come, Jesus Christ, would come to this earth and, just as God had taught, would receive sins passed on to Him and die in their place, thereby removing their sins. That is why these two were righteous in substance before God. For apart from Jesus Christ there is not a single righteous person.

The angel foretells the birth of John

When Zacharias, serving as priest in the order of his division, drew the lot according to the custom of the priesthood and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense, all the people were praying outside. Then an angel of the Lord appeared, standing on the right side of the altar of incense, and when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled and afraid. The angel said, *“Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John”* (Luke 1:13).

The angel went on to say, *“And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit*

and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:14–17).

This old couple had no child, and because these were such overwhelming words, Zacharias could not believe them as they were. Failing to believe, he asked for a sign, and he became mute until the child was born; only after John was born was his mouth opened. The angel’s words were that this child would become great in the sight of the Lord, be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb, turn the children of Israel back to God, and go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the disobedient back to the wisdom of the just.

The Old Testament speaks of Elijah, but the New Testament says several times that this John the Baptist is Elijah. When the scribes said that Elijah must come first and restore all things, Jesus said that Elijah had already come and they had done to him whatever they wished. Thus John the Baptist was born on this earth with the spirit of Elijah, and the New Testament clearly declares that he is Elijah.

John the Baptist, who came in the spirit of Elijah

The reason John is called Elijah and is said to have come in the spirit of Elijah becomes clear when we look at the ministry the Elijah of the Old Testament carried out. If we know what the spirit of Elijah is, we can know that John the Baptist is the representative of mankind of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the representative of the Law is Moses, but the representative of mankind is Elijah—that is, John. Elijah was a prophet who appeared to the people of Israel in the era before Christ, a man of Gilead who wore a garment of hair and was

girded with a leather belt.

At that time Israel was divided into north and south, and Ahab, the king of northern Israel, took Jezebel, a Gentile woman, as his wife. Jezebel came in bringing the god Baal and serving it, and Israel accepted that Baal and began to serve it. Baal means owner, that is, lord; it was a pagan god that the farmers of the land of Canaan served as a god, believing that it made the land fertile and made the grain and the livestock prosper. People set up its image and prayed to it for blessings, asking it to give them children and to make their farming prosper. As Jezebel served that god together with her maidservants, shrines of Baal came to stand everywhere in place of the temple of the LORD.

As Jezebel moved Ahab, the whole nation became a nation that served not the LORD but Baal. The prophet who rose up at that time was none other than Elijah. If Moses received the Law on Mount Sinai and proclaimed it to the people of Israel, Elijah stood alone in the days of Ahab and cried out that Baal was not God. All the people and Jezebel said that Baal was God, but Elijah fought, saying that Baal was not God.

Elijah faced the 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah by himself. He had an altar of burnt offering built on the mountain and the sacrifice cut in pieces and laid on the wood, and said that the one who truly answered would be the true God. The prophets of Baal went first, calling on Baal from morning till evening, crying out and wounding their bodies, but there was no answer at all. Elijah said that their god might be sleeping, so they should call louder, but there was still no word.

Now Elijah stepped forward, had water poured until the trench was full and the altar was drenched, and prayed that God would let this people know that the LORD is God. Then fire came down from heaven, licked up all that water, and burned up the sacrifice on the altar of burnt offering. Only then did the

people of Israel know that the LORD God alone is the true God, and their hearts returned to God.

That is exactly what these words mean: *“And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just”* (Luke 1:16–17). The prophet who powerfully led the people of Israel before God was not Isaiah or Ezekiel but Elijah. He turned the hearts of the fathers to the children so as to make the heart of God known to the people of Israel, taught them what the will of God is, and turned the disobedient back to the wisdom of the just. The one who did that work is the greatest among those born of women.

That is why the New Testament calls John the greatest among those born of women. Jesus said, *“For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’ 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”* (Matthew 11:10–11), and He also said, *“And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come”* (Matthew 11:14). In the Book of Malachi, God said that He would send Elijah—that He would send the one who would lead many people before God.

Just as the many people of the Old Testament waited for the Messiah to come, they waited for Elijah to come. And John the Baptist was born on this earth with the spirit of Elijah. Through John the Baptist, God drew out the countless people who had been serving the false gods of the world and made them return to God.

Who is the true God?

Luke, a disciple of Jesus Christ, records John the Baptist in such detail from the very source. Yet among the believers of Christianity today there are many who do not know well who this John the Baptist is. Though John the Baptist occupies a large place in the Bible, they simply pass over him, regarding him as merely one of the prophets and a servant of Jesus.

Those who are said to believe in Christianity well today speak of John the Baptist just any way they please. However, John, who truly gave baptism to Jesus Christ, testified accurately that Jesus Christ is our Savior and how He took away our sins. John is the one who makes clearly known how we become children of God when we believe in Jesus Christ, and how we receive blessing.

Then what is the god Baal? Baal is precisely the god of the world. The LORD God is the One who exists by Himself; He is not something made by anyone, but the Creator. But Baal is something made up within human thinking—an idol that people make and then go before to pray for blessings. That is precisely the religion of the world. The God we believe in—the God who created heaven and earth and is the Triune God, namely Jesus Christ—alone is the true God.

Yet countless people serve the god Baal. Even while claiming to believe in Jesus, they make a god with their own thinking and believe in it. The work John does, having come to this earth, is precisely this: testifying accurately who the true God is. John the Baptist came with the spirit of Elijah, made clear who the true God is, and turned many people back to the wisdom of the just.

Dear fellow believers, then who is God? Is the God who saved us God, or would a god who cannot even save people from

sin be God? A god who cannot save from sin is not God. It is no exaggeration to say that many people, though they call the name Jehovah, the Lord, are in reality calling on the god Baal. The reason John the Baptist came to this earth in the spirit and power of Elijah was also precisely to make clear who the true God is. The image of the god Baal is not necessarily only an idol made of stone. Setting some denomination or organization in the place of God can also become serving Baal.

Does it seem that the world will make us prosper? It is not so. Only God makes us happy and blesses us, makes our children prosper, makes us prosperous, and makes us live blessed lives. He is the LORD God, Jesus Christ whom we believe in, our Savior. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? God alone is our Lord.

Yet there are those who believe in Jesus while their hearts are not set on God, thinking that their blessing lies in some person, some denomination, or some enterprise. That is precisely serving an idol spiritually; it is serving a petty god. With their lips they say, "Lord, Lord," while their hearts have gone to some person, some denomination, some enterprise—so that Lord has been changed into Baal, which means owner. Did that god Baal make Israel blessed? Baal could never make this world blessed; it only pretended to help and in the end plunged people into hell.

Even among those who believe in Jesus there are many who do not have the Holy Spirit within them, and everyone who has not received the remission of sins is in effect serving the god Baal. They say, "Lord, Lord," yet they pay no regard to what the word of the Lord commands; they only beg for blessings. But God is the personal, living God who tells us step by step how to receive blessing and what is right and what is wrong. He turns the disobedient back to the wisdom of the just and gives the heart of the father to the children, and through the church and through

those who have gone ahead of us He speaks to us and leads us rightly even now. The LORD God alone is our Lord, the One who can bless us.

Jesus Christ, whom John the Baptist testified of

Just as Elijah proved the living, true God and led the disobedient back to God when all Israel had turned to Baal, in this age that Elijah is John. John led all people to Jesus Christ and sought to make them believe in Jesus Christ through himself. If we do not rightly know the work John did, it is hard to say that we have come to complete salvation.

John, who gave baptism to Jesus, testified accurately who Jesus is and how He took away our sins. With the baptism Jesus received from John, He received all the sins of the world passed on to Him, and the next day John testified, *“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29). Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross by shedding His blood and dying, and by rising again from the dead accomplished our salvation. This is precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

There is no telling how thoroughly Luke testifies about John the Baptist from the very source. The Bible testifies precisely that Elijah is John the Baptist. Since it says, *“to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord,”* John the Baptist testified that Jesus Christ alone is truly the truth, and turned many people back to the Lord’s side so that they would receive blessing.

John the Baptist lived in the wilderness, wore a garment of camel’s hair, and ate locusts and wild honey. He did not serve

God while living to his heart's content, mixed into the world; he lived uprightly and purely, relying on God. If one claims to believe in the Lord and yet looks to and relies on the things of the world more, that is not right. Of course, we may consult something like a Bible dictionary, but his eating locusts and wild honey in the wilderness means that he ate food in its natural state and lived relying on God alone. John the Baptist not only led people to receive the remission of sins; he also raised up, among the descendants of his faith, those who live for God, and testified with his own life what kind of life truly lives for God. He is the model for those today who purely offer themselves before God and live testifying of Jesus Christ.

Today we have examined from the very source the birth of John the Baptist, who is Elijah. Who is John the Baptist? He is the Elijah of the Old Testament and the representative of the people of Israel. Moses received the Law and delivered it, but the representative of the people is not Elisha but Elijah. Elijah lived that way and then went up to heaven in a chariot of fire. John's birth did not come about by human flesh and blood; it was brought about in aged parents by God's special providence and power. If John had not been born on this earth, we would have found it hard to believe in Jesus and would have been mocked by Satan the Devil.

The reason Luke examined this carefully from the very source and recorded it for the most excellent Theophilus is that it is that important a historical fact. Israel fell in A.D. 70, so this is something that happened within a hundred years. In the days of Herod, king of Judea, when Zacharias was burning incense, the angel appeared and said to call the child John, and even before John was born, it was said that he would turn many people back to the wisdom of the just. Who is this man? He is the one who came forth with the spirit of Elijah, the one whom the Bible

records as Elijah himself. The word is that through him countless people would believe in Jesus Christ, and that John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, would testify of Jesus Christ clearly and surely.

Even if we knew Jesus Christ, if we did not know the work John does, then whenever Satan the Devil said, “Do you not have sin?” we would have gone back and forth, being righteous today and a sinner tomorrow. It makes no sense that if you die on a day your faith is good you go to heaven, and if you die on a day your faith is bad you go to hell. Therefore, we must know the role of John the Baptist without fail. If we do not rightly know the role of John the Baptist, that remission of sins is nothing more than a conviction of our own; it is not complete.

When we did not know John, it was nothing more than something we grasped, claiming to believe. The faith we grasp with our own strength, not knowing John the Baptist, falls away when that strength grows weak. Rising and falling, repenting day after day, is not complete faith. But once we came to know John, we came to know that it was not we who grasped; it was Jesus Christ who saved us. John testified how Jesus, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, took all our sins away. Jesus determined to take us to heaven and saved us so; therefore, even if we did not want to go, we cannot but go.

Truly, I give thanks before the Lord. What is the work we are to do as we live on from now? It is to turn many people back to the wisdom of the just and to testify of Jesus Christ on this earth. Who is the true God? This Bible was recorded and has appeared to us in order to make us live lives testifying that Jesus is the true God—that the God who took away all the sins of this world is the true God.

Why was John born? It was to testify of Jesus Christ, to make many people righteous, and to reveal that Jesus is truly the God

who made heaven and earth and all things, the One who perfectly removed man's sins and made us righteous. It was to testify of this that John came to this earth. I hope that all of us will live lives testifying of Jesus Christ, like John. I also hope that, with God's help, you will be blessed for the rest of your lives and receive blessings steadily as you live on. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Live a life of faith that believes the word, not a life of religion

< Luke 1:1-19 >

“Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed. There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you

a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' And Zacharias said to the angel, 'How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.' And the angel answered and said to him, 'I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings.'"

Faith, not religion

This week we celebrate Christmas. Whenever Christmas comes around, we tend to be gripped by the obsessive thought that we must celebrate it, that we must prepare a play. But putting our hearts into it is more important than doing better than others. I hear that these days churches practice their plays as if competing with one another. Rather than striving to do better than others, however, it is more important to receive good lessons and teaching this Christmas and to build up our faith firmly. Rather than being bound by obsessive thoughts, I hope this will be a Christmas in which we think again of the grace of the Lord who came to us, and examine and strengthen our faith.

Today we have read the word of Luke chapter 1. Whenever Christmas returns we open the same passage, and someone may ask why it is always this passage. It is because there is nothing

more important than this word. The people of the world have now grown quite dull in their consciousness of Christmas. In the old days even unbelievers celebrated Christmas boisterously, saying the Savior had come; but these days there are so many songs to sing that people seldom sing songs praising Jesus. Does that make Christmas meaningless? Not at all. As I meet this Christmas and the year's end, I come to think again of what I was like before I met the Lord, and of how the Lord came to me and saved me. That truly gives much meaning to my heart and gives me a reason to live.

Faith is looking up to God

In this world there have been many people who spoke about Jesus and about our faith. But apart from the days of the early Church, there has been almost no one who clearly conveyed what the Bible says—that because the word says this, the conclusion is this. The philosophers of the Middle Ages also spoke of these things, but theirs were merely philosophical discussions: what would you do if God exists, and what would you do if He does not? A philosopher like Pascal asked what one would do if God exists, and passed on a faith of his own devising with the thought that if He exists, He will judge in such and such a way. But that was not about Jesus; it was merely a hypothetical argument over whether God exists or not.

Then what does the Bible say faith is? The word faith means looking up to God. To look up to the God who exists and to what God has spoken, to ponder that word, receive it into the heart, and believe it—this is faith. If we look at the Bible, it clearly shows what faith is and what believing is, and the people who appear in the Bible have that faith. But after the authors who

recorded the Bible and their age had all passed, many people merely asked hypothetically what they would do if God exists. Though people talked about faith for thousands of years, there was no one who spoke of it this clearly. The only ones who conveyed faith properly are God and the people of God.

The starting point of faith that Luke conveyed to Theophilus

Luke, a disciple of Jesus, wrote about faith. There was a man called the most excellent Theophilus, who held a very high office and was a new believer who had received Jesus as his Savior. Luke wrote this writing to inform him of what he had learned, carefully from the beginning, so that he could have conviction. He was conveying that faith is like this and must start exactly from here. So Luke begins like this: *“Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us”* (Luke 1:1–2) Not only he but many people took up the pen for this work, but Luke examined all those things carefully from the very source, recorded them in order, and sent them.

Every year when Christmas comes, many people appear on television and in films who have taken up the pen about Jesus. They organize and present in their own way whether Jesus was a real person and whether the Bible is fact or fiction. Yet most of the content speaks in the direction of denying Jesus. They dilute our faith as if watering it down, saying that since there were many people named Jesus in those days, the Bible is not speaking only of the Jesus of the Scriptures. Others, claiming to

translate the original texts, render the Hebrew and Greek in ways that blur the meaning of the Bible. Even though the Bible translated closest to the original texts records in vivid detail even the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, people dismiss it as archaic language, treat it as if it did not exist, and try to read only simple modern-language translations. In that way they utterly dilute what the original text of the Bible says and drag down its value.

Luke records for Theophilus what faith is, saying it must start from here. Today I intend to speak about what this Bible records. For knowing what the Bible says, holding on to it, looking up, and believing it is the best. We should not follow Jesus as some philosopher speaks of Him this way or some theologian speaks of Him that way. Such things are nothing more than words made up for lecturing at theological seminaries. In fact, some professors at theological seminaries today say from the pulpit that Jesus is the Son of God and is God, yet when they gather among themselves they say Jesus was merely a man, and in their scholarship and their papers they entirely deny the divinity of Jesus. And yet when they stand before church members, they say that Jesus is God.

Once, a certain professor of theology called in reporters and said that there is salvation in other religions too, so that whatever religion one believes well, one is saved and goes to heaven. When those words were printed in the newspaper, the whole Christian world was turned upside down. For speaking that way tears down people's faith altogether. But believing according to the word of God is the most upright life of faith and the way to reach the highest level of faith. So Luke, writing his letter to Theophilus, speaks of the starting point of faith from verses 5 and 6.

Zacharias and Elizabeth, and the promised John

Luke begins to write his letter to the most excellent Theophilus, and from verses 5 and 6 he speaks like this: *“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense”* (Luke 1:5–10) This is the starting point of faith.

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest of the division of Abijah whose name was Zacharias, and his wife was Elizabeth, a daughter of Aaron. These two were righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, but Elizabeth was barren, so they had no child, and the two were already advanced in years. The Bible makes clear that these two were descendants of Levi and direct descendants of Aaron, speaking of the legitimacy of the priesthood. Dear fellow believers, in the era of the Old Testament, however many priests there were, only the descendants of Aaron could become high priests. Even a descendant of Levi, if he was not a descendant of Aaron, was not qualified to become high priest. That is why the Bible, in introducing Zacharias, speaks first of the legitimacy of the high priesthood.

It so happened that Zacharias took on the priest's duties that

year. Since the descendants of Aaron were so many, lots were drawn to decide who would take on the priest's duties that year; the qualified men came forward and drew lots, and only the one who received the slip on which the priest's duty was written could do that work. When Zacharias, having taken on that duty, went into the temple of the Lord and was burning incense, an angel appeared. Angels often appeared in the New Testament era as well: it was angels who delivered the news to the shepherds, and it was the Angel Gabriel and his company who praised, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among the people in whom He is well pleased." When Zacharias saw the angel, he was startled and afraid; the angel said that his petition had been heard and that his wife Elizabeth would bear a son, and that he should call his name John. Because Zacharias did not believe, the angel said that he would be unable to speak until the day all these things came to pass.

"In the spirit and power of Elijah"

Let us look again at the words the angel delivered to Zacharias, from verse 13 to verse 16: *"But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God'"* And then the most important words follow.

The most important words in this passage are in verse 17: *"He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah,*

‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” That the angel told Zacharias that a child would be given him and that he should call his name John is important, but the real heart of it is that this child, born on this earth, would do the work of turning many of the children of Israel back to God. Going before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah—that is, making the heart of God known to the children and so turning many people back to God. Like whom does he do this? He does it like Elijah. The one who did that work is John, who baptized Jesus. Through his ministry and testimony we come to believe in Jesus, the Creator of the whole universe who came as the Savior of mankind. Here Luke reveals the source of faith.

What are the spirit and power of Elijah here? Elijah was God’s prophet who turned the people of Israel back to God. When the people of Israel were all serving idols, serving the golden calves Jeroboam had set up, and were all about to perish, Elijah cried out and cried out again for them to return to God. He cried out with the anxious heart of a parent watching his child perish, to make the people of Israel recover their faith again. And he had power.

Elijah stood against the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah and testified that the LORD God is the true God. He had an altar of burnt offering built and said that the god who sent down fire from heaven and burned up the sacrifice would be the true God, and had the prophets of Baal pray first. They cried out from morning till midday, cutting their whole bodies with swords and shedding blood as they prayed, but there was no answer at all. At length Elijah knelt down and prayed that the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, would show that He is the true God

and send down fire as the proof; and at once fire came down and burned up the water in the trench, the sacrifice, and the wood. Thus he showed before the eyes of the people of Israel that the LORD is the true God, turning them back to God and making them recover their faith again. The word is that John the Baptist would do that very kind of work on this earth.

The reason John the Baptist baptized Jesus

This is the most important thing. We believe in Jesus, but what matters is what the Bible says about Jesus. Who lets us know, through the role of John the Baptist, that Jesus is the Son of God, that He took our sin upon Himself through His baptism, and that He was judged in our place and saved us? It is John who lets us know. There are many people with the name John, but there is only one John the Baptist who baptized Jesus.

The ones who bore this John were the priest Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth. God set up His plan and had John born on this earth through the descendants of Aaron, establishing him as the representative of mankind and as high priest. And six months later He had Jesus born on this earth, and had Jesus take on the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Jesus bore the sin of the world, was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and, having died, rose again and removed all the sins of us mankind. This is precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Faith is going forward as the word of God goes, stopping where the word stops, and following along when the word goes further.

“He is Elijah who is to come”

If so, we must prove from the Bible whether John the Baptist really is such a person. If we just say that anyone is saved if only he believes in Jesus unconditionally, how would that differ from the words of the philosophers? The Bible must be interpreted with the Bible. Let us look at Matthew 11:10–14. Jesus Himself said this about John: *“For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’”* (Matthew 11:10) He also said, *“‘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’”* (Matthew 11:11) and, *“And 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).

God promised in the Old Testament Scriptures that He would send Elijah again into this world. And concerning that promise Jesus said, *“And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come”* (Matthew 11:14) Who is the Elijah who was to come? None other than John the Baptist. The greatest among those born of women, that is, the representative of mankind, is John the Baptist. It is not Moses, nor Jeremiah, nor Abraham. We must engrave the meaning of these words deeply. We should not just pass over it, knowing only that he is Elijah; we must examine biblically why that is so. If we pass over without finding out the reason and without asking, then when the same question comes up next time, accepting vaguely that it is John without confirming its meaning, our faith does not stand firm. Then, when the Devil comes and whispers, we are simply shaken and fall over. Therefore, we must know clearly who this man is of whom Jesus Himself spoke here in Matthew 11:10–14: he is

John the Baptist.

Why did God say He would send John through Elizabeth, from the family of Aaron? Because only one who could carry out the duties of the high priest could, as the representative of the people of Israel, pass sins on to the sacrificial offering—and pass the sins of all mankind on to Jesus. Only by becoming a priest whom God recognizes, that is, a priest descended from Aaron, could he carry out that duty. That is why God used Zacharias and made his son, John the Baptist, the high priest of mankind. Jesus also calls him John the Baptist, for he is the one who gave baptism to Jesus.

“Behold, I send My messenger”

The Bible must be interpreted with the Bible. When we interpret the Bible with the Bible, we can know the will of God and know the Bible completely. If, even with such a good opportunity to hear the word, someone lets it flow past with the thought that once this hour passes it is over, such a person comes rather to destruction. Because God is patient and waits for us, we must not treat His grace as worthless.

So let us look at the Book of Malachi. Malachi 3:1 records this: *“Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the LORD of hosts*” Here the messenger God sends is John the Baptist, and the Lord who suddenly comes is Jesus, the Savior of mankind. Concerning the day of His coming, the Bible goes on to say: *“But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire And like*

launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness'' (Malachi 3:2–3) God said that He would purify the sons of Levi like one refining silver and like launderers' soap, and this means that He would wash man's heart white.

Malachi chapter 4 also records this: *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers"* (Malachi 4:5–6). He promised that before the great and dreadful day of the LORD, that is, the day of judgment, He would send Elijah the prophet to all mankind. And right after these words the New Testament Scriptures follow, and the genealogy of Jesus appears. How, then, did He send that promised Elijah? Matthew 11:14 says, *"He is Elijah who is to come,"* so all these words are connected into one word.

In the era of the New Testament, according to the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus at the Jordan River. With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took on the sins of mankind once and for all, and He received the judgment for all those sins, washing man's heart as white as snow. In the old days of the Old Testament, when a priest descended from Levi offered a sacrifice with the sacrificial offering—when the sinner laid his hands on the offering to pass his sins on to it, and the offering was slaughtered and burned on the altar of burnt offering and the sacrifice was given—the sins of the people of Israel were removed and they became clean. In the same way, God the Father sent John the Baptist six months ahead of Jesus and then sent Jesus, and by having John the Baptist give baptism to Jesus, He had Jesus take on my sins and yours at that time.

And with the baptism He received from John, Jesus took on the sin of the world, was nailed to the Cross, and received the judgment for my sins and yours at that time. And, having died, He rose again and gave us new life. He said that He would give salvation and eternal life to everyone who believes. The life of faith is knowing like this and believing like this. Those who think they are saved just by believing in Jesus unconditionally come rather to destruction. This is the most fearful scheme by which the Devil sends people to hell. Sending someone to hell by seating him in another religion is rather an easy thing. The Devil's scheme is to make countless people believe in Jesus, seat them in church pews, have them hear sermons, believe, and give offerings—and yet keep them from knowing this truth, and so send them to hell.

Live a life of faith that believes the word

What the Devil fears most is the word. This word is called the sword of the Spirit. Before this word the Devil trembles with fear and retreats. God gave us ears and eyes so that we might hear with our ears, see with our eyes, believe with our hearts, and receive salvation. It is the word that says, if you are willing to receive it, then obey it gladly. Not being stubborn, but looking up to the God who exists and to what God has spoken, holding on to that word and believing it—that is the life of faith.

I say this because I cannot but say it. From childhood I liked reading books, and I read many theological books, whether from other denominations or from our own. But at last I reached a conclusion: only the denominations differ, and they are all the same—they say believe in Jesus and go to heaven, but there is no real content. So I resolved to put away all the theology books

and read only the Bible without commentary notes, and to look at the original text if I did not understand. When I asked people why Jesus received baptism from John, no one could answer, and what I wanted to know was not in the commentary books either. So I began to read the Bible.

Among all the books that have come out until now, there has not been a single one that revealed concretely how Jesus removed our sins so that a person could receive the complete remission of sins. The only word that clearly preaches this gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus took on our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and rose again from the dead and accomplished our salvation—is this word we preach on this earth.

When we read the New Testament we can know what the Old Testament is saying, and because we can know it, we preach sermons and publish books. If you go on without knowing this, you fall into great confusion. The word of God, before Jesus came to this earth, told through a man named Luke that John would be born through Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, and that he would do that role of turning many people back to God so that they would be saved. We must know this and believe this.

Because of the role of John the Baptist, we have come to know who Jesus is, and we have come to know that Jesus truly is our Savior and so believe in Him. Therefore, if someone says he does not know John the Baptist, he knows nothing about Jesus, not even a little. Believing in Jesus is called faith. Religion, however, is believing unconditionally, carried along by the emotion of thinking, “So Jesus shed His blood and died for me like this.” That heart is appreciated, but with that alone it is nothing more than religion. Faith is believing that God lives though He is not visible to the eye, holding on to and believing

the word that God has recorded in this Bible, and not letting go of that word. So there is a great difference between religion and faith: religion is believing vaguely and unconditionally, while faith is believing very precisely.

That is why we must be born again of water and the Spirit. Jesus fulfilled all righteousness with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, exactly as the word says: “*for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness*” (Matthew 3:15). Do you believe that by receiving baptism from John, Jesus took on all my sins and yours? This is faith. As for religion—Buddhism is a religion, the various other religions are all religions, and the group that stirred up society not long ago is also a religion. Believing unconditionally: that is religion. If you ask them about Jesus and the role of John the Baptist, they do not know.

Some call John the Baptist a failure, and some, saying that money is the root of all evil, collect money from their church members. But what the Apostle Paul and Timothy said is that the heart that loves money more than God and thinks anything can be done with money is evil. If money is used well, it becomes rather a good instrument. Therefore, with the Bible we must look at the context before and after, and see why this person said these words. We must not take out just one sentence; only when we examine the sentence before it and the sentence after it can we rightly know its meaning.

Others say that after receiving the remission of sins they do not sin. Pointing to the words Jesus spoke to the woman caught in adultery—“Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more”—they claim that they themselves do not sin. But Jesus told her not to sin because it is not right to keep committing the same sin; He did not say that we can avoid sinning altogether. Even though we have received the remission of sins, we sin every day. If someone beside us were to record our sins day by day, in only a

week we would fill a whole sheet of paper—that is the kind of sinners we are. To say that one does not sin at all is to say that one has become a god. Is that not true of me and you?

To save me and you, the Lord prepared John the Baptist in advance and sent him, and He sent Jesus and passed our sins on to Jesus. And through Jesus He removed our sins and had Him receive the judgment, and raised Him from the dead, giving us new life. Believing like this is faith. We must live the life of faith well. Since the early Church, philosophers argued for hundreds of years over whether God exists or not, but no answer at all came out of it. A philosopher like Pascal asked what one would do if God exists and carried on such debates, and that is how people produced religion. But among all that has come out that way until now, there is not one that leads people to receive the remission of sins properly.

People easily use the word heretic when someone is different from them. However, the word heresy is written with the Chinese characters meaning different and end, so it means that the end is different. It is easy to carelessly call someone a heretic, but one must first know what the word means. Whether or not a person is saved is known by his fruits and deeds. But above all, before weighing what was done well or badly outwardly, we must see whether his faith stands on the word. A person who does not have the faith that believes according to the word is a fake.

Though the Bible speaks like this, holding only to the fact that Jesus shed His blood on the Cross and saved us, and claiming to be immersed in the blood unconditionally, is close to religion. Yet the blood of Jesus is truly precious as well. For it is the blood that gave us new life. The life of faith does not change however the world changes. The word of God has remained just as it is for thousands of years, and we believe it

just as it is. Believing this word is faith; believing a religion, believing Christianity, or believing only in Jesus is not faith. That is merely a religion man has made for himself.

When this faith arises in you, at first it may be as small as a mustard seed, so small that you can hardly even feel it. But if you hold that word fast, as time passes the power of faith begins to appear. The power appears to follow the Lord in daily life and even in hardship—indeed, to follow Him rejoicing. That is faith. Liking it when things are good and losing heart as soon as things are a little bad is not faith; it is believing a religion.

I hope that our saints, and all the people of God throughout the country, will become those who live the life of faith. I hope you will live that life of faith until you meet the Lord. The problem is what you have been holding on to until now—the useless words of philosophers and the things you have picked up from reference books, newspapers, and broadcasts, held in your hearts. All the wrong thinking learned from people must be laid down and cleanly thrown out of the heart. Those things are all harmful and useless; they are nothing more than things that would carry us off to hell. And we must hold firmly to the word of God. This is faith. In this hour I have stood here and preached not my own story but the word of God, and that is what benefits you.

Throw away what you have had until now that is not the word. If you hold on to it and build something on it, you die. We must be pure and be like little children. In fact, before Jesus I am not even a little child, and neither are you. Yet we must not act as if we knew something because of a couple of words we picked up long ago, a little we saw in books, and what we saw on television. This Christmas, too, there will be many who broadcast strange, worthless things. If we do not hold on to the word of God, we cannot find the right answer. I ask you, please find the right answer in the word of God and believe it. I close the message. ☒

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Concerning the birth of John the Baptist

< Luke 1:8-19 >

“So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.’ And Zacharias said to the angel, ‘How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.’ And the angel answered and said to him, ‘I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings.’”

God, who foretold the birth of John the Baptist

The word records the birth of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was a man of a priestly family belonging to the order of Aaron. His father was Zacharias, a man who carried out the priest's duties before God. Since there were many priests, lots were drawn according to the custom of the priesthood, and the one chosen by lot went into the temple of the Lord that year and burned incense before God.

When Zacharias went into the sanctuary and was burning incense, an angel of the Lord appeared and said, *“Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth”* (Luke 1:13–14). The angel went on to say this: *“And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord”* (Luke 1:16–17).

What does John the Baptist do when he comes to this earth? It records that John the Baptist, with the spirit and power of Elijah, goes before the Lord, conveys the heart of the father to the children, turns the disobedient back to the wisdom of the just, and prepares the people established for the Lord. What is the work John the Baptist does? Turning the children of Israel back to their God; conveying the heart of the father to the children and so turning the disobedient back to the wisdom of the just; and preparing the people established for the Lord—these three things.

As we know well, if we look at Matthew 3:13–17, John the Baptist gives baptism to Jesus. By giving baptism to Jesus, he does the work of passing the sin of the world on to Jesus. And pointing to who Jesus is, he testified, *“Behold! The Lamb of God*

who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). In that way he kept testifying about Jesus, sent all his own disciples to Jesus, and at the last was martyred in prison. That is the role of John the Baptist.

What I want to say today is this. John the Baptist is recorded in the Gospel of Luke, and all four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—devote three or four chapters each at their beginnings to record him. Before Jesus comes, John the Baptist comes first and does this work. Just as the word we read today says, he comes with the spirit of Elijah, conveys the heart of the father to the children, turns the hearts of the disobedient back to the wisdom of the just, and prepares the people established for the Lord.

“The hearts of the fathers to the children”

The Son of God came to this earth as the Savior, went to the Jordan River where John the Baptist was baptizing people, and wanted to receive baptism from John. John gave baptism to Jesus just as Jesus directed, but with that baptism he passed the sins of mankind on to Jesus. And by John’s testifying of this fact—by his making known that Jesus is the Son of God the Father and that He received the sins of us mankind passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John—the word is telling us that God loved us, and that to save us He came to this earth, received baptism from John the Baptist, died hanging on the Cross, and rose again, becoming our Savior.

What is conveying the heart of the father to the children? It is exactly as the word says: *“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).* God the

Father loved us and sent His own Son to this earth, had that Son receive baptism from John the Baptist so that our sins would be passed on to Him, and had Him die on the Cross in our place and rise again—and so He saved us. The heart of God the Father is conveyed to the children through the role of John the Baptist.

Were it not for the role of John the Baptist, though God loves us, we could not know how He loves us. John the Baptist was a man of a priestly family belonging to the order of Aaron, and his father Zacharias was a man who had grown old without a child. When he went into the sanctuary and was burning incense, an angel appeared and said that a child would be given him, and that child is John the Baptist. The work that John the Baptist, born on this earth, was to do was to convey the love of God and the salvation God has given us, just as a father conveys his heart to his child. By testifying of Jesus and passing sins on to Jesus, John the Baptist conveyed God's love to us and made God's heart known to us.

It also said that he would turn the disobedient back to the wisdom of the just. We were originally those who disobeyed God, those who could not but go to hell. But by coming to know that Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John the Baptist so that our sins passed on to Him, died hanging on the Cross, and rose again, becoming our Savior, our hearts have returned to God.

If there were no such work—Jesus receiving baptism from John, dying on the Cross, and rising again to save us—then however much God said He loves us, no one would believe it, because there would be no ground for it. Rather, people would think like this: there are so many evil people in this world, and the wicked prosper while the good perish; if God exists, they could say, how can such things be?

But God had the work of turning the disobedient back to the

wisdom of the just—that is, the work of making those who commit sin sinless—be accomplished through John the Baptist’s giving baptism to Jesus, and He made us know that fact and return to God. That is why the word says that John the Baptist prepares the people established for the Lord, the people of God who will give glory to God.

The ministry of John the Baptist that is not in church history

While preparing a preface for a book I was going to publish, I examined church history once again after a long time, having learned it long ago in seminary. Having examined it, my heart was frustrated. For there was no one who had spoken about the ministry of John the Baptist. Seeing that in two thousand years of Christian history there is not a single person who speaks about the role of John the Baptist, my heart was frustrated.

Let us think about it. Taking the point of Jesus’ birth as the standard, the time after it is called A.D., and the time before Jesus was born is called B.C. B.C. is the time of the Old Testament; and coming over into A.D., Jesus at the age of thirty received baptism from John the Baptist and took on the sins of mankind passed on to Him, and at the age of thirty-three He died on the Cross and rose from the dead, becoming our Savior.

Even after Jesus ascended, many disciples multiplied through the twelve disciples, and the gospel of the water and the Spirit was spread. Jesus died on the Cross in A.D. 33, and in A.D. 70 Jerusalem fell. As the independence movement of the Jews grew fierce, the Roman emperor sent General Titus, who tore the temple of Jerusalem down completely. The stones were all carried away with not one left, and now only a single wall

remains, the one called the Wailing Wall. When the nation completely fell in A.D. 70, anyone caught was either killed or sold as a slave. So, in order not to die, people—whether they believed in Jesus or not—all escaped from that country. Countless people were caught and killed, and many escaped by boarding fishing boats or hiding in the bottoms of ships. From that time the persecution began.

Since the Israelites had lost their nation, the Romans thought that anyone called an Israelite was a person to be caught and killed. Ironically, however, many of them went to Rome and lived there. Some lived as slaves, and among those who dug caves into the mountains outside the walls of the city of Rome—hiding by day and coming out at night to find food to eat—there were many Christians. As they lived that way and their numbers grew, the Romans did the work of seizing their property and catching and killing them. Emperor Nero, wanting to build his own city, burned down the houses and then framed the Christians as the ones who had set the fires; he had the Christians rounded up wholesale, thrown into the amphitheater, made to be devoured by beasts, burned to death, and nailed to crosses to die. Persecution arose like that, and being killed and living in hiding continued until about A.D. 250—for nearly three hundred years they kept being persecuted.

The Roman emperors, whenever a new emperor arose, wanted to be recognized as gods. The Romans believed in polytheism; just as they served the Greek gods Apollo and Zeus, the emperor claimed that he himself was one of those gods and demanded to be recognized and served as a god. But the Christians would not recognize this, so they were caught and killed; they were caught and killed for paying little tax; beginning from A.D. 33 until about 250 they kept being persecuted. Then, in A.D. 313, the Edict of Milan was issued,

and its content was that the Christians would be set free. It was an edict that the catching and killing of Christians as evildoers would no longer be allowed—that their faith would be recognized and they would be allowed to live their life of faith to their heart's content.

How was the Apostles' Creed made?

The Christians gained an opportunity there and lived on, and Emperor Constantine convened a church council in 325 and established the Nicene Creed, and the Apostles' Creed we see today also developed from the Old Roman Creed, the orally transmitted confession of faith of the early church around that time. Who made the Apostles' Creed? It was made by gathering up and writing down, again and again, what the believers of the early Church had believed, and by asking the representatives of Christianity of that day. Since freedom of religion had now been granted, Rome intended to make Christianity the state religion; so they were told to explain how they believed, and what was written down there is the Apostles' Creed.

We can consider how the Apostles' Creed came that far. In the days of the early Church there was no Bible like the one we now have. The Pauline Epistles such as Galatians, Corinthians, Romans, Colossians, and Ephesians, and 1, 2, and 3 John, are now bound together as the Bible, but in the old days they were letters. The Apostle Paul spoke in prison and had someone write it down, and it was sent to each church; the church that received it read it to the church members, kept it well, passed it on to other churches, and, when circumstances were difficult, copied it out and passed it on. In this way, at every worship service they read the letters sent by God's servants and worshiped.

Then the persecutors caught and killed them, seized the documents and burned them in the fire, and burned down the chapels as well; so they lived without the Bible—without even the New Testament Scriptures we now have. Only what they had heard, what they had seen of the letters, what those who had heard it told them—this is called oral tradition—only what had been passed down by hearing remained. After the documents had all been lost and burned amid the persecution, all anyone could do was speak what remained in his memory: “What I now know is this.”

Since Christianity had been made the state religion of Rome, to make the Romans believe in Jesus they had to know the core; so the believers were told to state the creed of their faith. Do you believe in God Almighty, who made heaven and earth? Yes. Do you believe in His only Son, Jesus Christ? Yes. Do you believe that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, and saved us? Yes. It is said that the Apostles’ Creed was made in order to do this kind of baptismal catechism. Then is the Apostles’ Creed something the apostles wrote? No. It was written as articles stating that, in summary, the faith the apostles had passed on in the old days is this.

In those days they suffered so much persecution that life and death hung in the balance. We can worship with our hearts at ease like this, but in those days, as they worshiped in hiding, Roman soldiers with spears and swords would suddenly burst in, strike them down, and kill them; so their hearts were always anxious, and they were busy fleeing to save their lives, without even time to gather what they had. So what was made by collecting what had been passed down by hearing is the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed—and in it, the baptism Jesus received from John was left out.

The apostles all record in the Scriptures the baptism Jesus received from John; it is recorded in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Whenever the Cross of Jesus appears, the baptism Jesus received from John always appears together with it. The Apostle Paul speaks of the baptism: *“I have been crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20)*, and *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27)*. He expressed that whoever believes that Jesus received baptism from John so that our sins passed on to Him, died on the Cross, and rose from the dead, becoming our Savior, is one who has faith in substance, as one who has put on clothes.

Because the apostles had followed Jesus around, they all knew that Jesus received baptism from John, they all knew that He was nailed to the Cross and died, and they all knew that He died and rose again; so there was no need to speak of the Cross separately by itself. But as it was heard and heard again and came down from A.D. 33 to 325, something was left out. That is precisely “the baptism Jesus received from John.”

Of course, the leaders of that day must have spoken of it, and the saints must have spoken of it too. But because the Romans were polytheists who served all sorts of gods, they regarded Jesus, too, as one of their gods. If it was said that Jesus received baptism from John so that our sins passed on to Him, died on the Cross for us, and rose from the dead, becoming our Savior, they would say, “Where in this world is there a god who himself bore the sins of his people, died for them, and rose again to save them? There is no such god.” Because it was such an outstanding content, they left it out.

With only the Apostles’ Creed handed down, without the Bible, people believed that way; then, after Constantine the Great, as Catholicism took power, the materials and documents of the Scriptures were collected and the Bible was made. Later

on, the work of distinguishing—this is fitting as canon and this is not—and confirming the New Testament and the Old Testament as the authoritative word of God was accomplished in a later age. Moreover, manuscripts such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran manuscripts were afterward discovered in jars in the desert and collated, so that today the Bible has been delivered to us neatly in this single volume. Meanwhile, the Roman Catholic Church, every time it held a council, kept adding phrases one by one to the Apostles' Creed, saying that this time this word must be put in—and it is still being done that way to this day.

But in it there is no baptism that Jesus received from John. It came down that way, and in the 1500s the Reformation movement arose; Martin Luther posted his Ninety-five Theses, and the Reformation was carried out. The period from 325 to about 1500 is called the medieval Dark Ages, an age Catholicism dominated; and from the 1500s until now, the history of Protestantism is about five hundred years. Yet the Reformers, too, received the Apostles' Creed just as it was; they used it as it was when giving baptism and used it as it was when confessing the faith; and there was not even a single one who spoke about the baptism Jesus received from John.

The wisdom of receiving salvation

Yet if we look at the Bible, while telling that John the Baptist would be born on this earth as the son of Zacharias, when he was not yet even born it said that he would *“go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord,”* and Luke, moved

by the Holy Spirit, records this.

Before John the Baptist was born, it was said that when he was born he would do this work, and he truly worked so. John the Baptist was born, and when he was thirty he gave baptism to Jesus at the Jordan River. When Jesus said, *“Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness”* (Matthew 3:15), John gave baptism to Jesus. When he gave the baptism, just as the heart of the father is conveyed to the child, our sins passed on to Jesus through John the Baptist. So when we think of Jesus and John the Baptist, we come to engrave on our hearts that what Jesus did is so gracious and what John the Baptist did is so gracious as well. He also gave the disobedient the wisdom of becoming righteous—that is, wisdom. Believing that Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist so that our sins passed on to Him, died on the Cross for us, and rose from the dead, becoming our Savior, is truly the wisdom of receiving salvation.

For our sins actually to be removed, not merely known in theory, we must believe in the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist. And by believing with the heart the fact that He bore those sins, was judged and died on the Cross in our place, and rose from the dead, becoming our Savior, we become righteous and receive salvation. The wisdom of receiving salvation is here. And we become the Lord’s people. It said that he would make ready a people prepared for the Lord, and the people who praise the glory of the Lord have come to be, through the role of John the Baptist and the role of Jesus.

In this age we are preaching this. If you look at church history, not even one sentence of this appears. But what matters is this: the fact that it does not appear there does not mean that it is right and we are wrong. Whether it is recorded in the Bible that Jesus received baptism from John so that our sins passed on to Him,

died on the Cross, and rose again—whether it is recorded that John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus and passed our sins on to Him—this is what matters; church history is not what matters. Church history is what people recorded in their own way, so what is so important about it?

Because church history does not speak of this, people think it is something they need not know and need not believe. But the moment you open the Bible, it tells why John the Baptist came to this earth and what work he did when he came—John the Baptist’s giving baptism to Jesus, and his testifying of Jesus, “*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” (*John 1:29*). Through the testimony of John the Baptist we come to know that Jesus is our Savior. All four Gospels record this, and it is recorded throughout the Pauline Epistles. Then is it only in the New Testament? It is all recorded in the Old Testament as well. The laying on of hands in the Old Testament all points to the baptism. The words of Scripture have their counterparts: the term laying on of hands in the Old Testament and the statement in the New Testament that Jesus received baptism from John mean exactly the same thing.

Whether it is recorded in the Bible that Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist so that our sins passed on to Him, died on the Cross, and rose again, and whether we believe it or not—this is what matters; Eusebius, who wrote church history, or the Church Father Polycarp is not what matters. It has come down by oral tradition that the twelve apostles of the early Church were all martyred, and the Church Fathers who inherited the faith from those apostles were also all martyred. Within about A.D. 250 they were all killed. So what has been passed down from mouth to mouth is today’s Apostles’ Creed. And today the Christians of the whole world believe only as it is written in the Apostles’ Creed. They believe not as it is recorded

in the Bible but as it is recorded in the Apostles' Creed.

Between what has been passed down by mouth and what God's servants, though they were martyred, recorded in full while they were alive and was later made into the Bible—between the written word recorded directly by Jesus' disciples and what has been handed down by mouth—which is more trustworthy? What is recorded in the Bible is trustworthy. What is passed on by mouth can leave things out. Seeing this, I cannot help but speak. Yet when I preach this, there are those who dislike it. Satan the Devil dislikes it first of all and slyly does the work of opposing it. I know, because that is what Satan the Devil does.

“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence”

John the Baptist was conceived in the body of the aged Elizabeth six months before Jesus was conceived. In the sixth month the angel Gabriel went to Mary and delivered the news; so John the Baptist was conceived first, six months before Jesus was conceived in the body of Mary. Before Jesus came was the era of the Old Testament, and with Jesus' conception the era of the New Testament opens. So, as for all the promises of the Old Testament, the era of the Old Testament runs until the days of John the Baptist. Until the time when Jesus, who was promised to come, would come to this earth and save us—until then is the Old Testament.

In the era of the Old Testament, people always brought a sacrificial offering, laid their hands on it to pass their sins on to it, cut its throat, took the blood and gave it to the priest, and went back—and so received the remission of sins. But after Jesus

came, Jesus received baptism from John so that our sins passed on to Him, died hanging on the Cross, and rose from the dead, becoming our Savior. So B.C. and A.D. are divided cleanly.

The Bible says, *“And 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). The word here rendered violence means seizing by force, and it is put that way in the English Bible as well. Receiving the remission of sins is grasping and believing as if seizing by force, and salvation belongs to the one who believes. The one who puts on airs and says, “If Jesus took away all my sins, what am I supposed to do? I feel no moving in my heart; if you move my heart, then I will believe”—such a person does not receive salvation.

The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. Since the Lord received baptism from John the Baptist so that our sins passed on to Him, and bore those sins and was nailed to the Cross, died, and rose from the dead to save us, when a person strongly believes with his heart and clings to Him—“I believe. You are my Savior, and I must not let You go”—that person receives the remission of sins and comes to possess the kingdom of heaven the Lord has made. That is what the Bible says.

There is a proverb in our country that says even the salt on the kitchen hearth must be put in before it is salty. However close the salt is—right there on the hearth where the food is made—what use is it if it is not put into the food? When you boil stew in a pot, only when you put in the salt does the taste come out; if you do not put it in, there is no taste. Only when we believe with the heart do we become the people of heaven and go to heaven, becoming people who have received the remission of sins, people without sin. Living on this earth, though somewhat lacking, we become people without sin—where is there anyone

who goes to heaven by not sinning, or who goes to heaven by prayers of repentance? There is no one. There cannot be.

Looking at church history, I truly cannot help but tell this story. Whenever I open my mouth I speak of this, and whenever I open the Bible, it is all this story. There are indeed other stories in the Bible, but they are very few, while this word—that Jesus came to this earth, that John the Baptist passed sins on to Jesus, and that Jesus died on the Cross and rose again and saved us—is very abundant. You have not come to me to learn ethics and morals, nor to learn Confucianism, nor to learn philosophy; so, preaching the word of Jesus with this word spread open, what else would I say? I must tell this story.

Where is it recorded that John the Baptist came? Matthew 11:12 says, *“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.”* There is John the disciple of Jesus, and John the Baptist is also a John. The word Baptist was attached before his name because he was born on this earth to give baptism—it is the title Jesus gave him. We are now speaking about the birth of John the Baptist: what work did John the Baptist do on this earth before he went before God? He did the work of giving baptism to Jesus and passing the sins of mankind on to Him. And when Jesus passed by, he followed Him about and testified that, behold, that One is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world—that He is the Savior, the Messiah, the Lamb of sacrifice. Then he was martyred and went before God.

Reading this word about John the Baptist being conceived in his mother’s womb, we see what he did on this earth—the work of giving baptism to Jesus and the work of testifying of Jesus—until he departed. So it is by that testimony of John the Baptist that we have come to believe. *“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear*

witness of the Light, that all through him might believe” (John 1:6–7).

John the Baptist is born, John the Baptist gives baptism to Jesus, and John the Baptist testifies that He is the Messiah, the One who received our sins passed on to Him—and so we come to know. Because it was he who gave baptism to Jesus, without knowing the role of John the Baptist we cannot know who Jesus is. Have you ever seen Jesus? No. Though we have never seen Him, when we hear that John the Baptist did this work, that account is drawn before our eyes. Then who caused the Bible to be recorded? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God, the Holy Spirit; and that holy Spirit moved the hearts of men and had them record it.

Believe as it is recorded in the Bible

I, too, sometimes sit at the pulpit after being occupied right up until preaching with various complicated matters. In the things done in this world, it is not only good things that happen, is it? Yet when I sit in this seat and look at the word, the Holy Spirit makes me say within my heart what is to be said. He brings the word to mind, makes me testify, and makes me prove it. That is how I preach; if a person who has not received the remission of sins preaches, all he can say is: live kindly, live holy, repent.

Because the Holy Spirit is within me, the Holy Spirit makes me speak. It says, *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 2:7)*, and you are the church. The Holy Spirit moves me and makes me speak so that you will hear. This is the word God speaks. Hearing it, one comes to conclude: “Ah, John the Baptist is the one who did the work of giving baptism to Jesus and passing all the sins of

mankind on to Him, testified of that Jesus, was martyred, and went before God. That is why John's name was called John the Baptist. Through the role of John the Baptist, many people come to know who Jesus is, come to believe, and receive salvation."

Yet however hard I pored over that thick book of church history, looking and looking again, there is not one person who says even a single passage resembling this. So, of those who believed in Jesus over the past two thousand years, those already saved have gone; and at present countless people on this earth believe in Jesus, yet they all have sin in their hearts. They are believing wrongly. They hold so firmly to what has been passed down by people's mouths and believe it, while not believing what is recorded in the Bible. We must believe as it is recorded in the Bible. The one who believes as it is recorded in the Bible is the one who carries out the true reformation of faith.

Reforming religion still leaves it religion; it is only producing a new religion. We must carry out the reformation of faith. If we have believed wrongly, then when we believe following the word of the Scriptures, we become those who believe rightly. We must become those who carry out that reformation of faith. Now the Christians of the whole world must carry out the reformation of faith. We are those who believe following the word, so we have already carried out the reformation of faith. ☒

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Believe according to the word, and receive the blessing that is done according to the word

< Luke 1:24-38 >

“Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, ‘Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.’ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, ‘Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!’ But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’ Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’ And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon

you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.’ Then Mary said, ‘Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her.”

God, who leaves things on record

Writing and leaving documents behind is tremendously hard work. A first draft is, as the word says, only a draft; you must keep going into a second and a third revision. Not even two or three writings out of a hundred come out right at one writing; all the rest must be gone over twice and three times. So there is no need to be disappointed and troubled that a first draft was not adopted. When you write, first you gather and put in everything that must go in; second, you adjust where and how strongly to say it; third, you must see whether there is anything that could be faulted; and even after doing all that, you must go over it again.

It is the same with spiritual documents. If people published their sermon collections exactly as they had preached, they would all become heretics. There is a very great deal to correct. Once a document remains, it becomes evidence. With spoken words, you can deny it, insisting you never said so; but with what remains as a document, you absolutely cannot. That is why God also spoke and had His servants record like this. That is this Bible. Even if there are a few things that arose as people translated it, this Bible is remarkably perfect. It is a great thing. I pray that the grace of God will be with all those who serve the

Lord in various positions and in various ways.

The birth of John the Baptist, fulfilled according to the word

This evening, too, let us look at the part that shows that God works through the word of God. Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, was an elderly woman. She conceived. God's angel appeared to her husband Zacharias and said, "*Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John*" (Luke 1:13); and when Zacharias could not believe, He made him mute, and only after that thing had been accomplished did He loose his tongue. God worked through the angel.

God had John the Baptist born on this earth six months ahead of Jesus. He did that work by a special work of His. It is nothing marvelous for a young woman to bear a child. But if an elderly woman bears a child, is that not marvelous? Therefore, this is not a human work. Because it was fulfilled exactly as the angel Gabriel spoke when he appeared to the priest Zacharias, it is not a human work but God's special work. In the matter of our being saved from sin as well, God made a special promise, came and spoke according to that promised word, and caused it to be fulfilled according to that word, accomplishing our salvation. This shows that this is the work by which God saves us. Elizabeth was six months with child.

The work of the word of God

This time, whom did the angel Gabriel come to visit? He went to Mary, a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, a

Believe according to the word, and receive the blessing
that is done according to the word

descendant of David, in the town called Nazareth in Galilee. As he had appeared to Zacharias, he appeared to Mary and said, *“Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you”*. *“But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was”*; the angel said, *“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God,”* and went on to say this: *“‘And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’”* (Luke 1:31–33).

The time before, the angel Gabriel had told Zacharias that a child would be given him and that he should call his name John. Now there is a common point in these two. God spoke to Zacharias through the angel, and here also He spoke to Mary through the angel. When he spoke so, Mary said, *“How can this be, since I do not know a man?”* (Luke 1:34) When an angel suddenly appears to a virgin and tells her she will bear a son, she cannot but be startled. God’s work is a work done by the word. God works through the word, and when those who hear the word of God believe, the work of God appears.

The angel answered: *“And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.’”* (Luke 1:35–37) Then Mary answered: *“Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word”* (Luke 1:38) In this way, the work of God is the work of the word of God.

I am the Lord's servant; only speak the word

Just as God created heaven and earth and made the universe by the word in the beginning, in the work of saving mankind from sin He also works by the word of God. In the old days God promised by the word through the prophets, and in the era of the New Testament He sent angels to speak to those who would fulfill that promised word. And as Zacharias and his wife, and Mary and Joseph, all received the word of God, the work of God arose within them. Luke, who recorded this Gospel of Luke, tells nothing of his own story; he tells how the word recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures was fulfilled in the New Testament. God's work is the work of the word. My receiving the remission of sins, and yours, also comes about by the word. The remission of sins comes about by the word—what else is there? The words of theologians are all words like a filthy rag.

When I wrote the book on the Tabernacle, many people said they could not understand it. Even so, I told them to just translate it as I had written it. If they do not understand now, they will understand in ten years; if not in ten years, then in twenty; and after learning for a good while, they will later come to know why it was said this way. Because I am speaking of what is in the Bible, my words are not wrong just because they do not understand, or because it differs from what today's theologians say. There are many people on this earth who have written books about the Tabernacle, but there is not a single one who has spoken concretely of what the Tabernacle is saying—the work of Jesus Christ saving us. I spoke of it. And just because it was I who spoke of it, or because they do not understand it, are my words wrong? Even now God is working through the word of God, and to do so He is working through His servants. In the old days, to accomplish the work of salvation, He worked through

angels and worked through the apostles; and now, too, as God's servants explain and tell this recorded word of God, those who hear believe, and the work of God is arising within those who believe.

So the things done in churches—praying with the laying on of hands so that people speak in tongues, fall backward, and tremble—those are all the work of demons. Demons originally do such things. God works step by step with the recorded word of God. God worked in Mary—listen to what Mary says: I am nothing but a lowly maidservant, but since God has spoken so through the angel, let it be done according to the word; that is, she believes. What more words are needed? What further interpretation is needed? When God says He will have the Savior of mankind born on this earth through Mary's body, is there anything else to say?

Then why must it be Mary? Because God had promised, "*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel*" (Isaiah 7:14)—that He would borrow the body of a virgin and come to this earth in human flesh. So God is the God who speaks and then fulfills exactly what He has spoken.

According to that word, in the era of the Old Testament the Lord showed, through the law of sacrifice, how the sins of mankind are removed—in this way and that—and He also promised to send one man as the representative. And according to that promise, Jesus Christ came to this earth, obediently received baptism from John the Baptist so that our sins passed on to Him, bore those sins and died hanging on the Cross, and rose from the dead—washing our sins as white as snow and saving us. So the point is that God did it by the word. Whatever is done by emotion and not by the word of God is all a lie.

Tears coming as you pray—that is not the work of God; it is

just human emotion. In this age God works through people, through the servants of God. Before you encountered this word of God, there were stories you had heard from many people, and they form the base, so that when you hear the word of God it gets laid on top of those stories you had heard. If that foundation is wrong, then the moment the bottom is shaken, everything is shaken. Therefore, sweep your heart clean and say, I am the Lord's servant—speak; and when He speaks as it is recorded in the Bible, you must believe the word just as it is recorded. Only then does salvation come and the work arise.

Whatever you have picked up while attending ordinary Christianity, apart from the word of God, is all piled up on a wrong philosophy. We must be pure. The Bible said not to eat leaven and not to let leaven be found, and there is a feast of removing leaven, when after the Passover all the leaven in the house is thrown out. Like that, you must throw away all the stories you picked up in the world. The common saying that you are saved just by believing in Jesus and believing only the blood of the Cross must also be thrown out. How wrong a word is that?

In believing there is an order and there is a procedure. By the word of God you must know that you are a sinner and become a sinner; by the word of God you must know how the Lord removed our sins; and you receive salvation by believing and grasping that word of God. If you have not even become a sinner by the word of God, and you call yourself a sinner just because you have done something a bit wrong, that is not being a sinner—you have only done that thing wrong. You must not believe that way. You must find your identity by the word of God. You must know that you are of a brood of evildoers because you were born a descendant of Adam and inherited sin; if you say you are of a brood of evildoers because you see yourself sinning daily, then when circumstances change your faith is shaken

again. So you must grasp the word of God verse by verse, step by step. Look at why God used Mary and why He used Zacharias. The people God used were all pure people. We must know that.

The faith that believes for one's own happiness

However much you shout that you are glad at Christmas, and however much you believe, if your believing in Jesus is believing for your own happiness, in the end you can only leave God. If you believe that way, when you are not happy you all leave. Is our believing in Jesus believing for my own happiness? We believe to be saved from sin, and we believe truly to fear and acknowledge God. If it were for one's own happiness, any religion would do. One religion believes that you receive material blessing if you recite an incantation thousands of times, and its people carry beads about, reciting inwardly even while talking with others and reciting as they go to sleep. Is that not religion? It is done for one's own happiness.

But how did we believe? When we first sought to believe in Jesus, did we believe in order truly to fear, respect, love, and revere God and serve Him, to live according to His word? Or did we believe because we wanted to receive the remission of sins and go to heaven? Or did we believe just wanting to become happy, to have the wounds of our hearts healed? If it is only to have wounds healed, then once the wound is healed, Jesus is no longer needed. We believe His word in order to acknowledge, honor, fear, and love God, and we believe in order to become His servants and serve Him. First it must be so, and second, we must believe in order to receive the remission of sins.

And how wrong today's Christianity is! Listening to a pastor of a certain denomination speak, I heard that in the presbytery

he knows there are fifteen churches, and all but two or three are debtors. They took out loans and built large chapels, and every month they must repay a large debt; if they fall behind even a little, the building is taken over. Yet the church members do not increase. Also, when a small library was being built in his neighborhood and he went to donate and take part, the moment they heard he was a pastor, they flatly refused, asking why a pastor would meddle in such a matter. In the financial world, too, they dislike clergymen most of all; there are so many cases of taking money and not repaying it that their credit is at rock bottom. And that pastor said that the only way for the church to live is to live loving one another as a community, like the early Church. Hearing that story, I thought he was speaking honestly indeed. That is what the churches actually are like. However large and shiny they look, they are all covered in debt. Dear fellow believers, why does the church fail and why is it despised in society? It is because it fails to do the role of the church—because it fails to become light to the world and fails to do the role of salt.

How can we become light in the world and do the role of salt? We must have the gospel. We must have the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the word of God. Even if, coming here, you hear nothing else and fall far behind the world, you should at least be able to hear the will of God and the command of God, and how God has removed our sins. But if you go to the churches of the world, there is not the least bit of this gospel. Do you think there is? You can know it watching television and know it through the Internet, can you not? How many people stand against Christianity! What I am telling you is only a part of it. This is an enormously serious matter.

Take off your shoes

Once I went to my mother's house, and about fifteen pastors were sitting on the wooden bench in front of the house. I greeted my mother, joined them, exchanged greetings, and sat down; and one of them, saying that he held a position in a certain denomination and was a member of a Bible translation committee, spoke of the many difficulties in translation. God told Moses to take off his shoes, he said, and since in those days people went about in sandals and much dust got on their feet, that is why He told him to take them off; so these days one should not translate it literally but paraphrase it so people can understand. So I refuted him point by point: "Do you not know what that command to take them off means? You must first translate it literally, as close to the original text as possible, and then interpret it. Why did He say to take them off? It means: throw away your thoughts, throw away your experience, throw away everything you know."

If we would know, serve, and believe the Lord, we must throw away all the things that concern ourselves. What we experienced in Egypt, the common knowledge we hold, our attainments, our knacks, our emotions, our knowledge—all must be thrown away. What God speaks is entirely the word of heaven and entirely new. We must hear it so, believe it so, follow it so, and preach it so. So if one would do the ministry, he must throw away all the worldly things he knows. In preaching, too, one must not try to charm people with words and lead them along on the basis of what some book says. To do the ministry that way is a great discourtesy.

To read the Bible and say: this is what the Scripture says, and this word is spoken to me and to you as well; and seen within this word of God, we are lacking in such and such respects, yet

God has clothed us with grace and enabled us to do these things—speaking like this is true preaching and true ministry. It is not about displaying skill with words. We must not think that those who hear the sermon are foolish. The wrong pastors of ordinary churches gather the educated, manipulate them, lead them where they want, and try to squeeze them by making them give large offerings. That is a kind of swindler.

But however lacking a person may be, when he comes and sits in worship, there is no one who wants to be manipulated by a man. I came to hear the word of God and to hear what God says to me; no one wants to be melted by human words, dragged this way and that, made to give offerings, and manipulated like that. We are all equal before God. We are the same before God—sinners who must alike receive and believe the word of God, people just that lacking, and creatures God has made who must fear God. You and I must know that fact.

I once went to hear a famous pastor holding a rally in our region. He had the passage read that none who have suffered and been robbed for the Lord will fail to receive the blessing of the world to come, and then told this illustration. Long ago a young woman who believed in Jesus married into an unbelieving family; her in-laws made her work in the fields on Sunday to keep her from church, and that daughter-in-law, in order to go to church, did all the work through the night under the moonlight until her hands were covered in blood, and went to church the next day. The mother-in-law so hated her going to church that, persecuting her, she struck the back of her head with a stone and left a hole in it; later the mother-in-law also came to believe in Jesus, and when she died and went to the kingdom of heaven, she saw a diamond set in the back of her daughter-in-law's head. When she asked Jesus, He said that the diamond was set there because she had suffered much persecution for Him while on

this earth. Such was the logic of the story. Is it not a truly laughable story? In the end it means: give many offerings.

The members of that church, hearing such sermons, went to the bank and took out loans and gave not only a tithe but as much as five-tenths, and, being told that if they gave offerings they would be repaid tens of times over, they built a great chapel and so on. For a while it was said that if you sold your house and offered it up, you would get two houses. I called all such pastors thieves. I warned the people I knew not to be deceived by those words, but countless people were deceived, offered up their houses, and became utterly destitute. Later, having given up their houses, they asked at least for their principal back—let alone two houses—but it was no use. Dear fellow believers, there are many such people. What false prophets always aim at is money.

“Let it be to me according to your word”

Let me now sum up what I want to say. How did God work in Mary? He sent the angel and delivered the word of God. How did Mary obey? Behold the maidservant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word—if the word of God says so, she believed it would be so. And so she conceived and bore the baby Jesus and became a person used by God. It is the same with me and you today.

When the word of God, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, is delivered to us here, if you and I take hold of that word of the gospel in our hearts, then, because it is the word of God, we receive the remission of sins and obtain eternal life. If the one delivering the word conveys not the word of God but his own common sense and cleverness with words, it is nothing but a joke. But if the one preaching, whether he is impressive or not,

delivers exactly the recorded word of God, then you who receive it have received the word of God, and the one preaching has preached the word of God in faith. Therefore, it comes to pass alike according to the word of God. The word of God comes to pass just as it is within me and you. I have lived that way until now.

In the old days I had countless books. I would sooner skip a meal than fail to collect any book whatsoever. But now the Bible is most precious to me, and next the dictionary is most precious. What is truly fortunate is this: it is because I believed the word of God and received the remission of sins that things are well; had I not received it, I would still have to read countless Christian books, and, being insufficient for the ministry, I would have had to do many absurd things. Then I could only have deceived people and raked things in, becoming a swindler.

So, by believing the word of God, it is done to us according to the word, and we receive the blessing that is done according to the word. Meeting this Christmas, we must renew our faith, and our life of faith from now on must also go forward with the faith that believes the word of God. So the salvation He gives, the eternal life He gives, the blessing He gives, and the righteous work He entrusts to us must all be done by faith. I hope you will become such people, and I pray that He will give you that blessing. ☐

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

My soul rejoices in God my Savior

< Luke 1:46-50 >

“And Mary said: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation.’”

Dear beloved saints, Mary praised, *“My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior”* (Luke 1:46–47). In this confession, the subject who praises and the One to be praised are clear. The subject who praises is Mary’s soul and heart, and the One in whom her soul rejoices is God my Savior. Mary praised knowing who God is and what God had done for her soul.

Mary’s calling God *“my Savior”* was her confession that she, too, was a person who needed salvation. Mary was the fleshly mother who bore the Savior, but the One who saves Mary’s soul from sin was Jesus Christ. The great things the mighty God did for Mary were sending the promised Savior and saving sinners through that Savior.

Mary praised the great things God had done

Mary “*said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’*” (Luke 1:34) Mary did not know how a virgin could bear a child. But the angel made clear that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, that the power of God would overshadow Mary, and that the One to be born is the Son of God. Mary’s praise was not singing of something she had understood by her own judgment; it was believing and singing of the work of salvation that God speaks and fulfills.

In Luke 1:48–49, Mary praises that God regarded her lowliness and that He who is mighty did great things for her. The starting point of the praise is not what Mary did for God. What comes first is that God regarded the lowly Mary and fulfilled the promise of salvation. Salvation is not a matter of the sinner going up to God; it is God regarding the sinner and coming to him.

The subject of the “*great things*” Mary spoke of is also God. God sent the Savior, Jesus Christ, and Jesus saved sinners through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. People easily put forward their own deeds or religious life as great things, but Mary praised not her own merit but the work of God, who sent the Savior. We, too, must praise the work of God, who saved our souls through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Mary also praised that God’s mercy comes on those who fear Him from generation to generation. When we believe in the Savior God sent, we receive the remission of sins and enter into that mercy. Therefore, we too can praise the God of salvation together with Mary.

Mary praised together that the name of Him who is mighty is holy and that His mercy comes from generation to generation. The holy God judges sin with justice, and the merciful God sent the Savior and saved sinners. Through the baptism Jesus

received from John, He took the sin of the world passed on to Him, and He received the judgment of that sin on the Cross—so God’s holiness and mercy were revealed together. The remission of sins is the result of the Savior, Jesus Christ, receiving the judgment of sin in full.

The outward man is perishing, but the saved inward man is renewed day by day

The Bible tells us that we have an outward man and an inward man. The outward man is the flesh that lives in this world; as time passes it declines and finally returns to dust. The inward man is our soul, which must have the problem of sin and judgment resolved before God. Before the outward man prospering for a moment comes our soul’s receiving the remission of sins. We must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of the soul’s sins.

Paul contrasted the outward man and the inward man, saying, *“While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal”* (2 Corinthians 4:18). What the outward man enjoys in the world is visible but momentary, while the remission of sins and the eternal life obtained through the gospel of the water and the Spirit are invisible but eternal. Therefore, we do not judge the worth of salvation by visible circumstances; we can look at the eternal work Jesus Christ has done for the soul.

Distinguishing the outward man and the inward man, Paul said, *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day”* (2 Corinthians 4:16). *“The inward man”* Paul spoke of

here is our inward man that has received the remission of sins by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Because God makes our souls and hearts understand the word of Christ, even as the flesh grows old and weak and passes through hardship, we gain new strength daily.

Even if outwardly we are at ease and have many things we need, if we have no answer before sin and death, there is no true peace in the soul. The peace of the soul is obtained when we believe the gospel—that Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him through John’s baptism, was judged on the Cross, and then rose from the dead. Even when the outward man passes through hardship and the flesh grows weary, in the soul and heart that believe the gospel there is the peace of salvation God has given.

We receive the remission of sins when we believe the gospel—that Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and completed salvation with the Cross and the resurrection. Our inward man that has received the remission of sins comes, through the word God gives, to understand still more clearly the remission of sins already received and the status of being God’s child, and gains new strength.

The fundamental problem of the soul was sin

Dear fellow believers, the fundamental problem of us all, which the Bible brings to light, is sin. For us who were under sin, death and judgment were fixed. With the knowledge, good deeds, and religious zeal of the world, we can neither transfer to Jesus the sins we have already committed nor pay the wages of those sins ourselves. Therefore, what we need first of all is God’s salvation, which actually removes sin.

The fundamental problem of our souls was sin, having left God. Jesus said, *“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance”* (Luke 5:32). Everything by which we put ourselves at the center rather than God, exalt our own judgment above the word of God, and oppose the will of God in heart, thought, and deed is sin. We were born with fundamental sin, and before God the hidden greed and hatred, the comparing and pride, and the unbelieving heart within us are all laid bare. Man cannot remove the wages of his sin by himself, nor can he undo his past sins with good deeds.

If we think only of the problems of the outward man, why we need the Savior grows dim. We come to think of Jesus merely as someone who makes our circumstances a little better. But Mary called God my Savior. The Savior is the One who rescues a person who has fallen into peril. We needed to be saved from sin and judgment, to have our relationship with God restored, and to have our dead souls receive new life and be delivered from eternal destruction.

The greatest problem for you and me was sin and judgment. We must count greatest the work in which Jesus received all my sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and removed those sins with the Cross and the resurrection. God removed the sins of us who believe this gospel, made us His people, and gave us the life of living with God forever. The reason Mary’s soul rejoiced was also that she knew the God who saves her.

The Savior has done great things for our souls

Jesus Christ, who is God, came to this earth in a human body to save us. The sinless Lord walked the way of salvation that

fulfills God's will completely. What Mary praised—that He who is mighty had done great things—was revealed clearly through the work of Jesus coming in a human body and removing our sins.

The sinless Jesus received baptism from John in order to receive the sins of the whole world passed on to Him. To John, who hesitated to baptize Him, Jesus said, *“Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness”* (Matthew 3:15). With that baptism the Lord received, passed on to Him, all the sins of the whole world, down to the last man after Adam. Zacharias also prophesied that John the Baptist would *“give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins”* (Luke 1:77). Jesus bore the sins passed on to Him and carried them to the Cross, and by being judged in our place and dying with His blood shed, He paid the wages of sin in full.

Luke recorded the fact that at the empty tomb the angels declared, *“He is not here, but is risen!”* (Luke 24:6) Jesus rose again from the dead, overcame sin and death, and completed salvation. The Lord came in a human body, received baptism from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead—fulfilling all the righteousness of God and the eternal atonement. Because Jesus paid all the wages of sin, there remain no wages of sin left for man to pay.

When we believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit with our hearts, we receive the remission of all sins and become children of God. This is the great thing Jesus did for our souls by coming to this earth in the flesh. The ground of becoming God's children is not human emotion or religious deeds but the salvation Jesus accomplished. Believing this salvation, we call God Father and live in new life.

Therefore, our joy must have clear content. It is the joy that comes from the fact that my sins passed on to Jesus, that the Lord received the judgment of those sins in my place, and that He

completed salvation with the resurrection. Before this word I, too, praise God, who saved me from sin, as my Savior. I hope your souls also rejoice in God, who saved you.

We rejoice because we have been saved

Mary's joy has a clear reason. God caused Jesus Christ, the King of kings, to be conceived by the Holy Spirit through Mary's flesh, and Mary believed the saving work of the water and the Spirit that He would accomplish. So Mary's soul and heart rejoiced in God. We, too, must first believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins. Having received the remission of sins, we know and believe through the word what the Savior has done, and therefore we rejoice in and praise that Savior.

After hearing the words the angel delivered, Mary answered, "*Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word*" (Luke 1:38). Mary believed not her own thoughts and ability but the words God had spoken. Though all the work of salvation had not yet been accomplished before her eyes, she believed that God would surely fulfill what He had promised, and therefore she could praise the Savior.

Jesus also taught His disciples clearly the ground of joy. When the disciples rejoiced in the power to subdue demons, Jesus said, "*Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven*" (Luke 10:20). The greatest reason we should rejoice is not that we have displayed some power, but that we have believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit, received the remission of sins, and become God's people.

Religious joy or fervent emotion is not the evidence of

salvation. We must confirm before the word whether we have believed with the heart the gospel—that my sins passed on to Jesus and the judgment of those sins was finished on the Cross. The faith that we have become God’s children is based on the salvation Jesus completed.

Therefore, our praise must carry the faith that Jesus received all sins passed on to Him through John’s baptism, was judged on the Cross, and completed salvation with the resurrection. Because God has given the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit to us who believe this gospel and has made us His own children, we, too, can rejoice in God my Savior together with Mary.

The saved inward man is renewed by the word

The inward man Paul spoke of is renewed through the word of God. Paul said, “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*” (Colossians 3:16). When the word of Christ dwells richly within us, we know more clearly what the Savior has done and offer thanks and praise.

At the center of the word of Christ is the salvation Jesus completed. Jesus, who is God, came in a human body; with the baptism He received from John He took the sin of the world passed on to Him; and with the Cross and the resurrection He accomplished the eternal atonement. The Lord leads us to understand and believe through the word the gospel of the water and the Spirit, already completed, and to hold firmly to the fact that all our sins have been washed away.

We are witnesses entrusted with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Our inward man gains new strength by the word, and

clearly testifies of and praises how Jesus removed sin. As members of the church, we must believe and keep the gospel and deliver it to the souls that do not yet know this gospel.

Those who have gone ahead in the church must teach the gospel of the water and the Spirit so that the word of Christ dwells richly within each member. To those who do not know the gospel, the salvation Jesus accomplished must be preached clearly. All the members must be united in the word and keep and preach this gospel. This is the work of the church that builds up the inward man by the word and saves souls.

Our status as God's children is based on the salvation of Jesus

The weakness of the flesh still remains in us as well. But our status as those who have become God's children is based on the salvation Jesus completed. We cannot wash away sin with our good conduct, and God has justified us who believe the righteousness Jesus fulfilled.

We have become God's children because Jesus completed salvation. Hebrews says, *"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified"* (Hebrews 10:14). The one sacrifice Jesus offered has eternal efficacy, so one day's failure of the flesh cannot nullify the eternal atonement of Jesus. Believing this salvation, we come out into the light, acknowledge our wrongs, follow the Father's will, and walk the new way.

God has declared righteous those of us who believe the righteousness of Jesus. Therefore, we believe as the standard of salvation not our own good deeds or shortcomings but the righteousness of Jesus accomplished through the gospel of the

water and the Spirit.

The Lord leads us to live following the word. Having become God's children, when we realize our wrongs we break ourselves and turn, following the Father's will. Believing the salvation Jesus completed, we correct the wrongs of the flesh before the word.

Let us recover the confession of my soul

Jesus, who saved Mary, has removed our sins as well through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. God has given the remission of sins to us who believe this gospel, sent us the Holy Spirit, and made us His own children. Therefore, we too can confess like Mary that my soul rejoices in God my Savior.

Mary praised that God's name is holy and that His mercy comes from generation to generation. We, too, must place at the center of our praise not our own circumstances but the holy and merciful God. We praise God because God sent the Savior, and the Savior removed the sins of our souls through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Mary's praise was praise that testified with words the great things God had done. We, too, must speak clearly of Jesus' incarnation, baptism, Cross, and resurrection. We must praise the fact that by believing that gospel we have received the remission of all sins and become children of God. Today the church also offers this praise of salvation together with Mary.

Dear beloved saints, the mighty God sent the Savior, Jesus Christ, and did great things through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we believe this gospel, we receive the remission of all sins and new life. Therefore, let us praise the holy and merciful God and confess by faith together with Mary: my soul magnifies the Lord, and my heart rejoices in God my Savior. ☒

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, who delivered us and made us serve Him without fear

< Luke 1:68-75 >

“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.”

Dear beloved saints, Zacharias’s praise proclaims in order the salvation God has performed and the purpose of that salvation. God visits and redeems His people, raises up the horn of salvation in the house of David, and, remembering the covenant, delivers His people from the hand of their enemies. Then He establishes the people whose sins have been washed away as righteous, and makes them serve the Lord without fear. Every act of salvation that Zacharias praised begins from God.

If the order of these words is changed, the gospel changes

too. It is not that we first achieve holiness and righteousness, serve God, and are then saved. God first delivers us and gives us the status of the righteous whose sins have been washed, and then makes us serve the Lord. Serving is not a price paid to obtain salvation; it is the work entrusted to the people God has saved.

Therefore, we must first believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins. Having received the remission of sins, we believe the righteousness Jesus has given and live before the Lord. Zacharias's praise clearly shows this order of salvation.

Zacharias's praise begins from the work of God

Zacharias could not speak for a long time because he did not believe the words the angel delivered. When he named his son according to the word of God, Luke recorded, *"Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God"* (Luke 1:64). Zacharias, whose mouth was opened, was filled with the Holy Spirit and praised God, who visits and redeems His people. Through the birth of his son he saw the greater salvation God accomplishes.

If we look at what Zacharias praised, the One who performs salvation is God. God visits His people and redeems them. God sends the Savior, remembers the covenant He made with the fathers, and delivers His people from the hand of their enemies. And He makes the saved people serve the Lord. You and I are not people who produce salvation but people who are delivered by God. If we miss this fact, we end up putting forward the works of the Law and religious zeal as our own righteousness.

Human deeds and religious zeal cannot produce salvation.

Zacharias praised that God “*has visited and redeemed His people*” (Luke 1:68). It is not that the people first went to God and obtained salvation by their own deeds; God first visited His people and saved them. No one can remove the wages of his sins by his own deeds. God must come first, God must redeem, and God must deliver from the hand of the enemy. Zacharias’s praise, from beginning to end, exalts salvation as the work God performs.

In Zacharias’s praise there is no place for human merit to enter. God visits, God redeems, God raises up the horn of salvation, and God fulfills the covenant and delivers. The people who are saved are not the agents who produce this salvation but those who receive, by believing, the salvation God has accomplished. That is why Zacharias praised not his own resolve but God, who redeems His people.

The subject of the deliverance is God

This word says that we, “*Being delivered*” from the hand of our enemies, would serve Him. The passive expression “*delivered*” shows that the subject of salvation is not we but God. We cannot pass our sins on to Jesus by our own will and good deeds, nor can we pay the judgment of sin with our own lives and rise again. Jesus Christ, the Savior who is stronger than sin and death, must Himself deliver us.

The enemies Zacharias spoke of refer to sin, which cut all people off from God; to death, the wages of that sin; and to the power of the Devil, which condemns on the ground of sin. Mankind could not escape this power by itself. So God raised up in the house of David the “*horn of salvation*”—Jesus Christ, who overcomes the power of sin and death.

Believing in Jesus is believing the fact that Jesus received the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, bore that sin and was judged on the Cross, and rose from the dead. When we believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we are delivered from the hand of the enemies and become the righteous who have received the remission of all sins.

The fact that we are in the church and hold an office is not the evidence of salvation. We must not make our deeds or office our righteousness, but must believe, just as the word says, the salvation God accomplished through Jesus Christ. The standard by which one is justified before God is not the degree of one's religious life but faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The One who remembered and fulfilled the covenant is God

Zacharias praised: *“To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to our father Abraham” (Luke 1:72–73)* The words that God remembered the covenant mean that, when the time came, He actually fulfilled the promise of salvation He had made to Abraham, to David, and to the prophets. The certainty of salvation lies in the faithfulness of God, who promises and fulfills.

Luke recorded that God raised up the horn of salvation in the house of David and fulfills the oath He swore to Abraham. The horn of salvation born of the house of David is Jesus Christ. The blessing God promised Abraham was also fulfilled as the blessing of saving sinners through Jesus.

To fulfill this covenant, Jesus, who is God, came in a human

body through the line of David. Jesus received baptism from John so that the sins of mankind passed on to Him, paid the wages of those sins on the Cross, and rose again, completing salvation. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the word of salvation that God planned from the beginning, promised, and fulfilled in Christ. We must believe the gospel that Jesus Christ, the Seed of promise, accomplished. When we believe, we can be assured of salvation and give praise on the ground of the fact that God fulfilled that covenant in Christ.

He first delivered us, and then made us serve

The salvation God promised was actually accomplished through Jesus Christ. Jesus, who is God, came to this earth in a human body to save us who had fallen into sin and death. Jesus Himself accomplished, from beginning to end, everything needed to remove our sins.

When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him, he testified, “*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29). With the baptism He received from John, Jesus received the sins of every person in the world passed on to Him. The sins committed with our hearts and the sins committed with our bodies, the sins committed knowingly and even the sins committed unknowingly—all went over to the sinless Lord. Jesus bore those sins passed on to Him and carried them all the way to the Cross. On the Cross He received God’s judgment in our place and died shedding His precious blood, paying the price of sin without remainder.

The risen Jesus said to His disciples, “*Thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day*” (Luke 24:46). Jesus, who died, actually rose again on the third

day. The risen Lord showed that sin and death could no longer hold Him. Jesus fulfilled all the righteousness of God through His baptism, His bloody death on the Cross, and His resurrection, and achieved the eternal atonement and perfect salvation. There remains no sin for which we must pay again, and no salvation we must further complete.

Dear fellow believers, when we believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we receive the remission of all sins and become children of God. This is the deliverance given first. Then God makes us, clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, stand before Him without fear and serve God. God first delivering us, and we who have received deliverance serving the Lord—this is the order of salvation Zacharias praised.

Luke 1:75 is the word that God makes the people He has delivered from sin and judgment serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of their life. God first delivers His people, and makes them stand before Him as the righteous whose sins have been washed, serving God.

God has made us holy and righteous

This word says that we who have received deliverance come to serve before the Lord in holiness and righteousness. The holiness and righteousness here are what God has clothed us with, washing away our sins through Jesus Christ. We believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the washing of sin, and stand before God as those holy and righteous.

It is because of Jesus Christ that we are acknowledged as holy and righteous before God. Explaining how God made us righteous, Paul said, *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in*

Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). All our sins passed on to Jesus, and the judgment of those sins was finished on the Cross. God has received us who believe this gospel as the righteous whose sins have been washed and as a holy people.

Our righteousness and holiness do not come from ourselves; they come from Jesus Christ. Because Jesus received our sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John and was judged on the Cross, we who believe this gospel can stand before God as the righteous whose sins have been washed. Therefore, we do not put forward our own righteousness but boast of Christ.

We have believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and accepted the fact that Jesus washed away all our sins and the fact that we have been clothed with His righteousness. Now we believe the righteousness Jesus accomplished, and we serve God’s will and the gospel following the word of the Lord.

Therefore, we do not make our own conduct the standard that determines our status before God. God has washed away the sins of us who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and declared us righteous. We believe this word God has spoken and the righteousness Jesus accomplished, and we stand before the Lord.

What serving without fear means

The fear God has removed is the terror of facing the punishment of sin and the eternal judgment. Jesus received all sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John, and received the punishment of those sins on the Cross. Having received the remission of sins by believing this gospel, we stand before the Lord as children of God and serve God without fear.

To the woman who received the remission of sins, Jesus said, *“Your sins are forgiven”* (Luke 7:48), and then He said, *“Your faith has saved you. Go in peace”* (Luke 7:50). Because Jesus received our judgment in our place, we too believe the word that Jesus has removed sin, and obtain peace.

John said, *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love”* (1 John 4:18). That fear involves torment shows that the “without fear” Zacharias spoke of is connected with the salvation that escapes the punishment of sin. Because Jesus received the punishment in our place, we come to God without the terror of condemnation.

Jesus said to His disciples, *“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”* (Luke 12:32). Having believed this gospel, we are not servants awaiting punishment but children of God. Now, with the faith of children, we call God Father and stand before the Lord.

Having become God’s children, we believe the salvation Jesus accomplished and rely on the Lord. Freed from the terror of condemnation, we obey the word of God and serve God before the Lord.

He has made us serve before Him all the days of our life

The word makes clear that the saved people come to serve the Lord continually as long as they live. God has given us the eternal remission of sins and the status of the righteous. Having received this salvation, we keep standing before the Lord and serving God as long as we live. This is the purpose of the salvation Zacharias praised.

To serve before the Lord means that the standard of serving is not human evaluation but God. We believe how God sees us in Jesus Christ and stand before Him. God sees us who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit as the righteous whose sins have been washed. Therefore, we do not serve to display our own merit; we praise God, who saved us, and obey His word.

Zacharias praised that God would grant us to *“serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life” (Luke 1:74–75)*. This word makes clear the status of the one who serves the Lord. A person cannot serve God without fear while holding his own sins. First he must believe the baptism Jesus received from John and the Cross, receive the washing of sin, and become righteous. The one whom God has washed of sin and made righteous serves God following the word of the Lord.

The eternal salvation, the status of the righteous, and the serving without fear that Zacharias praised are joined into one. It is one promise of salvation: that God first regards and delivers His people, clothes them with the righteousness of Jesus, and makes them serve before Him.

Zacharias prophesied that John the Baptist would make salvation known

After praising that the people would receive deliverance and serve the Lord, Zacharias spoke of the work that would be entrusted to his son John. Zacharias prophesied: *“‘And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins’” (Luke 1:76–77)*.

The work entrusted to John the Baptist was to prepare the way of the Lord and to make known to the people the salvation of the remission of sins. John the Baptist later gave baptism to Jesus so that the sins of all mankind passed on to Jesus, and testified that Jesus is the Savior who takes away the sin of the world. Zacharias's praise shows the fact that God sent together Jesus, who would complete salvation, and John the Baptist, who would make that salvation known.

The church, too, must preach the salvation of the remission of sins that John the Baptist testified. A person is not saved by doing the works of God; he becomes a child of God by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in which Jesus took on all sins with His baptism and completed salvation with the Cross and the resurrection. God makes us, who have been delivered by believing this gospel, keep and preach the gospel in union with the church.

Let us praise God, who delivered us

With the baptism He received from John, Jesus received our sins passed on to Him, paid the price of those sins in full on the Cross, and rose from the dead. God has delivered us who believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit from the hand of sin and death. And He has made us, who have received the remission of sins, serve God before the Lord without fear, as those clothed in the righteousness of Jesus.

Believe the gospel Jesus Christ has completed. Having received the remission of sins and become God's children, we stand before the Lord clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, and we serve the gospel relying on the Lord's power.

God has delivered us from the power of sin and death and

made us serve the gospel within the church. Clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, we must obey the word of God, be united with the church, and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to those who do not yet know it.

The heart and the power to serve like this come from Jesus Christ. Jesus received our sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John, received the punishment in our place on the Cross, and rose again, justifying us. God has made us who believe this gospel His own children. Having become God's children, we rely on the Lord and keep and preach the completed gospel.

I hope that Zacharias's praise will become our praise today. Let us praise God, who delivered us; believe the righteousness Jesus has given; and, with the faith of God's children who have received the remission of sins, draw near to the Father. Let us keep the righteousness of God in union with the church and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord, who first delivered us and made us serve without fear, holds us and leads us to the end. ☒

CHAPTER

2

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Luke Chapter 2

seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Introduction

Luke chapter 2 records the birth in Bethlehem of the Savior whom the Old Testament promised. Though He was laid not in a splendid palace but in a manger, the angel proclaimed that baby to be the Savior, Christ, and the Lord. Through Jesus, who came to a low and humble place, God gave the gospel of great joy to all the people.

Jesus was born under the Law and followed the word concerning circumcision, the rite of purification, and the Passover. Simeon testified that the baby Jesus is the salvation prepared for all peoples and the light that shines on the Gentiles, and Anna spoke of Him to those who waited for the redemption of Jerusalem.

This baby is the Savior who would later receive baptism from John the Baptist and take on the sins of mankind, receive the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rise from the dead. Luke chapter 2 shows that the Son of God, who came to a low place, is the Christ who would give the remission of sins and life to all people.

1. The Savior was born in a manger in Bethlehem (Luke 2:1–7)

“And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:1–7).

By the census decree of the Roman emperor, Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem. It looked like a human command, but through this God caused the Ruler prophesied in Micah 5:2 to be born in Bethlehem. Also, the promise of David’s throne in 2 Samuel 7:12–16 and Psalm 132:11, together with the declaration of Luke 1:32–33, continues in Jesus, who was born in the city of David.

Just as Isaiah 7:14 promised, the virgin Mary bore the Son conceived by the Holy Spirit. Seen together with the parallel testimony of Matthew, He is Immanuel, who shows that God is with us. Jesus was born in a low place without even a room to stay in and was laid in a manger. He is the Son of God, who came to the most lowly place to lift up sinners. True salvation is in Him, who came not in the splendor of the world but according to the word of God.

2. The gospel of great joy was delivered to the shepherds (Luke 2:8–20)

“Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!’ So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.’ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them” (Luke 2:8–20).

The angel announced the birth of the Savior first to the shepherds who were keeping their sheep in the fields. The promise in Genesis 12:3 and 22:18 that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in the seed of Abraham began to be fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, proclaimed as tidings of great joy that would come to all the people.

The angel proclaimed the baby to be the Savior, Christ, and

the Lord. Jesus is the One who would save people from sin and death, the anointed King whom God promised, and the Lord who rules all things.

The peace proclaimed by the heavenly host shows that the promise of the Prince of Peace in Isaiah 9:6–7 and of our peace in Micah 5:5 had begun to be fulfilled. This peace is the peace of salvation, in which sinners are reconciled with God. Jesus accomplishes this peace by taking on sin with the baptism He received from John, being judged on the Cross, and rising again.

The shepherds heard the word, went to Bethlehem, and saw the thing that had come to pass. And they told others the word they had heard and praised God. Those who have heard the gospel must receive that word into their hearts and testify of Jesus.

3. He was born under the Law and acted according to the word (Luke 2:21–24)

“And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, ‘Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD’), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, ‘A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.’” (Luke 2:21–24).

Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day according to the words of Genesis 17:12 and Leviticus 12:3, and His parents presented the firstborn holy Son to God according to the words of Exodus 13:2 and 12. This is not so much a direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy as a scene in which Jesus and His parents carried out the words of the Law just as they were. Jesus

is not One who came to disregard the Law; He is the One who was born under the Law and would fulfill the word of God completely.

Mary and Joseph offered, according to the word, the offering of birds that Leviticus 12:6–8 allowed for the poor. Jesus came to a poor family and a lowly place. He is the Savior who would save sinners under the Law and make them children of God.

4. Simeon saw the salvation of all peoples (Luke 2:25–35)

“And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: ‘Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.’ And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, ‘Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’” (Luke 2:25–35).

Simeon waited for the Consolation of Israel and entered the temple following the leading of the Holy Spirit. Holding the baby Jesus in his arms, he praised God that his eyes had seen God’s salvation. God’s salvation is not in any institution or human merit but in Jesus Christ.

The light of the Gentiles promised in Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6, and the salvation before all the nations spoken of in Isaiah 52:10, are fulfilled in Simeon's praising Jesus as the salvation prepared before all peoples and the light that shines on the Gentiles. His salvation does not remain in Israel alone but is delivered to all nations. Whoever believes in the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished comes out of darkness into the light.

However, Jesus would become a sign that is spoken against. Before Him, people reveal their own hearts. Those who believe in Jesus obtain salvation, but those who hold on to their own thoughts and their own righteousness and reject Him fall.

5. Anna spoke of the redemption of Jerusalem (Luke 2:36–40)

“Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him” (Luke 2:36–40).

Anna served God in the temple for a long time with fastings and prayers. When she saw the baby Jesus, she gave thanks to God, and she spoke of Him to those who waited for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Jesus is the Savior who would pay the price and redeem those bound in sin. That redemption is later accomplished through the

baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. Isaiah 52:9–10 promised that God would comfort His people and redeem Jerusalem. Anna saw that the fulfillment of that promise had begun in the baby Jesus, and she spoke of Him to those who waited for the redemption of Jerusalem.

6. The Son of God was in His Father's house (Luke 2:41–52)

“His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, ‘Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.’ And He said to them, ‘Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?’ But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:41–52).

When Jesus was twelve years old, He went up to Jerusalem to keep the Passover. The teachers in the temple were astonished at His understanding and answers. Jesus told Mary that He must

be in His Father's house.

Joseph was known to people as the father of Jesus, but the true Father of Jesus is God. Jesus grew in a human body and obeyed His parents, but at the same time He is the Son of God.

The Passover points to the salvation of being delivered from sin and death. Jesus later accomplishes the salvation of the true Passover by taking on the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John and dying on the Cross with His blood shed.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit that Luke chapter 2 shows

The center of Luke chapter 2 lies in who the baby laid in the manger is. He is the Savior born in the city of David, the Christ, and the Lord. He is the salvation of all peoples that Simeon saw, the light that shines on the Gentiles, and the redemption of Jerusalem that Anna spoke of.

Jesus came to a low and poor place, was born under the Law, and acted according to the word. But He did not come merely as a man worth imitating. He came as the sinless Son of God to receive baptism from John and take on the sins of mankind, to receive the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and to rise from the dead and give eternal life.

Sinners cannot obtain salvation by their own deeds and religious merit. Like the shepherds, we must hear the gospel God has made known; like Simeon and Anna, we must see God's salvation in Jesus. We must receive by faith the gospel of the remission of sins and of life that Jesus accomplished with the water and the Spirit.

Conclusion

Luke chapter 2 shows that the salvation of all peoples began in the lowest manger. The angel proclaimed this baby to be the Savior, Christ, and the Lord, and the shepherds went and found the baby just as the word said and gave glory to God.

Simeon and Anna waited long for the promise of God. They saw in the baby Jesus the light of the Gentiles and the redemption of Jerusalem. Jesus grew in a human body and obeyed His parents, but He is the Son of God, who declared God to be His own Father.

This Jesus saved sinners through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. We must not, because of the world's outward appearance, think lightly of the Lord who came to a manger; we must believe, following the word of God, that He is the Savior of all peoples. ✉

Questions and Answers on Luke Chapter 2

[Question] 1. What important events does Luke chapter 2 record?

Luke chapter 2 records the important events that took place from the birth of Jesus until He was twelve years old. This chapter shows the fact that Jesus came as the Savior within actual history and the fact that He is the Son of God.

“Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!’” (Luke 2:10–14).

First, by the census decree of Caesar Augustus, Joseph and Mary went up to Bethlehem, and Jesus was born there. Because there was no room in the inn, Mary wrapped Jesus in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger. Jesus, the King of kings, came to sinners in the lowest and humblest form (Luke 2:1–7).

Second, an angel announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds who were keeping their sheep in the fields. The angel proclaimed that the baby who had been born was the Savior, who is Christ the Lord, and the heavenly host gave glory to God and praised peace on earth. The shepherds went to Bethlehem,

confirmed the baby, and then told people what they had seen and heard and praised God (Luke 2:8–20).

Third, when eight days had passed after Jesus was born, He was circumcised and received His name just as the angel had said. After that, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem according to the Law and presented Him to God. In the temple, Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised Him as the salvation of God prepared for all peoples and the light that shines on the Gentiles. Anna the prophetess also gave thanks to God and spoke about Jesus to those who waited for the redemption of Jerusalem (Luke 2:21–38).

Fourth, after finishing the things according to the Law, Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth with Jesus. Jesus grew there and became strong, was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him (Luke 2:39–40).

Fifth, when Jesus was twelve years old, He went up to Jerusalem with His parents to keep the Passover. When His parents, returning after the feast was over, saw that Jesus was missing, they went back to Jerusalem and found Him in the temple. Jesus listened to the teachers and asked questions, showing His wisdom, and He said that He must be in the house of God, His Father. This shows that from His childhood Jesus knew the fact that He is the Son of God and must follow the will of His Father. Afterward, Jesus returned to Nazareth with His parents and grew up in obedience (Luke 2:41–52).

Therefore, the central events of Luke chapter 2 are the birth of Jesus the Savior, who came in a lowly form; the testimony of the shepherds who heard the news of that birth; the praises of Simeon and Anna, who recognized Jesus in the temple; and Jesus growing up as the Son of God. The baby laid in the manger is not merely a child born into one family but Christ the Lord, who came to save all the people from sin. Like the shepherds

and Simeon and Anna, we must recognize and believe in Jesus as the promised Savior and give thanks and praise to God.

[Question] 2. Luke 2:1–5, what does the passage say is the reason Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, the city of David?

“And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child” (Luke 2:1–5).

The direct reason Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem was that Caesar Augustus had given the decree that all the world should be registered. People had to return each to his own hometown to be registered in the census. Since Joseph belonged to the house and lineage of David, he left Nazareth in Galilee and went up to Bethlehem in Judea, the city of David. Mary also went with Joseph, with child with Jesus.

Luke records that the Roman emperor at that time was Caesar Augustus and that Quirinius was the governor of Syria. This shows that the birth of Jesus was not a story people made up but an event that took place within actual history. By the decree of the Roman emperor countless people moved, and Joseph and Mary also went to Bethlehem according to that decree.

However, in their journey there was a providence of God deeper than the census registration. God had promised through the prophet Micah that the One who would rule Israel would

come out of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Joseph and Mary were living in Nazareth, but God used the census decree of the Roman emperor to cause Jesus to be born in Bethlehem, the promised place.

The fact that Bethlehem is called “*the city of David*” is also important. That Joseph belonged to the house of David and that Jesus was born in the city of David shows that Jesus is the descendant of David whom God promised and that He came as the King who would save His people. Seen outwardly, it was a matter of one family moving according to the decree of the emperor, but behind it God was fulfilling His promise of salvation exactly.

Therefore, Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to be registered in the census, but through that event the prophecy of God and His plan of salvation were fulfilled. The ruler of the world gave his decree for his own purpose, but God used even that decree to send Jesus at the promised time and to the promised place. Through this event we can believe that the word of God is surely fulfilled and that Jesus is the Savior who came according to that promise.

[Question] 3. Luke 2:6–7, why did Mary wrap Jesus in swaddling cloths and lay Him in a manger?

“So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:6–7).

The direct reason Mary laid Jesus in a manger was that there

was no room for them in the inn. While Joseph and Mary were staying in Bethlehem, the days were completed for her to be delivered, and Mary brought forth her firstborn Son. Mary wrapped the newborn Jesus in swaddling cloths to protect Him, but since there was no proper place to lay the baby, she laid Him in a manger.

The passage records only that there was no room in the inn. Therefore, we cannot know who refused them or exactly what kind of structure the place where Jesus was born was. The fact the Bible makes clear is that Jesus was born not in a comfortable, fine room but in surroundings so low and lowly that He had to be laid in a manger.

Jesus is the King of kings and the Son of God, but He was not born in a palace or a splendid place. By coming into this world in the lowest form, He became the Savior whom even the poor and the lowly can come near without fear. His lying in a manger shows that Jesus left the throne of glory, humbled Himself, and put on a human body in order to save sinners.

The baby laid in the manger then became the sign given to the shepherds. The angel told the shepherds that they would see a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. Following that sign, the shepherds went and found Jesus, and they confirmed that the birth of the Savior which the angel had announced was true.

Therefore, Mary laid Jesus in a manger because there was no room in the inn, but in that lowly birth the love of God, who came near to sinners, is revealed. We must not see Jesus lying in the manger merely as a baby born poor, but must recognize and believe in Him as the Savior who humbled Himself and came to us.

[Question] 4. Luke 2:15–17, how did the shepherds act after they heard the angel’s news about the baby Jesus?

“So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.’ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child” (Luke 2:15–17).

After they heard the news the angel had delivered, the shepherds went straight to Bethlehem and sought the baby Jesus. And when they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger just as the angel had said, they told others the news they had heard about that baby.

First of all, the shepherds did not hear the words of the angel merely as an amazing story. They received the news the angel delivered as that *“which the Lord has made known to us.”* Because they believed God, who was speaking behind the words of the angel, they decided to go and see whether that word had actually come to pass.

After talking with one another, the shepherds went to Bethlehem *“with haste.”* They did not stay where they had been keeping their flocks or put it off until the next day. They regarded the thing God had made known as important and acted at once. Following the sign the angel had told them, they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger.

What they found matched the words of the angel exactly. It was not a baby in a splendid palace or a high position but a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. The shepherds confirmed with their own eyes that the word they had heard and

followed was true. This confirmed the fact that the baby the angel had announced was the promised Savior, Christ the Lord.

After they met Jesus, the shepherds did not keep that news only to themselves. They made known what the angel had told them about the baby Jesus to Mary and Joseph and the people who were there. What they delivered was not their own thoughts or conjectures but the word God had made known and the thing they themselves had confirmed directly.

The actions of the shepherds show what those who believe the word are like.

- They heard the news from God.
- They believed the word they had heard and went at once.
- They confirmed the thing that had come to pass according to the word.
- They told others the facts they had heard and seen.

The actions of the shepherds did not produce salvation. Their actions showed the fact that they truly believed the news of the Savior God had delivered. The good tidings of great joy the shepherds heard was the news that Jesus the Savior had been born. This news was clearly revealed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed later by receiving baptism from John to take on the sins of mankind, receiving the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rising from the dead. We, too, must not stop at knowing the word about Jesus only as knowledge, but must believe that word in our hearts. And if we believe that Jesus is the Savior who came to save us, we must, like the shepherds, tell that joyful news to others.

[Question] 5. Luke 2:21, what was the name Joseph and Mary gave to the baby who was born?

“And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb” (Luke 2:21).

Joseph and Mary gave the baby who was born the name Jesus. This name was not one the two of them decided on after discussing it together; it was the name God had told them in advance through the angel before the baby was conceived.

When eight days had passed after Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary circumcised the baby according to the Law and gave Him His name. In obedience to the word the angel had delivered, they called the name of the baby “*JESUS.*” Not only the birth of Jesus but also His name came about according to the word of God.

The angel Gabriel told Mary, *“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS” (Luke 1:31).* In the parallel record of the Gospel of Matthew, the angel also told Joseph that Mary would bring forth a Son and that he should call His name Jesus. In that name is contained the meaning that Jesus is the Savior who came to save His people from their sin.

Therefore, the name Jesus is not a name given simply for one family to call Him by. It is the name that reveals who the baby God sent is and what work He would do. Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior who put on a human body and came in order to save sinners from sin.

Joseph and Mary remembered the words of the angel and obeyed them just as they were. That they named the baby Jesus means that they believed and received the word God had given. We, too, must not know Jesus merely as a man born in history. According to the meaning of that name God appointed, we must

know and believe in Him as the Savior who came to save us from sin.

[Question] 6. Luke 2:34–35, what did Simeon prophesy to Mary would happen in the future because of the baby Jesus?

“Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, ‘Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’” (Luke 2:34–35).

Simeon prophesied to Mary that because of the baby Jesus many people in Israel would fall and rise, and that Jesus would become a sign spoken against by people. He also said that Mary would go through deep pain, as though a sword were piercing her soul, and that through the way people treat Jesus the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed.

First, Jesus becomes the standard that decides the “*fall and rising*” of many people. Here, to fall and to rise does not simply mean failing or succeeding in the world. It means that those who believe in and receive Jesus as the Savior God sent are saved from sin and obtain life, but those who reject Jesus and hold on to their own righteousness fall and remain under judgment.

Jesus came to save all people from sin, but not all people received Him with the same attitude. Those who admitted that they were people who must be saved, like the tax collectors and sinners, believed in Jesus and rose up. But those who considered themselves righteous and rejected Jesus fell instead because of Him. It is not that people fall because there is some problem with Jesus; it is that the unbelief of the person who rejects Him is

revealed.

Second, Jesus would become *“a sign which will be spoken against.”* The fact that Jesus is the Son of God and came to save sinners is a clear sign, but many people did not believe in Him and slandered and rejected Him. This prophecy was a word that looked ahead even to Jesus being opposed during His public ministry and finally being nailed to the Cross.

Third, Simeon told Mary that a pain like a sword piercing her soul would come upon her. Mary had to watch Jesus being rejected by people, suffering, and hanging on the Cross. For her, watching that as His mother in the flesh would have been a great pain, like her soul being pierced with a sword.

Fourth, through Jesus the thoughts of people’s hearts are revealed. A person may look godly and good outwardly, but how he treats Jesus shows what kind of heart he has before God and His salvation. Through whether one believes in and receives Jesus, or rejects Him by putting forward one’s own thoughts and one’s own righteousness, hidden faith and unbelief are revealed.

Therefore, the prophecy of Simeon shows that Jesus would become the standard of salvation set before all people. We must not see the baby Jesus merely as the beautiful central figure of Christmas. He is the Son of God and the Savior who came to save us from sin. The salvation of Jesus does not stop at the suffering of the Cross. Jesus later received baptism from John to take on the sins of mankind, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and then rose from the dead, and so saved those who believe. The person who believes in and receives Jesus obtains life, but the person who rejects Him reveals his own unbelief by himself.

[Question] 7. Luke 2:36–38, what kind of person was Anna the prophetess, who testified of the baby Jesus to those who waited for the redemption of Jerusalem?

“Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:36–38).

Anna was the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, and a prophetess of a very great age. After she married, she lived with her husband seven years, then lost her husband, and it had been eighty-four years since she became a widow. The passage does not say that Anna was eighty-four years old; it records “*a widow of about eighty-four years.*” Therefore, she was a very aged person who had spent long years alone.

Although Anna lived as a widow for a long time, she did not resent her circumstances or become bound only to the affairs of the world. She did not depart from the temple but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. This shows that Anna was not a person who was zealous for a moment, but a person of faith who looked to God through long years and waited for the promised salvation.

Anna came forward at that very moment when Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus into the temple. Many people went in and out of the temple, but Anna recognized that this baby was the One related to the salvation God had promised. And she gave thanks to God. It was because she saw that the promise of

salvation she had long waited for was being fulfilled through the baby Jesus.

Anna did not keep to herself the fact she had come to know. She spoke about the baby Jesus to all those who waited for the redemption of Jerusalem. The Bible does not record what words Anna spoke specifically. But the fact that she gave thanks to God and spoke about the baby to those who waited for redemption shows that she testified of the news that Jesus is the Savior sent by God.

Here, “*all those*” does not mean that all the people of that time waited for the Messiah. The passage specifically says “*all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*” Many people were near the temple, but not all of them recognized Jesus. People like Anna, who believed the promise of God and waited for salvation, recognized the baby Jesus, gave thanks, and told others about Him.

Anna was a person who did not lose faith even in long waiting but prayed and served God. And when she saw the fulfillment of the promise, she was a witness who gave thanks to God and delivered that news. Like Anna, we too must continue to hold fast to the word God has given us, and must clearly recognize Jesus as the Savior who saved us from sin. And we must not keep the grace of that salvation only to ourselves but deliver it to others.

[Question] 8. Luke 2:43–46, where did Joseph and Mary find the boy Jesus again, whom they thought they had lost?

“When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother

did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 2:43–46).

Joseph and Mary found the boy Jesus, whom they thought they had lost, again in the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus was sitting in the midst of the teachers in the temple, both listening to them and asking them questions.

When they returned after finishing the days of the Passover feast, Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but Joseph and Mary did not know it. They supposed that Jesus was coming along among their relatives or in the company. Only after they had gone a day's journey did they realize that Jesus was not to be seen, and they began to look for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.

But when they did not find Jesus in the company, Joseph and Mary returned again to Jerusalem. After searching for three days, they found Jesus in the temple. From the standpoint of the parents they thought they had lost Jesus, but the passage records not that Jesus had lost His way but that He stayed in Jerusalem.

In the temple, Jesus was sitting among the teachers, listening to the word and asking questions. Though He was a twelve-year-old boy, He had deep interest in the word, and the verses that follow record that those who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. This shows that from His childhood Jesus regarded the word and the will of God the Father as important.

Joseph and Mary thought that Jesus would naturally be traveling with them, but they did not actually confirm it. This

event gives us, too, the lesson that vaguely thinking we are walking with Jesus is not enough. We must return to the written word of God and clearly know and believe who Jesus is and what salvation He has accomplished for us.

Jesus is the Son of God, who came to save us from sin. We must not look for Jesus within our own thoughts and feelings, but must meet Him and walk with Him within the word recorded in the Bible and within the gospel of salvation Jesus accomplished.

[Question] 9. Luke 2:46–47, what was Jesus doing when Joseph and Mary found Him in the temple, and how did the people regard what they saw?

“Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers” (Luke 2:46–47).

When Joseph and Mary found Jesus in the temple, He was sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. Those who heard Jesus all marveled at His understanding and answers.

Jesus was among the teachers who taught the Law in the temple. The passage does not record that Jesus one-sidedly taught the teachers or disputed with them. Jesus listened to their words, asked questions, and answered wisely when He received questions. Listening, asking, and answering took place together.

Jesus was twelve years old at the time. But those who heard the words of Jesus recognized the fact that His understanding and answers were different from those of an ordinary child, and they were amazed. It is also important that Jesus did not sit in a

place higher than the teachers to display Himself; rather, He sat in their midst and conversed with them. While listening to the word sincerely, Jesus showed the wisdom that revealed its meaning clearly.

This scene shows together the fact that Jesus truly put on a human body, came, and grew up, and the fact that at the same time He possessed special wisdom as the Son of God. From His childhood Jesus regarded the word of God and the will of His Father as the most important things. His staying in the temple was not mere curiosity or an act to get away from His parents, either.

We, too, must first incline our ears and listen before the word of God, and must sincerely ask and learn what we have not understood. Asking questions is not in itself unbelief. We need the attitude of listening and asking in order to know and believe the word of God rightly. But Jesus is not merely a wise student we should imitate. He is the Son of God, who came to fulfill the word of God and to save us from sin.

[Question] 10. Luke 2:49, how did Jesus answer when His parents said that they had anxiously sought Him?

Jesus asked why they had sought Him, and replied by asking whether His parents had not known the fact that He must be in the house of God, His Father.

“And He said to them, ‘Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?’” (Luke 2:49).

Mary said to Jesus, *“Your father and I have sought You anxiously.”* Here, *“Your father”* refers to Joseph. But Jesus called God *“My Father.”* These were not words denying the care

of Joseph and Mary; they were words revealing who He is. Jesus was born of Mary and received the protection of Joseph, but fundamentally He is the Son of God, sent by God the Father.

Also, in the words “*I must be about My Father’s business*” is contained the meaning that fulfilling the will of God the Father was the most important thing in the life of Jesus. Jesus stayed in the temple not because He had forgotten His parents or lost the way back home. As He listened to the word of God and asked questions in the temple, He was following the will of God the Father. Therefore, the answer of Jesus was not a word that took the worry of His parents lightly; it was a word that led His parents to understand His true identity and mission.

At that time, Joseph and Mary did not immediately understand the words of Jesus. But Jesus returned to Nazareth with them and was subject to them in obedience. Therefore, these words must not be understood as Jesus disobeying His parents in the flesh. Jesus obeyed His parents, but before that, as the Son of God the Father, He had to fulfill the will of His Father.

Through this answer we come to know the fact that we must not see Jesus merely as the son of Mary and Joseph. Jesus is the Son whom God the Father sent, and the Savior who came into the world to fulfill the will of the Father. Therefore, we must not try to find Jesus only with our own thoughts and worries, but must realize and believe through the word of God who Jesus is and what He came to accomplish. ☒

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

God, who fulfilled His promise

< Luke 2:1-14 >

“And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!’”

In Bethlehem, according to the word of promise

God made this world in the beginning, and the history of the whole world is in this God. About two thousand years ago from now, when Caesar Augustus, the emperor of Rome, was holding Israel as a colony, he gave out a decree. It was a command that every nation that had become a colony of Rome should take an exact census of how many men there were, how many women, and how many children.

At that time the baby Jesus had already been conceived in the body of the virgin Mary. Mary was betrothed to Joseph, and the two were of the family of the house of Judah. God had said that through the tribe of Judah, among the twelve tribes of Israel, a King would be born, and that this King would rule Israel.

When Augustus gave the decree, Mary's ten months were full and she was in the last month of her pregnancy. Following that command, Joseph and Mary went up to Bethlehem with her body full with child. And at the very time they had gone up to Bethlehem to be registered, the days were completed for her to be delivered, and the work of the baby being born in a stable came to pass.

How we can know that God moves all the history of the whole world is this: why did the baby Jesus have to be born after they went, of all places, to a place called Bethlehem, in a stable in that town? The registration was a matter that could be finished amply in about two days, once one went and made clear his family and ancestry, recorded it in the documents, and had it verified. They could have taken care of the business for a day or two and gone back to give birth to the baby in the place where they were staying, but God drove Mary and Joseph out to Bethlehem, and when they arrived at the town called Bethlehem, the time was fulfilled and the baby Jesus was about to come out.

This was in order to fulfill the word God had promised, the word He had prophesied. God prophesied through the prophet Micah about seven hundred years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting” (Micah 5:2) God spoke this word of prophecy to the prophet Micah. Naming that very place—Bethlehem, the small town of Ephrathah where the family of Judah lived—He said in advance that the One who would rule Israel would come out of there. He is the One whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. It was that the Savior would be born in that town called Bethlehem.

And this prophecy was fulfilled through that very event: when Mary and Joseph, the two of them, went up to their ancestral town to be registered, upon arriving in Bethlehem the time was fulfilled and she could not but give birth to the baby. Here we can know that God is the God who speaks and brings to pass, we can know that this Bible is the word of God, and we can know the fact that God rules over and moves the whole universe and all the history on this earth. We can know that, just as God created the heavens and the earth, He governs all people and all history throughout.

Mary, her ten months being full, delivered her baby in a stable because she could not help it, for there was no room in the inn. But behind that circumstance was God, who intended to fulfill the promise He had spoken about seven hundred years before. God caused the baby Jesus to be born in that place in order to fulfill the promise He Himself had spoken directly. We must know and also believe that the One who moves the history of the universe is God, and that the One who governs our personal life and death, fortune and misfortune, and all our

happiness and blessings is also God.

This event of the baby Jesus being born in the small town called Bethlehem was neither something that happened by chance nor something people made up artificially. God did this work Himself. We must know that our salvation, too, did not come about by chance, by believing one religion among many; we received salvation within the plan of salvation God had determined. So we pray before God and pray for souls, and while doing all that man can do, we know that ultimately it depends on God, and we entrust everything to God. What is the reason the baby Jesus was born in Bethlehem? He was born by the promise of God, in order to fulfill the word of promise.

“She brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths”

Second, the word says, *“She brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn”* (Luke 2:7). The Bible speaks of Jesus as the firstborn Son. If so, it is telling us that there would be a second child. It is recorded that because Mary had heard the voice of the angel, she did not know Joseph until she gave birth to the baby. But after giving birth to the baby Jesus, they lived their married life and bore children. The first birth was the birth of the Savior, in which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came clothed in the flesh to save us, and the son born next was a son of Joseph, a son of man.

If we look at Genesis chapter 3, when Adam and Eve fell into the enticement of the serpent, that is, Satan, and sinned, God sought out Adam. Adam said that the woman God had given him gave him of the fruit of the tree and he ate; and Eve said that the

serpent enticed her, saying that if she ate it her eyes would be opened and she would become like God, and so she ate. Then God cursed the serpent, saying, *“Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life”* (Genesis 3:14). And He went on to say, *“And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel”* (Genesis 3:15). This is the promise that God, in order to save mankind, would come to this earth as the Seed of the woman, in the form of a man, and would remove the sin and death that Satan had brought to people. Just as the word said, that the serpent would bruise His heel, Jesus Christ suffered the death of the flesh by being nailed to the Cross. Just as He had promised, our Lord came.

Our Lord was conceived by borrowing the body of the virgin Mary, who did not know a man. That conception was a conception that came about by the word of God. Just as today you and I hear the recorded word of God with our ears and believe it in our hearts, and so believe in Jesus, who became our Savior, and receive the remission of sins, and Jesus comes into our hearts, so also with Mary it was not something done by the work of man; through her believing the word of God the angel delivered, God, who is the Word, entered into her, put on a human body, and was born on this earth as the Savior.

So at every Lord’s Day worship service we confess our faith with the Apostles’ Creed: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. A virgin means a maiden who does not know a man. The Holy Spirit works following this recorded word. The Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is the same God

to us. There is the Father, there is the Son who is the Word, and there is the Holy Spirit who helps us, that is, pneuma (πνεῦμα). The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons, but in reality They are the same God to us.

She brought forth her firstborn Son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger. Swaddling cloths are clean white cloth. The pure white cloth that mothers in the old days would prepare by washing cotton fabric, starching it, drying it thoroughly, and smoothing it out flat by beating it—that is swaddling cloths. In them the baby Jesus was wrapped and laid in a manger, that is, the feeding trough of beasts. Our Savior came, and the words of prophecy before His birth, the circumstances when He was born, and all the things that came to pass at that time were not things that just happened without any meaning. They show concretely the fact that this One was actually God, and they tell us clearly the reason why this God became a man and came. That He was wrapped in swaddling cloths is the word that the holy God—the God who has no sin at all, the God who created us and all things in the universe—put on a human body and came to this earth. Through the word that He was wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger, God expressed that the holy God became a man and came to save mankind.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1–3) Here, He refers precisely to Jesus, who came to save us. Before He came to save us, He made all things in this universe, and we also were made through Him, and His coming was to save us from sin. He put on the form of a man, but in reality He was God. Just as the word says, *“who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal*

with God” (*Philippians 2:6*), the Bible records that He lowered Himself and saved us.

The salvation God has accomplished does not change

God made us, God came to this earth to save us, and He put on the form of a man and saved us with the Spirit, the water, and the blood—that is why we have received salvation. From whom did we receive salvation? We received salvation from God. Because we received salvation from God, our salvation is perfect, there is actually no sin in our hearts, and we have become the children of God. If it were said that not God but a man like Buddha or Socrates or Confucius had saved us, that salvation could not be perfect even for a moment and would always be unstable.

Jesus Christ came to this earth about two thousand years ago, received baptism from John the Baptist so that all the sins of mankind passed on to Him, died on the Cross, rose again in three days, testified to His disciples for forty days, ascended to the kingdom of heaven, and now sits at the right hand of the Father. The salvation with which He saved mankind from sin at that time is still effective now, so that you and I who believe have no sin even now. It is so because it is the work God did. If it were a work done by man, it would fade and be corrupted in just ten years, but though about two thousand years have passed, no corruption has come to it. No one knows how long this world will go on; only the Father knows. Though we can know roughly by the signs, we cannot know the month, the day, and the hour, like those doomsday sects that set dates. But until the day this earth comes to an end, the salvation in which our Lord has

resolved everything, even the sins of the people who are yet to be born, remains unchanged.

The One who came to become the food of life for us

The holy God came to this earth and became the food of our salvation. That He was laid in a manger means that He became food for us. A manger is the feeding trough of beasts. A feeding trough is a log split in half with the middle hollowed out, and when rice straw is chopped, boiled, and poured into it, the ox likes it very much. Though it makes no sense to a man, to the ox that is food. That He was laid in a manger means that the baby Jesus was laid in the place where beasts live. Spreading rice straw and wrapping Him snugly in white swaddling cloths and laying Him down—that much we can understand; but how could anyone lay his own child in the feeding trough of beasts?

Jesus Christ came just as the word says, *“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly”* (John 10:10). The Lord also said, *“I am the bread of life”* (John 6:48), and *“My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed”* (John 6:55). Our Lord put on a human body and came to this earth to become the food of life for us and to save us from sin, and He saved us. From the time He was born, He came to become the food of life for us. That is why our Lord was wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger.

In the hearts of what kind of people did the Lord come to dwell?

When our Lord came to this earth, it was said: glory to God

in the highest, and on earth on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased. The Lord came to save not those who commit violence in the world, seize power, and say there is no God, but those lives who, living on this earth, think that God certainly exists and wish they could meet God and wish they could receive blessing from God—the poor in spirit, insignificant even physically, the poor, the sick, the bound, and those crushed under sin. That is why our Lord was born in a stable, because there was no room in the inn.

The inn, that is, the lodging house, was already full of guests. It was full of people with much money. The innkeeper had taken in guests who paid double the price, and to send all those guests out and get a room, one would have to have money to compensate them several times over. Joseph had heard from an angel of the Lord in a dream the word, “*that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS*” (Matthew 1:20–21), so he knew the fact that the baby Jesus would be born from the body of Mary. If only he had had money, he could have compensated the full price and gotten a room for the baby to be born in. But Joseph was not a rich man. It is passed down that his occupation was a carpenter, and in the old days carpenters were very lowly people. That is why, because there was no place in the inn, He was born in a stable.

That is exactly why our Lord could be born in your heart and mine. In the hearts of people whose hearts are full of guests—full of power and wealth and honor—there is no place for Jesus to enter. However completely Jesus has removed their sins, even when this Jesus is preached to them, they have no empty space to receive Him. So those who hold wealth in this world and those who enjoy power do not believe in Jesus as their own Savior. Many people are said to come out to church, but many come out

to do business, to form social ties, and to win votes. When the gospel of the water and the Spirit—the most joyful and beautiful news, that Jesus has removed all their sins—is delivered, the ones who receive it are those whose hearts are empty like the straw in the place of beasts, people who have little power or wealth or things of the world. Only such people receive Jesus as their own Savior and become the children of God.

That does not mean, however, that you and I must have nothing. Those who receive Jesus as their own Savior are people for whom the wealth and honor and material things of this world are not everything, who cannot be satisfied with them, and who are satisfied with what is of the kingdom of heaven. Those whose hearts were full of the things of the world did not receive Jesus even when He came. The inn speaks of our hearts. Just as the word says, “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock*” (Revelation 3:20), the Lord went around the whole earth knocking at every house and every heart, but He could not enter into hearts full of the wealth, power, honor, and greed of the world. In the hearts of what kind of people was our Lord born? In the hearts of the lowly, like Mary, who confessed herself the maidservant of the Lord, God, the King of kings, came to dwell. He came into such hearts and saved them, became their Shepherd, made them the children of God, made them righteous, and passed down to them all things of the kingdom of heaven as their inheritance. Just as this word was fulfilled when the Lord came to this earth, this word is being fulfilled just the same even now.

The One who fills our hearts with grace

We cannot live on the wealth and honor of the world alone. Even a popular song has the words, ‘Though I drink and sing

and dance, there is only sorrow filling my breast.’ That speaks of the actual heart of human life. However much one enjoys the pleasures of the flesh, there is nothing but sorrow in the heart. So people set out to catch something. To gain honor once, to gain wealth once, a human life sets out. But as in Hemingway’s novel *The Old Man and the Sea*, even when it seems one has caught a big fish, when he drags it back and looks, nothing is left but the bones. Like the woman who came out to the well, just as the word says, “*you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband*” (John 4:18), even the sixth husband was not her own husband. Who is our real Husband? It is Jesus. What is on earth is a shadow of the kingdom of heaven.

Even if one comes to have all wealth and power, like the chairmen of great conglomerates, nothing remains. A human life sets some goal and runs toward it. Before achieving it his heart swells, but the moment he has achieved it, nothing remains in his heart—nothing but disappointment. When you design a big house with a beautiful dream, build it, and cut the tape at its completion, are you satisfied? It is nothing much. When you first go to a big airport your eyes grow wide at how grand it is, but once you have seen a bigger one, it looks small. The only One who can fill our eternal heart is Jesus.

When we receive our Savior, our Creator God, into our hearts, there is satisfaction in our hearts. You and I are happy people. Just as the word says, “*having food and clothing, with these we shall be content*” (1 Timothy 6:8), it is truly so. We receive the Lord into our hearts and receive the remission of sins, our family members one by one receive the remission of sins, and we do this work of delivering the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the people around us and saving souls. There is no news on this earth more joyful and more beautiful than having become the people of God. We have received the greatest blessing, and there

is no greater blessing than being those who do the work of God.

“There is born to you a Savior”

“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11) The Savior means that the God of salvation has come. The word Lord means Master, so it means that God came as our Savior and saved us. He took on three offices and saved us. He is King, High Priest, and Prophet. The King speaks of God. The people receive the remission of sins only when the high priest offers the sacrifice for them, and Jesus, the High Priest, offered the sacrifice not with some other sacrificial offering but with His own body. He received baptism from John the Baptist so that all the sins of you and me passed on to His own body, offered His body on the Cross, which was the altar of burnt offering, died, and rose again, and so saved His people from their sins. And as the Prophet, He taught us so that we might believe in Jesus and receive salvation.

“And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men” (Luke 2:12–14) When Jesus Christ was born on this earth, the army of heaven and the angels appeared to the shepherds. It is not only on this earth that people live and soldiers exist; in the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, there are soldiers and there are angels.

We must know that this earth is not everything. These days people make a great fuss about having seen UFOs, but I ask you not to be deceived by such things. It is the phenomenon of gas coming out of an airplane during flight training, burning together

with the air and looking red like a flying saucer, that they call the appearance of a flying object. The world of God is in the kingdom of heaven, and on this earth there are only people. It is because people have no hope on this earth that they want to leave the earth and set their hearts elsewhere and run away, and so think up such things. Our Lord said that He will actually come again on the clouds with the heavenly host and the angels. When the Bible is right spiritually, it is right in actuality as well. It is not a lie.

When our God Jesus Christ put on the form of a man and came to this earth, out in the fields shepherds were keeping their flocks. Then suddenly it became bright, and the soldiers of heaven lined up in an immense array, and on one side the angels stood packed in dense ranks, praising God: glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those who are favored. The King of kings came. And He was born in our hearts. We thank God that by the will of God we have become the children of God. Though our flesh is weary, He said that blessed is the one who trembles in fear before the word of God, so our hearts are truly blessed. Even if you chase after the things of the world, they are nothing much. There is no One more precious than Jesus Christ, and there is no person more blessed than those who tremble in fear before the word of God and follow the word. ☒

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus, who was born by the Holy Spirit

< Luke 2:1-20 >

“And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace,

goodwill toward men!’ So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.’ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.”

The Christmas on which the King of kings came

Verse 11 of the passage says, *“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”*. It means that the King of kings came to this earth to save us from sin. When we look at the world of the galaxies in the sky, how vast it is! The day on which God, the King of kings who created all this heaven and earth, put on a human body and came in order to save sinners from all their sins is Christmas. How awesome and thankful a thing it is that the King Himself came down for truly lowly mankind, and for you and me!

To the lowly, a most precious Guest came. We received life from God and were born on this earth, but we are beings like mayflies, who come once and go back—people who are no more than one tiny creature. Yet God came to this earth for the one reason that we resemble His image, and for the one reason that He had planned it. Suppose someone unimaginably high,

someone who could never visit your house, came to visit once. How overwhelming would that be? And if that One came and blessed you, and through meeting Him your whole life was completely changed, how good a thing would that be?

We do not fully sense that the King of kings came to save us. We only sense it about this far: joy to the world, the Savior has come; He is the Lord who came, received baptism from John at the age of thirty so that our sins passed on to Him, died on the Cross, rose from the dead, and saved us. But we hardly sense how great He is. Yet the great One came to this earth. The word Christ means the Anointed One. The King of the kingdom of heaven, the King of kings, the Priest of the kingdom of heaven, and the Prophet who knows all things—such a One came. How great a thing is that? Greeting Christmas, we give thanks to God that the King came to this earth to save His people from their sins.

Christ, who moves history to fulfill the word

Christ is the central figure of the history of the universe. He is the Master who is the beginning and the end of all this world of galaxies turning and all things turning, our Lord who rules and governs everything in the world God has made. When our Lord was to come to this earth, He turned history around in order to be born in Bethlehem. He changed the quiet history of Israel so that it came under the rule of Rome, set a Roman named Augustus on the throne as emperor, and that emperor, wanting to display his power, gave a decree to the nations belonging to Rome to register, every one. It was Augustus who took the census of the subject nations, but the One who caused him to do it was Christ. Christ put it into his heart and caused him to do it.

So when the decree went out that all the world should be registered, all the people went to their own hometowns and registered.

Our Lord is the King of kings, the Christ who made all things in the universe, the Christ who moves the history of the world and the history of mankind. He did this work in order to be born in the small town called Bethlehem. This was His moving history in order to fulfill the word of the Old Testament Book of Micah, the word He had promised through the prophets. So Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem, their ancestral town, and registered, and at that time the baby Jesus Christ was born, borrowing the body of the virgin Mary.

We must have faith that believes in the King

The word records that the virgin Mary brought forth her firstborn Son. It was recorded that way lest people in later generations should call Mary the queen of heaven and serve her. If Mary had borne only the baby Jesus and never borne another child, all the people of later generations would have served Mary even more devotedly than Jesus Christ. It could have been a disaster. Something would have happened in which the whole world exchanged God for one woman and served her as a god. To prevent such a thing, God caused Mary, after she gave birth to Christ, to marry Joseph, to whom she was betrothed, and to bear a second, a third, a fourth child, one after another. It means that the brothers of Jesus in the flesh were indeed there. So when His family in the flesh came looking for Jesus, He said, *“Who is My mother and who are My brothers? And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is*

My brother and sister and mother” (Matthew 12:48–50). God knew everything.

So we must give thanks that the King has come, and we must have faith that believes in the King. Just as there is much dust in this world, there are many petty affairs, and there are many times when Satan the Devil blows in absurd thoughts, and times when he brings anxiety over things that will never happen. Satan the Devil works like a roaring lion, whether in dreams or in thoughts, within the faithless thoughts and plans of man. At such times we must drive him out by faith. What kind of people are you and I? We are people who have received the remission of sins, people who have become the children of God because the King of kings came to this earth and saved us. We must live fighting against Satan and driving him out by faith, commanding: in the name of the Lord Jesus, Satan the Devil, be gone!

Therefore, the practice of exalting and serving Mary because she gave birth to the baby Jesus is something that must be greatly guarded against. The Catholic Church now calls Mary the queen of heaven and earth. With the fleshly thought that if one makes a request through the mother rather than through the Son, He would grant it better, they pray, saying: Mary, full of grace, pray for us.

I once spent nine months in a Catholic church in the past. Twice a day, morning and evening, they had us go around the fourteen stations following the pictures put up on the wall, praying in call and response: holy Mary, queen of heaven and earth, pray for us. Every time I did it, I could not accept it at all in my heart. Did God marry Mary, then? So after mass I went to the nun in charge and confronted her. What do you mean, Mary full of grace? The One full of grace is Jesus, and God; Mary is a human being just like me, who goes to the toilet and relieves herself—how can Mary be full of grace? She was greatly

shocked that I said such things and tried to send me away. We must know the Bible accurately. Is it not recorded in the four Gospels that Mary bore a second and a third child? From now on, do not say before me, Mary full of grace; say instead, Lord full of grace. I fought that way for nine months, but it was like striking a rock with an egg.

Mary, who gave birth to Jesus Christ, only lent her body for ten months, for a time, so that God might fulfill His will to save mankind. Even so, Mary received grace. She believed the word God spoke through the angel and came to know the fact that Jesus is the Savior, and by believing in that Jesus Christ she received salvation. Through the baptism Jesus received from John at the age of thirty and through all the things in which He, who had never sinned, died on the Cross, Mary believed that He, though her son in the flesh, was the Messiah who came to save mankind from sin, and she obtained salvation by faith. People like Mary and Elizabeth and Zacharias and Joseph and Anna the prophetess and Simeon believed that the word of the Old Testament would be fulfilled, and so they received special grace and had already received the remission of sins at that time. Mary, too, just like us, became a woman blessed through faith.

The Lord, who was laid in a manger to become the bread of life

Our Lord was born on this earth and laid in a manger. That He lay in a manger means that He became our food, our eternal nourishment. Mankind had no truth worth believing, no food for the spirit, but through Jesus Christ's coming, food for the spirit came into being. So when He was born on this earth, He was born into a manger and became our true food, the food of eternal

life, and became truly the Lord of truth, the One whom man can believe. The King came to this earth and gave His own body to us, so we eat the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ by faith. We could receive salvation by believing in our hearts that Jesus Christ was born, received baptism from John so that all the sins of mankind passed on to Him, went bearing the sin of the world, died nailed to the Cross, and rose again.

The Lord said, *“I am the bread of life”* (John 6:48), and *“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life”* (John 6:54), and He said that He becomes the living water that never lets one thirst again. Christ came to become the food of salvation for you and me. Therefore you and I could obtain salvation through faith.

The King of kings came into this world, but there was no place for Him in people’s hearts. Even now Jesus Christ is there unchanged, but in people’s hearts there is no place to hold Jesus Christ. They are sunk in the lust of the flesh, sunk in the lust of the eyes, sunk in science—sunk in many places. So although the King of kings has come, there are hardly any hearts prepared to receive the Lord of life. Even now the Lord wants to enter into people’s hearts and truly become the Lord of life and the food of life for them. And yet people have no empty heart to receive Jesus. Their hearts are wholly full of the things of the world and the greed of the world, so there is no place for Jesus. Thus they leave Jesus Christ standing outside the door and treat Him coldly, and the Lord, having nowhere to go, seeks out the hearts of those who say they are truly lowly, those who say life is vain and nothing at all, those who, like lost sheep, find no satisfaction in this world—and He was born in those hearts that were prepared to receive Jesus Christ. And so He was born in our hearts as well.

The birth made known first to the shepherds

Our Lord has much interest in shepherds. The ones to whom He made known His birth first of all were the shepherds. Even now our Lord has much interest in God's Church ministering in this world, in its shepherds, and in their flocks. Around Bethlehem, in the dark, starlit night, angels came down from heaven and praised God. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those who are favored—it is truly so.

The King of kings came, and the baby Jesus wrapped in swaddling cloths was the sign. A couple went into the small town called Bethlehem and gave birth to a baby, and having no place to lay the baby, they cleaned a manger and wrapped Him in white swaddling cloths and laid Him there. Yet that is a miracle for all mankind. Who knew that the baby wrapped in swaddling cloths in a place as lowly as a stable was the King of kings? Who knew that the almighty God had become a man and was lying there, born as the baby Jesus? This was the sign. So the angels appeared and taught the shepherds. Saying, *“Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”* (Luke 2:10–11), the angel told them that the baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger was a sign to them.

Is the baby Jesus coming to this earth a sign, or is it not? It is a miracle. It is a miracle to you and me, and a miracle to all the people of the world. Our Lord did not come suddenly and majestically in the form of a grown man. He came as a newborn baby, in the form of a very small baby. Jesus, who came for us—the King of kings, the almighty God—was born as the baby Jesus in the very same form you and I had when we were babies: if this is not a miracle, what is? It is a truly amazing thing.

At that time the shepherds were astonished, deeply moved; they confirmed it and rejoiced. They were keeping their flocks in the cold night, covered with blankets, watching whether wolves were coming, when suddenly a bright light shone, and on this side the army of heaven lined up more numerous than grains of sand, and on that side the angels stood in dense ranks, and one side sang, glory to God in the highest, and the other side answered, peace on earth to those who are favored, praising in response—how majestic it must have been! How astonished the shepherds must have been! Since the shepherds were believers, they must have looked upon this with wonder.

The shepherds heard this word, went with haste, found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger, and met them, and they told people what the angel had said about this baby. All who heard marveled at the words of the shepherds, but Mary kept all these words in her heart and pondered them. She had already been startled when the angel appeared and said that she would bear a baby from her body; and when she actually received the word, her womb swelled, and when ten months were full, the baby was born. That alone was amazing, and now, being told that the heavenly host and the angels had come down and spoken, Mary stored this in her heart.

Our Lord, who will come again just as it is recorded in the Bible

The baby Jesus was born on this earth, grew up, received baptism from John at the age of thirty so that all the sins of mankind passed on to Him, died nailed to the Cross, rose from the dead, and now sits at the right hand of the throne of God in the kingdom of heaven, reigning as the almighty King of kings.

And He sent the Holy Spirit to this earth so that He might dwell with you always. When you are lonely, when things are hard, at any time, the Holy Spirit holds your heart and enables you to have fellowship with God. We also have seen the work the Lord came to this earth and accomplished. Like the shepherds, we too saw and believed and received the remission of sins. In fact, we are no different from these shepherds.

The King who became a wonder and a sign came into this world, saved us, and made us His own people, so let us deliver this gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world. Our Lord came at His first coming as the baby Jesus wrapped in swaddling cloths, but the Lord who ascended into the kingdom of heaven is coming a second time. He said that the Lord who comes again will come to this earth just as He ascended—in that very form of His thirty-three years—with dignity and majesty, with the trumpet sound of the heavenly host and the angels, riding on the clouds in the midst of that arrayed procession. Looking forward to that Lord, even when that day comes, let us not be startled like the shepherds or think it too strange, but, because this is what is recorded in the Bible, let us greet the Lord on that day by faith. And I hope that you will be God's servants and saints who deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit until that day comes. ☒

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The birth of Jesus and the historical facts

< Luke 2:1-20 >

“And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace,

goodwill toward men!’ So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.’ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.”

Yesterday evening, since it was the day before Christmas, we put on a stage performance celebrating the Lord’s birth in advance. Our family members prepared it with all their hearts and celebrated the Lord, and to us who watched it was also a great grace and lesson. I believe it was also much glory to God. Today, greeting the Lord’s birth like this, we offer a worship service of celebration.

The Lord loved all mankind and came to this earth to save us from sin. If so, is the Lord’s coming to this earth some fictional event, or is it something that really happened based on fact? Today I hope we will look into this part and have a time of giving thanks before God.

The birth of Jesus is a fact within history

If we look at Luke 2:1, it says, *“And it came to pass in those*

days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered". This—that Caesar Augustus gave a decree that all the world should be registered—is the first evidence that Jesus Christ was actually born within the history of this world and came to save us.

This man was the emperor of Rome. Caesar Augustus is Augustus, who is called the first emperor of Rome. He is the man who ascended the throne as emperor around 27 B.C., before Jesus came to this earth. At that time Rome had the whole world in its grasp, so the command that all the world should be registered meant that everyone was to register. It was a survey to count the population in order to rule and to equip the administration. So Jesus Christ did not come to this earth without any basis.

When the emperor Augustus was ruling Rome, when Israel had become a subject state of Rome, Jesus was born in the land of Bethlehem, borrowing the body of the virgin Mary. It was exactly so. Historians also consult the Bible. They say that however many materials there may be, historians cannot properly carry out the study of history if they leave out the Bible. This Bible speaks about salvation, but it also records here and there the history and events of the world of that time, letting us know through those events what work God did.

Luke, who recorded the Gospel of Luke, was a physician by occupation. He recorded the birth of Jesus as being when Rome was ruling Israel, when there was the emperor Augustus, who bore the family name Caesar. If we look at Matthew chapter 22, the Pharisees test Jesus and ask whether they should pay taxes. Then Jesus said to render "*to Caesar the things that are Caesar's*" (*Matthew 22:21*). Even in the days of Jesus' public ministry, the matter of paying taxes to the Roman emperor was a matter of dispute. Jesus and His disciples, too, had to pay taxes. All this

tells us historical facts.

Therefore, this faith with which we today believe in Jesus as the Savior is not a tale handed down by mouth without basis or lineage. This is something that actually and undeniably took place within history. Jesus Christ came to this earth borrowing the body of the virgin Mary, and the king at that time was Caesar Augustus, the emperor of Rome who was in control of Israel. Luke recorded it this way so that you and I today can know it through this word.

The birth of John the Baptist and his name

Now let me speak a little about the biblical account. It is the time when Mary accepted the word of the angel, conceived the baby Jesus, and went to visit her relative Elizabeth. Since the angel had told Mary that her aged relative Elizabeth had also conceived, Mary went to visit Elizabeth with a heart wanting to confirm it.

When Elizabeth saw Mary coming, the baby in her womb leaped, and Elizabeth said that the mother of her Lord was coming to her. Then Mary, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied and praised, saying that God had cast down the proud and saved the poor and pitiful. God did not forsake the people of Israel, and He caused the King of kings, the King who would rule the whole universe, to be born from that people. That One is Jesus Christ. God was the One who fulfills all the promises He made with His servants.

Now let us look at the word of Luke chapter 1. It says, “*And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house. Now Elizabeth’s full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son*” (Luke 1:56–57). The people of

Israel intermarried among their own people. Joseph, who was betrothed to Mary, was of the family of Judah, and Elizabeth and Zacharias were of the family of Aaron, that is, the tribe of Levi. Jacob had twelve sons, and the tribes were divided following the names of his sons, like Levi and Judah and Simeon, and each tribe was given a region to govern; that is why they are called tribes.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months. An angel had appeared to a virgin and said that the One to be born from her body was the King of kings, the Son of God, and the Savior; a virgin being with child was something too fearful and shocking. So she went to visit her relative Elizabeth, wanting to see a person who had gone through such a thing. When Mary visited, Elizabeth's womb was swollen, a little past six months. That she stayed about three months and returned home was because her relative Elizabeth's time to give birth had come.

After Mary returned, Elizabeth's full time came and she bore a son, and he is John the Baptist—that very John the Baptist who baptized Jesus. John was born six months before Jesus was born on this earth. When John's father Zacharias was performing the duty of the sacrifice in the temple of God on behalf of the people of Israel in the office of the high priest, the angel appeared. Inside the temple of God there is an enclosure and within it the Most Holy Place; the high priest enters that place only once a year, and the rest of the sacrifices are performed outside at the laver and the altar of burnt offering.

When Zacharias was performing that duty, an angel appeared and said that he would obtain a son by his wife, and because Zacharias could not believe it, he was made mute. And the angel said to call the name of that son John. Jesus also was conceived in the body of Mary, yet it was not Mary who named Him; the angel said, *“you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His*

people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). John, too, was given his name by the angel. Originally, among the people of Israel, if the father was Zacharias, the son would usually inherit that name.

When a woman marries, she follows her husband’s family name, abandons what she has managed until then, and lives united with her husband. In fact, seen spiritually, this is right. It is the same when we come to Jesus Christ. We abandon our old self and live united with the Lord.

The role of John the Baptist

Now, concerning this John who was born, we call him John the Baptist, and we call him the voice of one crying in the wilderness. John the Baptist cried out Jesus in the wilderness. He cried out: repent, the King of kings, the Son of God, is coming to this earth; He is coming to save you from sin, so go to Him and believe and receive the remission of sins. That is John the Baptist. We know that John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus and passed the sins of mankind on to Him. This is not our own word but fact, and the Bible tells us what role John the Baptist was born on this earth to carry out.

If we look at Luke 1:67, it says, *“Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying”*. Let us look from verse 68. *“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: To grant us that we,*

Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life” (Luke 1:68–75).

Up to this point it speaks of what God promised David: that his descendants would continue to be born as kings and rule this nation. God promised to deliver Israel from the hand of its enemies and to protect this nation. In order to fulfill that promise, He would keep causing kings to be born and would preserve the nation of Israel. Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, praised in this way the God who fulfilled the promise made to our ancestors of faith. And next he speaks about John the Baptist.

Let us read from verse 76. *“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace. So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel” (Luke 1:76–80).*

Who is this child? It is John the Baptist. He is the one called the prophet of the Highest. There were prophets in the Old Testament and in the New Testament; Moses and Elijah are all prophets. Who is the greatest prophet among those prophets? It is John the Baptist. John the Baptist clearly testified of who Jesus is. He testified that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He is the Savior who received baptism from John the Baptist to take on the sins of mankind, bore those sins to the Cross and died, and rose from the dead and saved us.

Therefore John the Baptist is the greatest among the prophets, and he was the one qualified to carry out the office of the earthly high priest, passing the sins of mankind on to Jesus as the

representative of mankind. It is because he was one whom God specially sent. At that time Israel had become corrupt through and through, an age in which the office of the priesthood was bought and sold for money. But God kept the faith of one couple firm—namely, the couple of Zacharias, who as a descendant of Aaron could carry out the duty of the high priest. Six months before Jesus was conceived in the body of Mary, the angel appeared to Zacharias and said that his wife would bear a son, and that he should call his name John, and that this child would make the people of Israel know the remission of sins and be the one who prepares the way of the Lord.

John the Baptist and Jesus, two indispensable roles

Everyone, through the role of John the Baptist we know and also believe that Jesus took over the sins of mankind by the baptism, hung on the Cross and died, rose from the dead, and became our Savior. Is that so? The role of John the Baptist and the role of Jesus are the roles of a two-horse chariot that cannot be left out of this Christmas. To save mankind from sin and lead them before the Lord, the role of John the Baptist and the role of Jesus must be together. It is because John the Baptist passed the sin of the world on to Jesus once and for all, and so He could save us.

This is like the promise God made to save us. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son: He promised, I will send you the Savior and save you through Him. God is the One who promises to mankind and fulfills that promise. God sent John the Baptist first and then sent Jesus, and caused Jesus to receive baptism from John the Baptist to take on the sins of mankind, to die hanging on the Cross, and to rise from the dead, and so to

become our Savior.

Therefore this Bible keeps speaking with connectedness in concepts of time—at this time, at that time. God accomplished within history the work of saving us mankind from sin. He did not just do it secretly at any time He pleased, as He liked. When Rome had the whole world in its grasp, at that time, He caused Jesus to be born borrowing the body of Mary, and sent John the Baptist six months ahead, and John the Baptist first lived on this earth as God’s servant, pointing out the sins of the people of Israel, and when Jesus appeared, he gave baptism to Jesus and passed all the sins on to Him. Jesus took over all those sins, and dying nailed to the Cross, He said, It is finished.

He completely accomplished the work of removing the sins of mankind. He said: I have washed away your sins, taken them over, died for you, and been judged—I have finished it all; and in this way He saved us. Through what did this work come about? It was because God had compassion on us. *“Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace”* (Luke 1:78–79).

God sent John the Baptist and Jesus to this earth in order to bestow that compassion on all mankind. All mankind was soaked in sin and could not but go to hell, and the history of the whole world was darkness. But through the births of John the Baptist and Jesus, the world that had been covered in darkness began to see the sunlight and could conceive the history of new life. When Jesus was born, John the Baptist had already been born six months ahead. Since it says Mary stayed about three months and returned home, the difference is roughly six months or so.

Can we disregard the role of John the Baptist? People think

lightly of the role of John the Baptist. But if the role of John the Baptist were nothing, would the angel have appeared to his father and given him his name, and would Zacharias, when he was born, have been filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, and would these things have been recorded in the Bible? They were recorded because they are important, because they are things that must not be left out. But because people skip over that important fact and do not know it, even though they believe, it is of no use.

Can it do to believe the heart of man? The heart of man changes, but God is the One who does not change, so we must believe the heart of God. Even while preaching, I see that the role of John the Baptist is this important and yet people do not accept it and do not believe it. The Gospel of Luke devotes several chapters to the role of John the Baptist, and the Gospel of Matthew also records the role of John the Baptist a great deal. Jesus, too, within His own ministry, kept citing and testifying of the role of John the Baptist.

What John the Baptist came to this earth and did was the work of giving baptism to Jesus and passing the sins on to Him, the work of pointing out people's sins, and the work of testifying, "*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*" (John 1:29) so that we might know and believe in Jesus and receive the remission of sins. That work is so important to all mankind. Therefore we must not disregard the role of John the Baptist. If one disregards the office for which God the Father called and used John the Baptist, that is disregarding God's intervention itself.

God surely fulfills His promises

Everyone, it is because we do not know that we fail to believe, because we are ignorant that we fail to believe; God fulfills what He has once planned, absolutely and without change. Long before Jesus was born, God prophesied that He would send Jesus to this earth, and He fulfilled it just so. What He promised through the prophet Isaiah, saying, “*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel*” (Isaiah 7:14), He fulfilled hundreds of years later exactly as it was, causing Him to put on a human body and be born borrowing the body of a virgin. Therefore God is not a liar.

Though we are without faithfulness, God is always faithful, so He can never break what He promised—that He loves us and has promised us eternal blessing. That is the ground of faith our ancestors of faith held on to. It is so with me as well. When my body is not well, negative thoughts sometimes arise, but regardless of that, I believe that because the Lord has promised, He will surely fulfill it.

God, who testified to the shepherds

If the first evidence is that Jesus came to this earth in the days of the emperor Caesar Augustus, what is the second evidence? It is that God sent angels to the shepherds, made them praise—glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those who are favored—and made them testify that the Savior had been born. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem there was no place for Him, so Mary bore the baby, wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, the feeding trough of beasts.

Let us look from verse 8. “*Now there were in the same*

country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger” (Luke 2:8–12).

This is something like a miracle. An angel appeared to shepherds keeping sheep and told them that the Savior had been born in the nation of Israel. He said that in the city of David a Savior had been born for them, who is Christ the Lord. Jesus is the King of kings. The word Christ means the one who takes on three offices: king, priest, and prophet. Jesus is the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, so no one can enter the kingdom of heaven without going through His righteous deed. He came to this earth, did the role of the prophet and the role of the priest, and as the King of kings, in order to save His people from their sins, He received baptism from John the Baptist, bore our sins, died hanging on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so saved us.

Strictly speaking, the time when Jesus was born would not have been a cold winter night. Since it says the shepherds were keeping their sheep in the fields at night and slept out with the animals, if it had been the dead of winter the shepherds could not have slept outside. So on biblical grounds it is seen as spring or after. Whether it is December 25 or another time, we cannot know the exact day, but keeping one day in commemoration of the Lord’s birth is a thing of great meaning to you and me. This is the second evidence—the work of appearing to the shepherds and testifying.

The news of great joy that reached all mankind

Everyone, God is here testifying not through people directly related to Jesus, like Mary or Joseph or Zacharias, but by bringing forward people on the outside, shepherds who knew nothing. Jesus was actually born within history and grew up, and at thirty He received baptism from John the Baptist to take on the sins of us mankind, died on the Cross, rose from the dead, and saved us.

Let us read Luke 2:13 and 14. *“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men”* This means that the soldiers of heaven, that is, a company of angels, came down to this earth and praised God together with that angel who delivered the word to the shepherds. Everyone, is this not a tremendously amazing testimony? It is.

In our country there are many tales of the sort in which a man comes out of an egg and becomes the ancestor of a family. But such things are stories people made up, meant only to display the greatness of their ancestors. The birth of Jesus is not like that. The heavenly host and angels of heaven actually came down, and the shepherds saw and heard them praise: glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those who are favored.

The angel told the shepherds to look for the baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, saying that He was the Savior who would save His people from their sins, so the shepherds went and saw. Looking from verse 16, it says, *“And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in*

her heart” (Luke 2:16–19).

Mary had already heard from the angel the word that a baby would be born from her body, and now the shepherds came and told her again. What the heavenly host and angels had come down celebrating—saying that the Savior had been born in the city of David, glory to God in the highest and peace to those who are favored on earth—the shepherds confirmed with their eyes and came and delivered. Mary heard those words and engraved them on her heart. As for the shepherds, what they had heard through the angel and what they confirmed by going and seeing were exactly the same, so they praised God and returned again to the shepherd’s path. This is the period placed at the end of the birth.

Jesus Christ, in the end, is not a groundless tale or a lie-like story handed down by mouth; He is the One who actually came within history. He is the Savior who actually came to this earth, took on the sins of mankind with the baptism through the role of John the Baptist, hung on the Cross, rose from the dead, and saved us. What is the news of great joy that reached the people of God? It is that Jesus Christ came to this earth, received baptism from John the Baptist to take on the sins of mankind, hung on the Cross, rose from the dead, and saved us from all sins. This was the greatest joyful news that reached mankind.

That news was, in a word, the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That gospel of the water and the Spirit is what gave life to you and me. The Lord actually came to this earth, saved us mankind, took on our sins and washed them away, received the judgment and saved us, and made us the people of God. And He said that when Jesus Christ comes to this earth in the future, He will come to take us to the new kingdom He has prepared for us. Then we will be led by the Lord and go and live in that kingdom. This is God’s plan toward those who believe in God. We believe before God and give thanks. I have finished the message. ☒

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus, who came to save us from all the curses of the Law

< Luke 2:21-40 >

“And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, ‘Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD’), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, ‘A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.’ And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: ‘Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.’ And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and

said to Mary His mother, ‘Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’ Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.”

Jesus, who was born under the Law

Eight days after He was born, He was circumcised, and when the days of her purification were completed, they went up to the temple in Jerusalem and offered a sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Because man is born with sin from his parents from the time he is born, everyone must receive the remission of sins before God. That is why the people of Israel would bring two young pigeons, that is, two young turtledoves, or a sacrificial lamb or a goat, and receive the remission of sins. In the word of the Old Testament, God said that to keep a firstborn donkey alive one must redeem it with a lamb, and that otherwise its neck must be broken; this was the word that because man is a sinner born with the root of sin from birth, he

can only die unless he receives the remission of sins. Therefore, if a man would not die because of sin, he must without fail receive the remission of sins. So God said to pay the price of the life of a young sacrificial lamb as the price of our sins and to receive the remission of sins.

Mary bore the baby Jesus after conceiving Him for ten months, and eight days after He was born, following the purification rite of the Law, she went out to the temple in Jerusalem to sacrifice with a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Through this we must see the works of God's redemption. Every human life is under God and under the Law. The Law God handed down revealed all people to be sinners who have sin, and our God, to save us who were under the curse of the Law, was born through the virgin Mary. Our Lord, in order to save the sinners who were under the Law, was born under the Law through the body of a woman.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1) At the time God made the heavens and the earth, there was no law of God. Even when He placed the first human beings, Adam and Eve, in the heavens and the earth He had made, He did not give the Law. Therefore at first this earth was the age of innocence, the age of conscience, in which sin was not revealed. In such an age there occurred the affair in which Satan the Devil enticed man and made him fall into sin. Satan the Devil approached the woman and tempted her to disobey the word of God, and the one who fell into the temptation fell into sin. Only then did our God give the Law to this earth, so that through the Law people might realize and know sin. From the time God gave the Law, all people have been born under the Law and become sinners. Since all are born as descendants of Adam, they inherit sin from birth, and by the Law no one can avoid committing sin, so before God every person could not but be a sinner. So our

Lord, to save them, was born under the Law in the form of a man, like a creature. And so He saved us from all the curses of the Law.

The baptism by which He took on all our sins passed on to Him

When thirty years had come since He was born under the Law clothed in a human body, Jesus settled the matter of all human life. At that time Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, and so took on the sins of all the sinners under the Law passed on to Him. Jesus, who is God, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, so He was not One who had sin like other people. Therefore He could receive the baptism by which all our sins passed on to Him, and Jesus Christ, who actually received baptism from John, bore all our sins, went to the Cross, was judged according to the Law, gave His own life as the price of our life, and rose from the dead.

How thankful it is that our Lord truly became a man for us! And how fortunate it is that our Lord came as a man and took on all the sins of man, passed on to His own body at the Jordan River—we must think on this. If our Lord had not taken our sins over onto His own body, we would have had to pay the price for all those sins. As it is said, “*the wages of sin is death*” (*Romans 6:23*), the price of sin can be paid only with life, so everyone who has sin must receive the punishment of hell. But our Lord became our Savior, who took over all those sins passed on to Him. How did He become our Savior? He put on a human body and came to this earth, received baptism from John so that all the sins of this world passed on to His body, bore those sins, died on the Cross, and rose again, and so became our Savior. Therefore

the baptism Jesus received from John is the token that our Lord became our Savior. That our Lord, who is God, came to this earth in the flesh, and that all our sins passed on to His body by the baptism—this is the sign that He became our Savior.

When we think of it, it cannot but be truly fortunate. Because our Lord came to this earth about two thousand years ago, received baptism from John at the Jordan River so that all our sins passed on to His body, died on the Cross, and rose again, we have been saved from the terrible punishment of sin. If our Lord had not taken over all our sins, how could we resolve the sins we commit day after day? There is no way at all to resolve them. If the Lord had not put on the flesh and come to this earth and become our Savior, we would have no way to bear the sins we are born with or the sins we commit while living. So how thankful is this salvation, in which the Lord was born on this earth, received baptism from John so that our sins passed on to Him, went to the Cross and died for us, and rose again! I am truly so thankful that our Lord put on the flesh, came to this earth, and at the Jordan River took over all my sins and the sins of all the people of this world passed on to Him. The Lord truly became our perfect Savior.

Living on this earth not just a day or two but long years, we pass through so many ups and downs. Even while believing in Jesus, how often we change according to the time and circumstances! Are there not times when we believe God brightly and well, and times when we are wretched before God? There is no telling how often our hearts change, how often we commit sin, and how much lack we reveal. That is why it is fortunate. When I think of what it would be if the Lord had not taken over all our sins at the Jordan River, it is too terrible—it would be too much to bear. Where could we go to resolve the sins we commit every day?

How well do you know your own self? What Socrates meant by saying, Know yourself, shows how little we know ourselves as we live. If you look back at yourself, you will come to know how much sin you commit. Because the heart of man is evil at its root, what comes out from within is what defiles us and makes us evil. As fog rises from the ground, sin always rises steaming from our flesh, clouding our life gray at dawn and at night. So in thought, in heart, and in deed, we commit so much sin that the one who knows himself well comes to want to be released from his sins, for they are too heavy. It is said that if a man is strong he lives seventy or eighty years; how much sin does he commit while living all those many years? How can such sins be resolved? Because our Lord put on the flesh, came to this earth, received baptism from John at the Jordan River so that the sin of the world passed on to Him, died on the Cross, and rose again—because He resolved it all—we can be released from it by believing; if it were not for that, where is there a way to resolve our sins?

The most blessed thing in the word is the gospel of the water and the Spirit

The most noble knowledge in the world is the word of God, and the most blessed thing in the word of God is the gospel in which Jesus saved us with the water and the Spirit. We see and hear many things, but the faith we must pay attention to, take as our own, and believe was only one. It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in which Jesus removed all our sins with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross. You and I must know and believe in our hearts that the Lord took over our sins passed on to Him. Did not the Lord come to this

earth as the baby Jesus in order to take over all your sins and mine once and for all by the baptism of John and so to remove all the sin of the world? What is so good about the low and lowly body of man that He should be born in a human body? The birth of Jesus was to fulfill the mission He received from God. We give thanks to God. We are truly thankful for the grace by which He sent Jesus and removed all our sins. That God put on the flesh, came to this earth, and took our sins over onto that flesh; that He resolved all this sin with His own flesh—for this one thing alone we human beings cannot but give thanks before the Lord. The only One who became your true Savior and mine is our Lord alone. No one else on this earth is the true Savior. Only our Lord, coming as the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world, receiving baptism from John so that the sins passed on to Him, dying on the Cross shedding His blood, and rising again, could save us. The birth of Jesus Christ is the birth of the Savior, so we had to rejoice and give praise.

The love of God, who makes us break our hearts

Our lack does not change. We are like the tide, flowing out and flowing in morning and evening, committing sin. Our root is a wretch who does not even know grace, a proud one who, bound to his own thoughts and situations and circumstances, raises his head countless times before God. After receiving the remission of sins, is breaking one's heart comfortable? Even after receiving the remission of sins, breaking one's heart is very hard. When did we ever break our hearts before anyone? We always lived centered on ourselves, so we were stubborn and stiff-necked. That is why even breaking our hearts before God takes effort. It is so with everyone without exception. Have you

ever found it harder because it seemed others had nothing to break, while you alone had so much to break?

Everyone, after receiving the remission of sins, breaks his heart before the Lord. Who is a docile lamb before God every day? We have our own stubbornness and our own thoughts, so that we cannot break them even before God—such is human life. And when we break our hearts before God, it is painful for everyone. When we came to know God, at first we learned love, but next we must learn to break our hearts. It is like a married couple: to live together, each breaks his heart and yields to the other. If each does entirely as his temper pleases, someday war breaks out like a nuclear bomb exploding. So only when one breaks his own heart do all live well together.

In fact, meeting the Lord and breaking one's heart is harder than receiving the remission of sins. But God breaks us to pieces through the members of the body. We become pickaxes and hoes for one another, breaking and crushing the stubbornness and thoughts and self-opinions hardened in our hearts, and so He tills a good field where the seed of God can grow well. How could it be easy for the field of the heart to be plowed like that? Because no one could survive seeing the holy God directly, the merciful God does not do it Himself but uses people to do that work. He could say directly, "Break your heart," but since we do not listen well when told in words, He uses people to make us break our hearts. And yet, even when He breaks us through people, there is no telling how painful it is; sometimes breaking oneself is harder than dying. You may think that being broken and crushed through people hurts your pride more, but I want you to know the fact that God breaks our hearts through people because it is profitable for us. When our bad temper is broken and our bad stubbornness is snapped in this way, we come to be used before God—and how blessed is that? If God did not break us through

people, when would your wicked temper and mine ever be changed? So the merciful God causes those distinct personalities and strong tempers to be broken through one another. It may seem harsh, but this is truly the love of God.

That is the process by which our God is making us. God uses gold in the temple; with that gold He makes the lampstand, the bowls, and the wick-trimmers' trays. He takes one lump of gold and makes them by beating it with a hammer. Just as there was the discipline of continually hammering the pure gold to make the vessels in the temple, our God is refining us. Gold that is refined—continually beaten and bent and folded and unfolded—becomes harder and gives off a brighter light.

‘Why does He tell me to do the very things I hate to do? Why does He make me meet the very people I hate to meet, and do only the things I hate to do? Why must we be born on this earth and go through this?’ Not understanding the heart of God, how often we pointed our finger at God in resentful hearts! Our God caused us to meet all those circumstances and all those people in order to make us. He permitted all things in order to make us people of refined faith. When you are broken and crushed and come to look to God, I want you to know that you are being loved by God that much. You must know that this is the providence of God.

To put it simply, we are being trained every day to set our hearts before God and to break our own hearts. These are things that come upon us because the Lord has a deep will in them. As those who believe in God and have received the remission of sins, we should rejoice in receiving the discipline of faith that makes us look to God and depend on Him. For when we have been broken and made into God's vessels, God leads us and governs us.

Which is better—our original self, or the self newly made

after receiving the remission of sins? The newly made self is better. Before we were born again, our former self was so wretched that one could not bear to look at it with open eyes. It had to be made anew. That is why our Lord is remaking us like that. Entrust yourselves before God. God wants to make us new vessels and use us. All we need to do is commit ourselves to God and live by faith.

God places us in the church and raises us, makes us, and shapes us with the word of God. This is the life of faith on our side. The remission of sins is accomplished once and for all, but it takes time for God to refine our character and personality to be fit for His use. I ask you to lay down your own thoughts and stubbornness and pride and entrust yourselves before the Lord. Our Lord came to this earth and took over all our sins passed on to Him by the baptism of John. Our Lord became our true Savior.

Simeon, who recognized the Savior

When our Lord came to this earth, there were two people who recognized the Lord. *“And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people*

Israel” (Luke 2:25–32) Simeon was a man who waited for the first coming of the Lord. The Holy Spirit was upon him, and he had received the revelation that he would not die before seeing the Lord’s Christ. Then one day, he came up to Mary, who had brought the baby Jesus to the temple to perform the purification rite, took the baby Jesus in his arms, praised God, and said that his eyes had seen the salvation of the Lord. Though he saw the baby Jesus born only a short time before, Simeon recognized at one glance that He was the Savior.

The people of Israel circumcise their males eight days after birth. The face of a newborn baby is wrinkled like the skin of an old man. Simeon, receiving into his arms that baby Jesus who was brought wrapped in cloths, is saying before God that he has seen the Savior. It means he met God, who came clothed in a human body. He recognized that the Creator had come like this, as the baby Jesus.

Jesus became the true Savior prepared before all peoples. What is the token that our Lord became the true Savior of mankind? It is that He, who is God, put on a human body and came to this earth, and that, according to the purpose for which He came, He took over all our sins passed on to His own body by the baptism of John. That is the sign of the salvation that saved us—baptism. So the First Epistle of Peter says, “*There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*” (1 Peter 3:21). Jesus, in the year He turned thirty, went to the Jordan River and received baptism from John the Baptist, so that our sins passed on to His own body, and He bore those sins, died on the Cross, and rose again. In whom do all peoples believe to receive salvation? They believe in God Jesus Christ, who received baptism from John, and so are saved. And through what do they receive salvation? By believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that God came in a

human body and took over our sins passed on to that body—they receive the remission of sins. That is what the man called Simeon prophesied in today’s word.

Jesus is the light that shines on the Gentiles. The One who cast the bright light called the remission of sins into a world dark and filthy because of sin is Jesus Christ. All the people of the whole world receive salvation through Jesus. Since Jesus put on the flesh, came to this earth, and took over all the sin of the world passed on to Him by the baptism He received from John, we receive the remission of sins by believing that word. Jesus, who took over the sin of the world by the baptism of John, went to the Cross and died for us, receiving the punishment of our sins in our place, and rose from the dead, so we have been completely saved from sin and the judgment of sin. By believing the gospel of the baptism Jesus received in the flesh and of the Cross, we receive the remission of sins. We are Gentiles. All the people of the whole world except the nation of Israel are Gentiles. Now that light of salvation is shining even to all the people of the whole world. For we who first received the remission of sins have become messengers of the light who spread that light, delivering the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The God of salvation, the God of judgment

Simeon speaks to His mother Mary. *“Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed”* (Luke 2:34–35) Because Jesus came to this earth, there are people who receive blessing, and there are also people who receive curse and destruction because of Jesus. Some

believed in Jesus, who came to them in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and became children of God and received every blessing. But some rejected Jesus, lost everything, and became children of hell. As the prophecy said that He came for the fall and rising of many, Jesus was the cornerstone and a stone of stumbling. Have you ever walked an unpaved country road and nearly fallen over a stone jutting out here and there? You may also have run, tripped over a stone, fallen, and bled. To those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, Jesus becomes the cornerstone that builds them a sturdy house; but to those who do not believe, He becomes a stumbling stone over which they trip and fall and bleed. The person who knows how much he needs Jesus Christ and believes in his heart, making Him the foundation stone of his faith, rises because of Jesus; but the person who does not need Jesus and casts Him away stumbles over Jesus and comes to ruin. Therefore we must truly recognize Jesus, who became our Savior, and by faith receive the remission of sins, receive salvation, and receive eternal life.

What kind of person stumbles over Jesus? It is the one who rejects Him, saying, 'Must I really believe in Jesus like that? He removed our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit? I can just believe in God my own way; I can just live a good life; whatever way I go, as long as I get to heaven, is that not enough? Where is it written that I must believe in Jesus' gospel of the water and the Spirit?' Not believing the gospel by which Jesus saved us with the water and the Spirit is rejecting Jesus. The one who rejects like this is not delivered from the curse of the Law and comes to ruin.

On what does the rising and falling of many people depend? According to whether one receives or does not receive that Jesus Christ who came clothed in a human body, the rising and falling of his life is decided. The person who believes the gospel of the

water and the Spirit that Jesus gave goes to heaven, obtains eternal life, and receives the blessing of possessing as his own all the things of God that are in the kingdom of God. But the person who rejects the fact that Jesus came as the true Savior, fulfilled the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and saved us becomes a loser who lives forever in the unquenchable eternal fire. So our Lord becomes the Savior to countless people, and to countless people who do not believe, He becomes the sign of destruction.

Jesus is the God of salvation and at the same time the God of judgment; the God of love and at the same time the jealous God. To the one who believes in Jesus' gospel of the water and the Spirit He bestows love and compassion and salvation, but on the one who does not believe but rejects and opposes Him He brings down stern judgment. In fact, Jesus is the signpost to heaven, the truth of the way to heaven, and the storehouse of blessing; it is heartbreaking that many people, not knowing the truth, reject that Jesus and head down the road of curse. If one believes in Jesus and receives the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he can enjoy everything; but if one disregards the gospel of the water and the Spirit by which the Lord removed sin, refuses the Lord's leading, and goes down a wrong path, he comes to receive the eternal punishment of hell.

It also said, a sword will pierce through your own soul. Our Lord is the Prophet. When we hear the word the Lord speaks, everything in our heart is laid bare, as though a sword were cutting through the inside of the heart. Why is it so? Because our Lord is the Master who made us, there is nothing about us He does not know. So the word of God is like a sharp sword, living and active, searching our heart and inward parts, pointing out all the root sins of our heart. We cannot but be pricked when we hear the word of God, and when our heart was pricked, we had

to admit ourselves honestly and receive our Lord. Yet there are those who stubbornly refuse our Lord; they were only pricked in heart and wounded, and did not receive healing from sin.

Truly, our Lord became the true Savior for you and me and gave us true peace. When the Lord digs into your heart, sinful at its root, with the word, and points out the sins within, receive the pricking and confess your sins to God. When you honestly and uprightly lay yourself out and admit that you are a sinner, you become able to receive the truth of Jesus' gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord, who knows all your sins, received baptism from John so that all your sins passed on to Him, died on the Cross, and rose again on the third day, and so took all those sins away. Believe the fact that when John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus, your sins were all passed on, and that therefore there is no sin in your heart. Then your sins are cut away and carried over to Jesus, and the peace and rest the true Savior gives come into your heart.

We are the blessed ones who recognized the baby Jesus

“Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:36–38) We cannot know when Anna married, but considering the situation of that age, it seems she would have married at about fifteen. Then, since she lived with

her husband seven years, she became a widow at about twenty-two; and since it says she had been a widow for eighty-four years, Anna would have been about a hundred years old. This Anna did not depart from the temple but served God with fasting and prayer night and day, and when she saw the baby Jesus coming, she gave thanks to God and said that this baby is the true Savior and true God for us mankind.

Countless people are living on this earth. But how many people recognized that baby Jesus, God born on this earth clothed in a human body? The ones who recognized Jesus as their Savior were two people, Anna and Simeon. If you recognize Jesus and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit Jesus fulfilled, then you, like Anna and Simeon who recognized the Savior, are among the very few blessed people who recognized the Savior among countless many. Truly only a very few people recognized our Lord and knew the true Savior. If you belong among them, is it not glorious beyond measure?

Jesus became the true Savior for us. And He gave us true peace. Nevertheless, many people do not believe in that Jesus. There are so many who cannot believe because they do not know Jesus, and so many who know and yet do not believe; we must testify of Jesus to the Gentiles of the whole world who do not know Jesus and do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Carrying out that work the Lord has entrusted to us, we give thanks today also to the Lord, who saved us from all the curses of the Law. ☒

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Walk with the Lord within the word

< Luke 2:41-49 >

“His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day’s journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, ‘Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.’ And He said to them, ‘Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?’”

Dear beloved saints, when Jesus was twelve years old, Joseph and Mary went up to Jerusalem to keep the Passover. They kept the Passover every year, and that year too, following the custom of the feast, they spent the appointed days and then began to return to Nazareth. But the boy Jesus stayed in

Jerusalem, and His parents did not know it. Supposing that Jesus was in the company, they went a day's journey without confirming it.

The word states precisely that His parents, *“did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company”* (Luke 2:43–44), went on their way. His parents thought Jesus was with them, but in fact Jesus was in Jerusalem. Their thought and the actual fact were different. They had kept the Passover and had raised Jesus for many years, but this time they judged by their own thinking where Jesus was.

This event shows us what we must confirm in the life of faith. We must take the recorded word, rather than our own experience or familiar religious practice, as the standard of judgment. Rather than the fact that we are moving along with other people, we must confirm whether I am now walking following the word of the Lord.

We must correct our own thoughts by the word

Only after going a day's journey did Joseph and Mary realize that Jesus was not in the company. They looked for Jesus among the relatives and acquaintances who had kept the feast together, but they did not meet Him. Luke says that His parents, having *“sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him”* (Luke 2:44–45), returned to Jerusalem. This event shows the fact that where Jesus is and what His will is cannot be decided by the number of people or by personal closeness.

In the church we receive the guidance of those who go before us and join hearts with the members of the body to serve the gospel. Even then, we must confirm by the recorded word where

Jesus is and what He is saying. The reason the church is precious as the body of the Lord is that it believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit which Jesus completed and follows the recorded word. When the word and the gospel are at the center, we too can lay down our own thoughts and be united in the same faith.

When His parents did not find Jesus, they changed direction and returned to Jerusalem. We too, when we discover the fact that our own thought differs from the word, must confirm again what God has said and correct our direction following that word.

His parents went back to the point where their thinking had gone astray and confirmed the place where Jesus actually was. The reason we return to the word of the gospel is also to confirm again the salvation Jesus has already accomplished and to set our judgment to that word. We believe the remission of sins accomplished once and for all, and we must keep correcting our thoughts and conduct before the word.

God said, “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 8:1). Because Jesus took over all our sins by the baptism He received from John and received the condemnation of those sins on the Cross, there is no condemnation for us who are in Christ. Even as we correct our wrong thoughts and conduct before the word, we believe just as it is the remission of sins Jesus has completed.

The young Jesus, who was in His Father’s house

After three days His parents met Jesus in the temple. Jesus was sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. Those who heard marveled at Jesus’ understanding and answers. The twelve-year-old Jesus knew where He had to be and was within the will of His Father.

Because His parents thought Jesus would be in the company, they did not know the place where He actually was.

The record that Jesus both listened to the teachers and asked them questions is also important. His parents first assumed where Jesus would be, but Jesus was listening, asking, and answering in the place where the word was handled. We too must first listen to the word, ask about what we have not understood, confirm it by the word, and then believe. Hearing and learning the word in the church, we must place our thoughts under the word of God.

To His parents, who had sought Him in worry, Jesus said, *“Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”* (Luke 2:49) Jesus made it clear that God is *“My Father.”* He also said that He must be in His Father’s house. The standard that determined Jesus’ place and conduct was not people’s expectation but the will of His Father. Therefore, for His parents to find Jesus rightly, they had to listen to the words Jesus spoke, not merely retrace their own route.

The place where Jesus actually was, was the temple in Jerusalem. The sacrifices offered in that temple showed in advance the fact that the wages of sin is death and the substitutionary redemption of the Savior who was to come. Jesus came as the very Savior to whom those sacrifices pointed, took on the sins of all mankind by the baptism of John, and was judged once and for all, and so completed salvation. The place we must return to today is not the temple building itself but the word of the salvation Jesus accomplished. Just as His parents did not keep going by their own thinking but returned to the place where Jesus was, we too must lay down our own judgment and return to the word of salvation.

The salvation Jesus completed is the standard of judgment

Jesus is the Son of God, who has no sin, but He put on the body of a man and came to this earth. And when He received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, He said, *“Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness”* (Matthew 3:15). John the Baptist, representing all mankind, laid his hands on Jesus’ head, and through that baptism all the sin of the world passed on to Jesus’ body. With this baptism Jesus fulfilled the righteousness of God.

The next day John the Baptist saw Jesus and testified, *“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29) Jesus went to the Cross bearing the sin of the world He had taken over earlier by the baptism at the Jordan River. The sins we committed openly and the sins we committed in heart and thought, the sins we remember and the sins we have forgotten, all the sins of the past and the present and the future, passed over to Jesus. We believe that by this method God spoke, all our sins passed on to Jesus.

Jesus bore the sins He had taken over by the baptism and carried them all the way to the Cross. Since the wages of sin is death, Jesus, who bore the sins, shed His blood and died, and so received the judgment for the sins of the whole world. On the Cross the Lord said, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30), and His spirit departed. This word means that Jesus paid in full on the Cross the price of all the sins He had taken over by the baptism. And Jesus rose again from the dead, overcame sin and death, and completed our salvation.

The Book of Hebrews says, *“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14). Jesus made us perfect forever with one baptism and one

death on the Cross. As the word says, “*Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin*” (Hebrews 10:18), the ground of the remission of sins has already been completed. Instead of adding tears or resolutions, we believe just as it is the salvation Jesus completed.

Also, if after receiving the remission of sins we discover a fault in our own thinking, we must admit that thought and conduct before the word and turn back. We must correct our faults before the word, and believe the salvation by which Jesus removed all sins just as the Lord completed it.

We walk with the Lord within the word

His parents came back from the wrong direction and heard His words in the place where Jesus was. We too must believe the salvation Jesus completed, place our thoughts before that word, and walk with the Lord.

We must examine, with the recorded word as the standard, whether our own thinking fits the gospel. If our own judgment was wrong, we must lay that thought down and, receiving the word of the Lord and the exhortation of those who go before us, join hearts with the members of the body within the gospel.

As we serve the gospel in the church, there are times when judgments differ from one another. At such times we must examine which judgment is fitting for keeping the gospel and the word and for the work of saving souls. When it is revealed that one’s own thought was wrong, we must come back before the word, as Joseph and Mary returned to Jerusalem. This is the way of walking in the same direction as the Lord.

Where Jesus is and what He is saying can be confirmed through the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the recorded

word. We walk with the Lord, fitting our judgment and our steps to the word of salvation that removed all sins. If my thought has gone ahead of the word, let us return before the word. I hope that we all will walk together with the Lord within the gospel and the recorded word. 

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus was in the will of the Father

< Luke 2:48-52 >

“So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, ‘Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.’ And He said to them, ‘Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?’ But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

Dear beloved saints, Mary and Joseph, after looking for Jesus for three days, met Him in the temple. Mary spoke out the worry of her heart just as it was. Mary said to Jesus, *“Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously”* (Luke 2:48). Here, the words *“Your father”* that Mary spoke refer to Joseph. Joseph was the legal father who protected and raised Jesus. But Jesus, answering Mary’s words, called God *“My Father.”* This short answer shows together who Jesus is and for what He came to this earth. Today, following Jesus’ answer, let us look into who He is and how He fulfilled the will of the Father.

Jesus came to fulfill the will of the Father

Jesus is the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born from the body of the virgin Mary. After Adam sinned, sin entered the world, and all who were born as Adam's descendants came to be placed under sin. Because Jesus had no sin of His own, He could take on the sins of all mankind. The word in which the twelve-year-old Jesus called God "*My Father*" is the word by which Jesus made clear that He Himself is the Son of God.

Jesus said, "*Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?*" (Luke 2:49) Here, the words "*I must be*" show the fact that Jesus was within the will of the Father and the work of the Father. Jesus, the Son of God, knew the purpose for which He came to this earth, and He intended to fulfill the ministry of salvation the Father had entrusted to Him.

The twelve-year-old Jesus was actually in the temple. The sacrifices and the Law of the temple were pointing in advance to the Savior who would remove sin, and Jesus came to this earth to fulfill all those types in reality. Therefore the word that He must be in His Father's house reveals together the facts that Jesus is the Son of God and that He is the One who would fulfill the ministry of salvation the Father entrusted to Him.

Jesus later said, "*My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work*" (John 4:34). A man's body can live only when he eats food. Jesus said that doing the will of the Father and completely finishing His work was His own food. The Father and the Son were one within the will of salvation, and Jesus received that will as His own mission and carried it out.

Jesus spoke still more clearly of what that will of the Father is. The Lord said, "*This is the will of the Father who sent Me,*

that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day” (John 6:39). The Father sent the Son to save people dead under sin, and the Son came to give eternal life to those the Father entrusted to Him. Jesus took our sins over onto His body by the baptism and received the judgment of those sins in our place on the Cross, and so delivered us completely from sin and death.

The Son of God obeyed in Nazareth

In the temple, Jesus sat in the midst of the teachers, both listening and asking questions. Those who heard marveled at Jesus’ understanding and answers. Jesus is the Son of God, who knows the truth, and at the same time He put on a human body and passed through a real process of growth. The figure of the twelve-year-old Jesus listening to the word and asking questions shows that He passed through the process of growth as a true man.

Luke records, *“But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them” (Luke 2:50).* Mary had heard the words of the angel and had experienced the amazing things related to the birth of Jesus, but she did not understand on the spot all the meaning of the words the twelve-year-old Jesus spoke. This record shows the fact that we must keep learning the will of God through the recorded word.

The word makes clear that Jesus went down to Nazareth with His parents and *“was subject to them” (Luke 2:51).* Jesus, the Son of God, came as a true man, honored His parents, and obeyed the order of the place where He stood. The wisdom and authority of Jesus appeared in the form of fulfilling the word and the order.

Jesus went down to Nazareth following His parents, and He stayed there until the time God had appointed came and He began His public ministry. Jesus walked the way of salvation according to the time and the order God had appointed. This obedience was the way the Savior actually walked in order to save us.

Jesus obeyed the will of salvation to the end

God sent His Son to this earth to save the people placed under sin. Jesus is the God who gave the Law, yet He put on the body of a man and came under the Law. For to deliver a man who must receive the condemnation of the Law, the sinless Savior had to take on that man's sins in reality and pay the price of the sins.

To fulfill the Father's will of salvation, Jesus went to the Jordan River and received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. Jesus said, *"for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness"* (Matthew 3:15). Through that baptism the sinless Jesus took on, passed on to His own body, the sins of all mankind, who had to be condemned under the Law.

And so Jesus bore the sins He had taken over by the baptism of the Jordan River and carried them all the way to the Cross. On the Cross He was judged in our place, shed His blood and died, and so paid the price of the sins in full, and by rising again from the dead He overcame the power of sin and death and completed salvation. In this way, the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and the resurrection were all accomplished within the one will the Father had appointed in order to save sinners.

Before the Cross, Jesus prayed, *"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be*

done” (Luke 22:42). Jesus, who at the age of twelve went down to Nazareth and obeyed His parents, also in His public ministry received baptism and died on the Cross following the Father’s will of salvation. Jesus acted within the will of the Father from beginning to end.

Jesus obeyed the will of the Father, took on all the sins with the baptism He received from John, and completed our salvation with the Cross and the resurrection. We receive the remission of sins by believing in our hearts the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus completed.

You and I were born with sin as descendants of Adam, people who had to receive the judgment of hell before God. Jesus took over all our sins passed on to Him by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. God made us, who have received the remission of all sins by believing this gospel of the water and the Spirit, His own children. Because we have become the children of God by believing the salvation Jesus accomplished, we can call God our Father.

Jesus is the only begotten Son of God from the beginning. We were born under sin, but by believing the salvation completed by Jesus, the Son of God, we have become the children of God. Therefore, Jesus calling God His Father shows who He is, and our calling God our Father shows the fact that Jesus has saved us.

We, who have become the children of God by believing the salvation Jesus completed like this, learn the will of the Father through the word. If our own thought differs from the word, we must correct that thought, and believe and follow the word of the Lord who saved us.

Jesus, though He is the Son of God, went down to Nazareth and obeyed His parents. We too must follow the word delivered

in the church and the order of the gospel, receive the guidance of those who go before us, and join hearts with the members of the body to keep and deliver the gospel. The Master of salvation is Jesus, and we, depending on the work the Lord has accomplished, serve the work of the gospel He has entrusted to us.

We keep the word in our hearts and follow the will of the Lord

Mary did not understand on the spot all the words of Jesus, but as the record says she *“kept all these things in her heart”* (Luke 2:51), she treasured those words in her heart. For us also there are words that need more understanding. At such times we must examine the recorded Scriptures and learn the word in the church, understanding step by step on the foundation of the gospel that has already been made plain.

Luke records at the last that Jesus *“increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men”* (Luke 2:52). Jesus put on a real human body and grew. At the same time, He is the Son of God and the only Savior who can save us. Only Jesus, who is true God and true man, could take on the sins of all mankind in a sinless body and receive the judgment of those sins in our place.

Jesus was in the will of the Father from the age of twelve, and when the appointed time came, He completed our salvation perfectly with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The salvation Jesus completed is sufficient in itself.

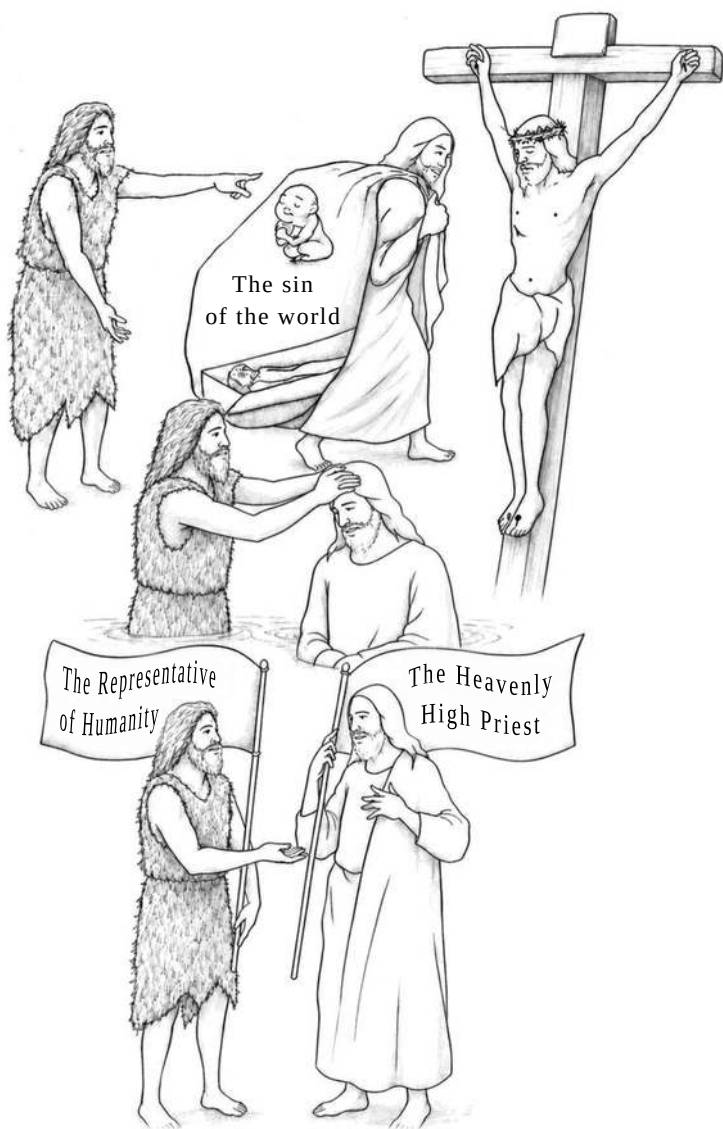
We who have become the children of God must not put our own thoughts forward as the will of God, but must listen to the recorded word. If there is a word we have not understood, we must not change it at will but keep it in our hearts. And we must

believe the salvation Jesus completed, and serve the work of the gospel the Lord has entrusted to the church together with the members of the body.

Jesus was in the will of the Father and obeyed that will to the end. With that obedience He completed our salvation, and we have become the children of God by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. I hope that we too will believe and follow the word of the Lord. ☒

CHAPTER

3



Luke Chapter 3

seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Introduction

Luke chapter 3 begins with the word of God coming to John the Baptist in the wilderness. According to the prophecy of Isaiah, John prepared the way of the Lord and demanded of the people repentance and fruits worthy of it. But John himself was not the Christ. He was a man sent to testify of Jesus, who is mightier than he, and to baptize Him.

When Jesus was baptized, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, and God the Father testified that Jesus is His beloved Son. Jesus, who has no sin, is the Son of God, who took on the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, bore those sins and died on the Cross, and rose again and accomplished salvation.

Luke connects the genealogy that follows all the way to Adam and to God. Jesus is not the Savior of Israel alone but the Savior of all mankind, who belong to Adam. Luke chapter 3 teaches that a sinner must admit his own state and believe the salvation Jesus accomplished with the water and the Spirit.

1. The word of God came to John in the wilderness (Luke 3:1–6)

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’” (Luke 3:1–6).

At a time when the rulers of the world and the religious leaders were in place, the word of God came to John in the wilderness. God begins the work of salvation not through a person’s position but through His own word.

John preached a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. His mission was the work of preparing the people to turn from their wrong ways and receive Jesus, who was soon to come. This baptism is not the same in purpose as the baptism that Jesus, who has no sin, received from John in order to take on the sins of mankind.

Luke makes clear that the ministry of John is the voice in the wilderness that Isaiah spoke of. This word is the direct fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3–5. Malachi 3:1 and 4:5–6 also prophesied the messenger who would prepare the way before the Lord, and that mission was fulfilled in John the Baptist. John prepared the way of the Lord, but the Lord who accomplishes

salvation is Jesus. The salvation of God, which all flesh will see, is revealed in Jesus Christ.

2. True repentance is followed by fruits worthy of it (Luke 3:7–14)

“Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’ So the people asked him, saying, ‘What shall we do then?’ He answered and said to them, ‘He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.’ Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than what is appointed for you.’ Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, ‘And what shall we do?’ So he said to them, ‘Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.’” (Luke 3:7–14).

John rebuked those who tried to escape the coming judgment while boasting of their lineage. No one can be guaranteed salvation by the mere name of being a descendant of Abraham. A person must admit before God that he is a sinner and turn back.

Repentance does not end with words alone. It must be followed by fruits: sharing what one has, not taking from others unjustly, and not using power to oppress people. But such deeds do not pay the price of the remission of sins. Repentance is admitting one’s own sins and one’s wrong way and turning to Jesus, who was to come, and the fruits worthy of repentance appear in one’s life after that.

John warned that every tree without good fruit would be judged. A person must not hold on to his own righteousness and lineage but must look to the Savior who was to come.

3. Christ baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire (Luke 3:15–20)

“Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, ‘I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.’ And with many other exhortations he preached to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison” (Luke 3:15–20).

The people wondered in their hearts whether John was the Christ. But John did not exalt himself; he said plainly that One mightier than he was coming. He confessed that he was not worthy even to loose the sandal strap of Jesus.

John testified that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. The statement that He would baptize with the Holy Spirit is connected with Joel 2:28–29, where God said He would pour out His Spirit on all people, and it was clearly fulfilled when the Holy Spirit, sent by the risen Jesus, came at Pentecost. Here, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the judgment of fire do not point to the same result. Since Jesus completed the remission of sins with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, the person who believes this gospel receives the remission of sins and the

Holy Spirit. For the person who has rejected the gospel, there is the judgment of fire.

The One who separates the wheat and the chaff is also Jesus. The judgment of the wicked foretold in Psalm 1:4–6 and Malachi 4:1 is carried forward in this word about separating the wheat from the chaff. Jesus came as the Savior, and at the last He comes again as the Judge. John was not the Savior but a servant who testified of Christ, and while rebuking the sin of Herod without fear, he was shut up in prison.

4. God testified of the baptism of Jesus (Luke 3:21–22)

“When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, ‘You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.’” (Luke 3:21–22).

Jesus, who has no sin, also received baptism from John. With this baptism received from John, Jesus took on the sins of mankind. Leviticus 1:4 and 16:21–22 show the Old Testament law of sacrifice, in which sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, and they prefigure the gospel ministry in which Jesus would take on the sin of the world with the baptism He would receive from John. Just as that type showed, Jesus received baptism from John and became the Lamb of God, who took on the sin of the world.

When Jesus was baptized, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove. God the Father testified that Jesus is His beloved Son. The voice from heaven reflects both the word about the Son who is King in Psalm 2:7 and the word about the Servant in Isaiah 42:1, in whom God delights and on whom He puts His Spirit, showing that Jesus is the Son of God and the anointed Servant. The

baptism of Jesus was not a baptism of repentance received to wash away the sins of men; it was obedience for taking on the sins of sinners.

Jesus bore the sins He had taken on, received the judgment on the Cross, and rose from the dead. Through this ministry, which God testified of, the salvation of sinners was accomplished.

5. The genealogy of Jesus reaches back to Adam (Luke 3:23–38)

“Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Janna, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Semei, the son of Joseph, the son of Judah, the son of Joannas, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmodam, the son of Er, the son of Jose, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim, the son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the

son of Mahalalel, the son of Cainan, the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God” (Luke 3:23–38).

People knew Jesus as the son of Joseph. But just before this, God testified that Jesus is His own beloved Son. Jesus came into history clothed in a human body, but He is the Son of God, whose origin is in God.

In the genealogy appear David and Judah and Abraham. Genesis 49:10 promised that the King would come from Judah; 2 Samuel 7:12–16, that the throne of David would be forever; and Genesis 22:18, that in the seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Jesus is the Christ, who would fulfill the blessing promised to Abraham, the kingship promised to Judah, and the eternal kingdom promised to David.

Luke carried the genealogy all the way back to Adam. Jesus is not the Savior of one people only but the Savior of all mankind, who belong to Adam. This genealogy shows that Jesus, the Seed of the woman promised in Genesis 3:15, came to save all mankind. Through the first man Adam, sin and death came in, but Jesus took on the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John and overcame sin and death with the Cross and the resurrection.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit shown in Luke chapter 3

John the Baptist preached repentance to the people and prepared the way of the Lord. He did not gather people to himself but pointed to Jesus. The baptism of water that John gave was a baptism that prepared sinners to turn from their wrong ways and receive the Savior.

The baptism Jesus received from John is different in its purpose. It is the event in which the Son of God, who has no sin, took on the sins of mankind. Jesus carried those sins to the Cross,

received the judgment, and rose again and completed salvation. The person who believes this gospel receives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit.

A sinner must not boast of lineage or religious deeds. He must admit his own sins and the judgment of God, and receive by faith the salvation Jesus accomplished with the water and the Spirit. The person who has received the remission of sins must show in his life fruits worthy of repentance.

Conclusion

In Luke chapter 3, the voice in the wilderness that Isaiah prophesied appeared through the ministry of John the Baptist. John prepared the way of the Lord, preached repentance to the people, and testified of Jesus, who is mightier than he.

When Jesus was baptized, God the Father and the Holy Spirit testified of His ministry of salvation. Jesus is the Son of God, who took on the sins of mankind and accomplished salvation with the Cross and the resurrection.

The genealogy of Jesus reaches back to Adam and to God. Therefore Jesus is the Savior of all mankind, including both Jews and Gentiles. We must not exalt John as savior or make the deeds of repentance the price of salvation, but must believe the gospel of the remission of sins that Jesus Christ has accomplished. ☒

Questions and Answers on Luke Chapter 3

[Question] 1. What important events does Luke chapter 3 record?

Luke chapter 3 records how John the Baptist preached the word of repentance and prepared the way of the Lord, how Jesus received baptism from John, and the genealogy of Jesus.

First, the word of God came to John the Baptist, who was in the wilderness. Luke records in detail the names of the emperor and the governor, the tetrarchs and the high priests of that time, showing that this was an event that took place within actual history. John preached a baptism of repentance in all the region around the Jordan, and prepared the way of the Lord just as Isaiah had prophesied.

“And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’” (Luke 3:3–6).

John cried out that they should not rely only on the lineage of being descendants of Abraham but should bear fruits worthy of repentance. He told the multitudes to share their food and clothing; he told the tax collectors not to collect more than the appointed taxes; and he taught the soldiers not to oppress people

or take from them falsely, and to be content with their wages. Repentance is not merely confessing one's fault with the mouth; it is admitting one's own sins and wrong way and turning back to God.

The people even thought that John might be the Christ, but John testified that One mightier than he was coming. He proclaimed that he himself baptized with water, but that Jesus, who was coming, is the One who saves with the Holy Spirit and who will judge with fire those who do not believe. John also rebuked Herod for taking Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evils he had done, and for this he was shut up in prison.

Second, Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist. When Jesus was baptized and prayed, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove, and God the Father testified that Jesus is His beloved Son.

“When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, ‘You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.’” (Luke 3:21–22).

Jesus did not receive baptism because He had sin. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, He took on the sin of the world, and He began the ministry in which He would bear that sin and receive the judgment on the Cross, and rise from the dead and save sinners. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus at His baptism and the words of God the Father testify that Jesus is the beloved Son, who fulfills the will of God.

Third, together with the fact that Jesus was about thirty years old when He began to teach, His genealogy is recorded. This genealogy starts from the fact that people knew Jesus as the son of Joseph, and goes back through David and Abraham all the way to Adam and to God. This shows the fact that Jesus put on

a human body and came into actual history. But Jesus is not simply the son of Joseph; He is the Son of God, whom God the Father Himself testified of, and the Savior who came to save mankind from sin.

Therefore, the center of Luke chapter 3 is ‘preparation and beginning.’ John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord so that people would turn from sin and receive Jesus, and Jesus received baptism from John, took on the sin of the world, and then began the ministry of salvation. We must admit our own sins and turn back to God, and believe in our hearts the salvation Jesus accomplished with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

[Question] 2. Luke 3:1–2, at what time did the word of God come to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness?

The word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. At that time Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and Philip, Herod’s brother, was tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis. Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, and Annas and Caiaphas were high priests.

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness” (Luke 3:1–2).

Luke recorded specifically the names of the emperor and the governor, the tetrarchs of several regions, and the high priests. This shows that the appearance of John the Baptist and the word

he preached were not a vague legend or a made-up story but an event that took place within the history in which real people were active. It was set down clearly when, where, and to whom the word of God came.

At that time the power of the world was being exercised by the emperor, the governor, and the tetrarchs, and the religious office was held by Annas and Caiaphas. But the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias, who was in the wilderness. It means that John did not step forward by his own thought or will, but received the word of God and began the mission God had entrusted to him.

From this time John the Baptist went out into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance and preparing the way on which Jesus would come. Therefore Luke 3:1–2 tells us that the ministry of John the Baptist began with the word of God at an exact point in history, and that the history of salvation God had promised began to unfold within actual history.

[Question] 3. Luke 3:3, what baptism did John, who had received the word of God, preach in all the region around the Jordan?

After receiving the word of God, John went out into all the region around the Jordan and preached to the people a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

“And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Luke 3:3).

Repentance is realizing that the way one has been going is wrong, and turning from that way and coming back to God. One

must not stop at merely saying with the mouth that he was wrong; he must admit the fact that he is a sinner who must receive the judgment of God, and turn back to God. John cried out to the people, who had left God and followed sin and idols, not to keep going that way but to turn back.

The baptism John gave the people was a sign showing the fact that they had to turn from sin, return to God, and receive the washing of sins. The act itself of going into the water and coming out does not remove all the sins of a person. John's proclamation of repentance was the work of making the people realize their sins and preparing their hearts to receive Jesus the Savior, who would come after.

Therefore, the *"baptism of repentance for the remission of sins"* does not mean washing away sins by the deeds of man. It was a proclamation leading people to admit their own sins and their wrong way, to turn back to God, and to believe in Jesus, who was coming to save sinners. After preaching repentance to the people, John carried out the mission of giving baptism to Jesus and passing the sin of the world on to Him. Jesus took on that sin, received the judgment on the Cross, and rose from the dead and saved those who believe.

We too must admit our own sins and faults before the word of God and turn back to God. And we must believe in Jesus, who removed our sins with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, as our Savior. This is the faith for which John the Baptist, preaching the baptism of repentance, wanted to prepare the people.

[Question] 4. Luke 3:4–6, which Old Testament prophecy did Luke explain that John’s proclamation of repentance fulfilled?

Luke connected the fact that John the Baptist preached a baptism of repentance to the people with the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3–5 in the Old Testament. Isaiah prophesied that one crying in the wilderness would prepare the way of the LORD and make straight a highway for our God, and that all flesh would see the glory of the LORD together.

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.’” (Isaiah 40:3–5).

Luke applied the prophecy of Isaiah to the ministry of John the Baptist and recorded it as follows.

“As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’” (Luke 3:4–6).

Here, *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness”* refers to John the Baptist. John was not a man who came to exalt himself or draw people to himself. He was a servant of God who testified of Jesus, who would come after, and prepared the way of the Lord so that the people would receive Jesus.

The word that every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low does not simply mean that the shape of the

land changes. First, this word shows that whoever believes in Jesus becomes equally a child of God, regardless of whether his position in the world is high or low. It also means that the heart of the person who has left God must repent and return, the proud heart must be brought low, and crooked and wrong thoughts and lives must be set straight before the word of God. John the Baptist prepared the way on which Jesus would come by pointing out the sins of the people and crying out to them to turn back to God.

The Book of Isaiah said, *“The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together,”* and the Gospel of Luke recorded, *“All flesh shall see the salvation of God.”* This shows that Jesus is the Lord who comes to accomplish the salvation of God. Jesus received baptism from John and took on the sin of the world, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and rose from the dead and saved those who believe.

Therefore this prophecy shows together the purpose for which John the Baptist preached repentance and the purpose for which Jesus came. John prepared the way of the Lord, and Jesus came by that way and accomplished the salvation of God. We too must turn our proud and crooked hearts before the word, and believe in Jesus, who saved us with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

[Question] 5. Luke 3:9, what judgment did John warn would come upon every tree that does not bear good fruit?

John warned that every tree that does not bear good fruit would be cut down with the ax and thrown into the fire.

“And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees.

Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’” (Luke 3:9).

Here the tree refers to the person standing before God, and the good fruit refers to a life worthy of repentance. John told the people not to say only with their mouths that they had returned to God, but actually to turn from the wrong way they had been going. Claiming to believe in God while continuing to serve idols, oppressing or deceiving other people, and following only one’s own greed is not fruit worthy of repentance.

The word “*the ax is laid to the root of the trees*” is a solemn warning that the judgment of God is not far off and will surely come. That the ax is laid not to the branches or the trunk but to the root means that fixing only the outward appearance a little is not enough; one must turn from the fundamental heart that loves sin and goes against God.

In the word that the tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire, the fire signifies the final judgment of God. John warned them not to think that they could escape the judgment by the lineage of being descendants of Abraham or by their religious background alone. God looks not at a person’s outward appearance or status but at whether his heart has truly returned to God.

But the deed of bearing good fruit does not become a merit that saves the sinner. A person cannot remove his own sins by piling up good deeds. The fruits worthy of repentance are the result of faith that appears in the person who admits his sins, turns back to God, and believes in Jesus. Jesus received baptism from John and took on our sins, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead and saved those who believe.

Therefore we must not take the judgment of God lightly or rely only on our religious background. We must admit our own

sins and our wrong way, turn back to God, and believe the salvation Jesus has accomplished. And that faith must not stay in words only but must appear in our lives as fruits worthy of repentance.

[Question] 6. Luke 3:12–13, what did John teach the tax collectors to do as fruit worthy of repentance?

John exhorted the tax collectors not to collect any more than the taxes that were appointed.

“Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than what is appointed for you.’” (Luke 3:12–13).

The tax collectors of that time did the work of collecting taxes from the people under the rule of Rome. They could forcibly collect more money than the appointed taxes and keep the remainder as their own share. John told the tax collectors to stop such unjust exploitation. In other words, they were not to collect anything by force beyond what was appointed.

John did not tell the tax collectors to abandon their occupation. He only told them not to use the authority entrusted to them to seize the people’s possessions or fill their own greed, but to collect honestly only the appointed taxes. The fruit of repentance the tax collectors needed was to cast off greed and dishonesty in their own place and to work fairly and honestly.

This shows the fact that repentance must not stay in words only. If the tax collectors, while saying they had been baptized and had returned to God, deceived the people and collected money unjustly as before, that would not be fruit worthy of repentance. The person who has truly turned back must no

longer make the authority and possessions he once misused into instruments of greed.

But honest conduct does not become the price for obtaining the remission of sins. Even if the tax collectors collected only the appointed taxes, they could not remove their own sins by that deed. They too had to admit their own sins, turn back to God, and believe in Jesus, who saved sinners with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. An honest life is not the price of salvation but the fruit of faith that must appear in the person who truly repents and believes in Jesus.

We too must not take what belongs to others unjustly by using the position or authority entrusted to us. The person who has turned back to God must be honest also in the workplace, in business, and in the money matters of daily life. The faith that believes the salvation Jesus accomplished must not stay in the confession of the heart alone, but must appear in a life that casts off greed and treats other people fairly.

[Question] 7. Luke 3:21–22, what happened when Jesus was baptized and prayed?

When Jesus was baptized and prayed, heaven was opened. The Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Jesus, and from heaven a voice was heard testifying that Jesus is the beloved Son of God, in whom God is well pleased.

“When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, ‘You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.’” (Luke 3:21–22).

In this scene, God the Father, the Son Jesus, and the Holy

Spirit appear together. The Son Jesus received baptism from John and prayed, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in a form like a dove. God the Father spoke from heaven and Himself testified that Jesus is His beloved Son.

That the Holy Spirit descended in a form like a dove does not mean that the Holy Spirit is an actual dove. It means that the descent of the Holy Spirit appeared in a form that could be confirmed with the eyes. By this, God clearly testified that Jesus, who had been baptized, is the Son of God and the Savior who came to fulfill the will of God the Father.

Jesus did not receive baptism to wash away His own sin, like the rest of the people. He has no sin, but by receiving baptism from John the Baptist He took on the sin of the world upon His own body. God the Father saying, “*You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased,*” testifies that Jesus, in obedience to the will of the Father, had begun the ministry of salvation in which He takes on the sins of mankind.

Jesus went forward to the Cross bearing the sin of the world He had taken on with the baptism received from John, received the judgment of that sin, and rose from the dead and gave new life to those who believe. Therefore, the event in which heaven was opened, the Holy Spirit descended, and the voice of God the Father was heard did not simply display an amazing sight. It is the event in which God the Father and the Holy Spirit testified of the baptism of Jesus and the ministry of salvation He would accomplish.

We must not see Jesus as merely a great man or one among the prophets. Jesus is the Son of God, whom God the Father Himself testified of, and the Savior who saved us from sin with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. We must believe this testimony of the Scriptures in our hearts and receive Jesus as our Savior.

[Question] 8. What does the genealogy of Jesus recorded in Luke 3:23–38 mean?

The genealogy of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of Luke shows that Jesus came clothed in the flesh within the actual history of mankind, and that He is the Son of God, who came to save the descendants of Adam from sin and death.

“Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli” (Luke 3:23).

Luke records that people knew Jesus as the son of Joseph. But this does not mean that Jesus was conceived through Joseph. Luke chapter 1 clearly testifies that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Jesus, who grew up in the family of Joseph, truly put on a human body and entered the history of mankind, but in His origin and identity He is the Son of God, born of God.

The genealogy of the Gospel of Matthew starts from Abraham and David and comes down to Jesus, but the genealogy of the Gospel of Luke starts from Jesus and goes back up through David and Abraham all the way to Adam. It shows that Jesus is not only the King promised to David and the One who fulfills the promise of blessing given to Abraham, but also the Savior related to all the descendants of Adam.

“The son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God” (Luke 3:38).

That the genealogy here says Adam was the son of God means that God made Adam. It does not mean that Adam is the Son of God in the same sense as Jesus. Adam is a man made by God, but Jesus is the Son of God, of whom God the Father Himself testified, *“You are My beloved Son.”* Therefore this genealogy shows the true humanity of Jesus, and yet does not let us understand Him as merely a man.

Through the one man Adam, sin and death entered mankind, but through Jesus Christ, righteousness and life were given. Jesus put on a human body in order to take on the sins of mankind. He received baptism from John and took on the sins, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead and gave eternal life to those who believe.

Therefore the genealogy of the Gospel of Luke is not simply a list recording the ancestors of Jesus. It is the testimony of the gospel that Jesus came as a true man but is not a mere man, and that He is the Son of God, who came to save all the descendants of Adam under sin. We must not regard Jesus only as a great teacher or a historical figure. We must believe in Him as the Son of God, who put on a human body, came among us, and accomplished salvation with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, and as our Savior.

[Question] 9. What differences are there between the genealogies of Jesus recorded in Luke and in Matthew?

The genealogies of Jesus recorded in Matthew and in Luke differ in their starting point and direction, in the range and the names they record, and in the meaning they emphasize.

First, the starting point and direction of the genealogies differ. Matthew starts from Abraham and comes down to Jesus.

“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1).

Matthew records the generations divided into fourteen each: from Abraham to David, from David until the deportation to Babylon, and from the deportation to Babylon until the Christ. In comparison, Luke starts from Jesus and goes back up through

His ancestors, past Abraham, to Adam and to God.

“The son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God” (Luke 3:38).

Second, the range the genealogies cover differs. Matthew begins with Abraham, the father of faith of the Jews, and especially highlights King David. This shows that Jesus is the Christ, who fulfills the promise of blessing given to Abraham and the promise of kingship given to David. Luke goes back further than Abraham, all the way to Adam, the ancestor of all mankind. This shows that Jesus came as the Savior related not only to the Jews but to all the descendants of Adam, and that He truly put on a human body and entered the history of mankind.

Third, the names recorded in the lines after David differ from each other. Matthew carries the line on through Solomon, the son of David, but Luke carries it on through Nathan, the son of David. Also, Matthew records the father of Joseph as Jacob, but Luke records that Joseph was the son of Heli. It is clear that the two Gospels record different names, but the biblical text does not settle and explain the specific genealogical method by which that difference arose. Therefore we must not immediately conclude that the genealogy of Luke is the genealogy of Mary.

Fourth, there is also a difference in the way the two genealogies express the relationship between Jesus and Joseph. Matthew records Joseph as the husband of Mary and makes clear that Jesus was born of Mary.

“And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ” (Matthew 1:16).

Luke also does not state that Jesus was Joseph’s own son; he records that Jesus was the son of Joseph *“as was supposed.”* People knew Jesus as the son of Joseph, but both Gospels testify that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.

In the end, the genealogy of Matthew emphasizes that Jesus is the Christ and the King, who fulfills the promises given to Abraham and to David, and the genealogy of Luke emphasizes that Jesus is the Son of God, who came as a true man and saves all the descendants of Adam. Their emphases differ, but both genealogies testify that Jesus is the Savior who came into history according to the promise.

Therefore we must not see the genealogies as mere lists of names. Jesus came clothed in a human body in order to fulfill the promises of God given to Abraham and to David and to save mankind under sin and death. Jesus is our Savior, who received baptism from John and took on the sins of mankind, received the judgment on the Cross, and rose from the dead and gave eternal life to those who believe.

[Question] 10. Why do different names appear in the genealogies of Luke and of Matthew?

The clearest reason different names appear in the genealogies of Luke and of Matthew is that the two Gospels record the lines after David along different branches, and the purpose and method of composing the genealogies also differ.

Matthew carries the line on through Solomon, the son of David.

“And Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah” (Matthew 1:6).

On the other hand, Luke goes back up the line through Nathan, the son of David.

“The son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David” (Luke 3:31).

Accordingly, as they follow different branches of the line

after David, many names differ. Matthew, centering on the line of Solomon and the kings of Judah, reveals that Jesus is the King promised to David. He also divides the line from Abraham to the Christ into three sections and arranges each section in fourteen generations. This tells us that Matthew's purpose was not to record the names of every generation without omission, but that he selected and composed the genealogy so as to show that Jesus is the Christ, who fulfills the promises given to Abraham and to David.

Luke goes back up from Jesus through His ancestors, past Nathan the son of David and past Abraham, to Adam and to God. Through this Luke emphasizes that Jesus actually put on a human body and came into the history of mankind, and that He is the Savior related to all the descendants of Adam. In this way the two genealogies present different branches and different names according to their different purposes of recording.

The two genealogies also record differently the generation immediately before Joseph. Matthew says as follows.

“And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ” (Matthew 1:16).

But Luke records as follows.

“Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli” (Luke 3:23).

The biblical text does not directly explain the specific reason the names Jacob and Heli differ. From the early Church there has been handed down the explanation that one was Joseph's father in the flesh and the other was his legal father under the institution of carrying on the name of a relative who died without children. There is also the view that Matthew recorded the legal line of the throne through Joseph, while Luke recorded the line of the flesh related to Mary. But since the text of Luke does not directly

state that this is the genealogy of Mary, we must not assert any one explanation as though it were a settled statement of the Bible.

Therefore, rather than trying to force away the differences in the names, we must see the common fact the two Gospels clearly testify. Both genealogies testify that Jesus is the promised Christ connected with the line of David, and yet neither teaches that Jesus is the fleshly son of Joseph. Jesus is the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit and come clothed in a human body.

Jesus came to fulfill the promises given to Abraham and to David and to save the descendants of Adam. He received baptism from John and took on the sins of mankind, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead and completed salvation. Though the composition and the names of the two genealogies differ, both testify that Jesus is the promised Christ who came into history and our Savior. ☒

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Cast off the desires of the world and receive Jesus Christ

< Luke 3:1-14 >

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’ So the

people asked him, saying, ‘What shall we do then?’ He answered and said to them, ‘He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.’ Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than what is appointed for you.’ Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, ‘And what shall we do?’ So he said to them, ‘Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.’”

It has been a long time. It is good to see you. Today we have looked together at the word of Luke chapter 3.

The baptism of repentance that John the Baptist preached

If we look at this word, we see John the Baptist preaching a baptism of repentance. There are two kinds of baptism. One is the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, and this is the baptism for taking on the sins of all us mankind and washing them away. The other is the baptism of repentance, which John the Baptist cried out to his hearers before that work took place. He cried out: repent, turn back; if the way you are going is a wrong way, turn back. He cried out to them not to think of themselves as descendants of Abraham—for it does not come by the flesh—but to turn back from whatever they were doing wrong in their hearts.

It has already been more than two thousand years since the New Testament of this Bible was recorded. Speaking of John, how many people of the same name would there be, named after

him? So, knowing that such a thing would arise, God nailed it down in chapter 3, verses 1 and 2, like this: *“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.”*

The man called Luke was a physician who carefully recorded the works of Jesus as they were handed down by the eyewitnesses, and lest people of later generations slander this Bible, saying it was written at will with no historicity and no sense of place, he mobilized all the history and places and background of that time and nailed it down, so that no one could talk nonsense. At that time Israel was a colony under the rule of Rome, and the king of Rome was Caesar. In the time when Caesar had reigned fifteen years, Rome set up a governor and set up tetrarchs under him, and Annas and Caiaphas were there as high priests. It is recorded that at this very time John the Baptist received the word of God in the wilderness and cried out. If it had not been done this way, how many men named John would there have been in Israel, and people would have tried to corrupt and fabricate this. That is why He nailed it down, mobilizing the historicity and the sense of place and the background of that time.

Repentance is turning back

John the Baptist, preaching the baptism of repentance, cried out like this: *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD” (Luke 3:4)* He cried out to people to repent—not to say that they were descendants of Abraham, but

to turn back. Then how must one turn back? The word repent means that, concerning the way we have been going while doing wrong and knowing wrong, the moment we realize, ah, I am going the wrong way, we are to turn back. Turning back—that is repentance.

Rattling off with the mouth only, I did wrong, please forgive me, is not repentance. That is not even confession; it is only words of self-hypnosis to comfort oneself. Repeating with the mouth only, I will never do it again, is like the babbling of a little child. What God wants is that if you are going down a wrong way, you do not keep going down that way but turn back. So many people, hearing the crying voice of John the Baptist, asked, what must we turn back from?

When they asked, John answered like this: *“So the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answered and said to them, He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise” (Luke 3:10–11)* At this time Israel was in the position of a slave, a subject state of Rome. Because it was an age in which they had to pay heavy taxes and had their property all taken away, there was much exploitation even among their own people within Israel. There were many cases of the powerful taking what belonged to the powerless and not giving it back.

Therefore this word—that he who has two tunics should share with him who has none, and he who has food should do likewise—is by no means a small word. It means they were committing this very sin at that time. It had become a world of the law of the jungle, where the strong took everything from the weak and only the strong survived. So John the Baptist cried out that if one had two tunics, he should wear one and share the other, and since there were so many people starving to death with nothing to eat, he should share his food as well.

The word spoken to the tax collectors and the soldiers

Next come the tax collectors. A tax collector is a term for those in charge of taxation. They were people who, though citizens of Israel, worked like officials of Rome, collecting heavy taxes from the people of Israel and paying them to Rome. Even such people asked, “*what shall we do?*” (Luke 3:12) Then John said, “*Collect no more than what is appointed for you*” (Luke 3:13). It means: do not collect more than the appointed taxes. There was an appointed tax for each household, and though the amount Rome had set was not much, they would collect ten times that and fill their own bellies.

The soldiers also asked, “*what shall we do?*” John said, “*Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages*” (Luke 3:14). It means that a man must not, because he is a soldier, swing his sword at people on the road when they displease him, harming them or taking what they have. The baptism of repentance that John the Baptist preached cried out, in this way, the things that had to be turned back from in daily life.

The one who prepares the way of the Lord

Then what kind of role is this role of John the Baptist? There is a word the prophet Isaiah prophesied long ago. Let us look together at Luke 3:4–6. “*As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the*

rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” John the Baptist is the very one who came to do this work.

First, it said: prepare the way of the LORD. What did Jesus Christ come to this earth to do? He came to save you and me from sin. Then, when the Lord intends to save us, what is the first thing that must be done? Since people are all following after sin, the work of pointing that out and making them turn back must be done first. So John the Baptist did this work of preparing the way of the Lord. He cried out to people what they were doing wrong and told them to turn back.

Second, it said: make His paths straight. The path here means a very rough way, a way with many obstacles. To make His paths straight means that Jesus was coming to this earth to save us mankind from sin, and yet on that way there were many stumbling blocks and obstacles. The word, *“Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth”* (Luke 3:5), was spoken because the differences of class were great and there were too many who oppressed and too many who were ruled over.

In our own history, too, there was a time when the nation was in disorder and the officials exploited the powerless people and collected excessive taxes, and the people, harassed beyond endurance, finally rose up. It was an age in which the differences of class were great, and people excessively distinguished nobleman from commoner and man from woman, and oppressed one another. Israel was like that too; there were too many oppressors and too many who were crushed down, so John the Baptist appeared and first cried out, Brood of vipers! Repent!—and pointed out the sins of the people.

So John the Baptist pointed out even the sin of King Herod. He cried out: how can it be a human thing to take your brother’s

wife and make her your own wife? Because he challenged the king and pointed out his sin, Herod had his soldiers put John in prison and finally had him beheaded. And so John was martyred. We must know this biblical background, and we must also know its spiritual meaning. In the end, the work and purpose of John the Baptist was this: to make all people truly turn back from what they were doing wrong and do it no more, and to make them receive Jesus, who came to save us from all sins, as their Savior, their Redeemer, and so obtain salvation.

We must cast off the desires of the world

Then, if John the Baptist cried out like that and did that work at that time, what must we do now? If we would receive Jesus as our Savior and believe, there is something we must do first of all. We must cast off the desire of the world that says: I alone will live well, I will become rich, and even if I must oppress and trample others, it is enough if I alone live well. If we would receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and believe and receive the remission of sins, we must admit before God that our thoughts and hearts and actions and will have all been wrong. And only when we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior do we receive salvation.

Everyone, if a person who would believe in Jesus tries to believe in Him and receive the remission of sins while holding the greed that says, becoming rich in the world is my goal, salvation does not come. Only with a heart like this does one receive salvation: before God and before people, I will not do evil; I hate such a life; I may do wrong in a moment of weakness, but I will not plan it in my heart and do it; I will turn back; even if by turning back I become penniless and am branded a

worthless person in the world, I will live uprightly before God and before people—receiving Jesus Christ as one’s own Savior with such a heart.

Everyone, if you receive Jesus without casting off your own greed, holding on to the greed that says, I will live as a rich man in the world, you cannot be united with Jesus as one. If becoming rich is your only goal, is that not an idol, and is that not your god? Then salvation does not come. Why did God send John the Baptist to this earth before Jesus? It was so that if there is anything wrong, we would turn back. Only the person who has turned back is qualified to receive and welcome Jesus, and only such a person can receive salvation.

That is why He sent John the Baptist first, and John the Baptist cried out that the valleys would be filled and the low places made level, becoming even. Whoever it may be, he must turn back from what he has done wrong. With a heart that says, I truly want to live uprightly before people and before God, he must admit his faults and turn back. And only the person who says, I will receive salvation by believing in Jesus Christ, who came to remit all these sins; I will receive salvation and live according to the will of God—only such a person receives salvation.

If someone keeps his heart packed full of greed and says, I am a man of many sins, so I want to believe in Jesus and receive the remission of sins, but I will surely achieve my greed and live according to my greed—that is not returning to God. Such a person is not believing in God but rushing in to use God, and God knows all of it. For such a person, even if on top of that he knows and claims to believe the righteousness of Jesus, salvation does not come. From the center of the heart we must admit before God what should be admitted, call wrong what is wrong, and though we may be tempted and dragged along, we must

throw away that will and thought that says, I will do this no matter what. The person who admits he has done wrong can receive salvation.

Everyone, I do not know whether you will believe me when I tell you this. In my young days I, too, wanted to live without a single spot of shame toward heaven. Then, as I looked at the word of the Bible, I realized that my thoughts and my will and my actions were all wrong. What was already done wrong could not be helped, but I truly turned back, resolving not to live that way from then on. I threw away all the greed of believing in Jesus and becoming rich and living high while trampling on people. I threw away even the ambition of building a huge church. As I tried to believe in the Lord, this was sin and that was sin, and there was nothing to be done, so I threw it all away. I paid off and settled all the debts I owed to others, and from that very day I quit drinking and smoking.

Even now, things that chase after material gain keep arising inside this church, but I do not exploit you. There is no such thing as money piling up in my bankbook. Apart from what the church manages here, there is no bankbook and no card in my name. I absolutely never divert what is yours. If I did such a thing, I would be not a servant of God but a thief and a false cult leader, and God would not use me.

If the heart is full of the greed of the world, the Lord cannot dwell in it

And yet, among the people who worked with me, such people keep coming out. They also say they believe in the Lord, but there is no Holy Spirit within them. Why is that? It is because they have not cast off the greed in their hearts. Though living

here they enjoy their life now no less than those who hold great wealth and enjoy it outside, their pocketing that money like that is because they have not repented before God. Whether before being born again or after being born again, if this heart is full of the greed of the world, the Lord cannot dwell in it. However much one claims to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Lord cannot dwell within him.

The greed within—the greed and desire going the wrong way—must be cast off. Even if, still holding it, one says, I am an evil man, I need the Lord, I believe the Lord as my Savior, the Lord cannot enter into that heart. He said that the pure in heart shall see God. What is purity? Is it not being clean? When the heart is not clean, how can the Lord enter into it? Everyone, do not think so lightly of the Lord. You must not suppose that since the Lord came as the Savior, the more of a sinner one is the better. Even a man who is presently stealing—when he knows it is wrong and throws that wrong away and believes in the Lord as his own Savior, then the Lord walks with that person. Otherwise the Lord can never dwell in him.

Would you unite with such a person? Suppose you had much wealth and power, and you meant to choose someone from a village to live with you, sharing riches and honor. In such a case, would you choose a person full of his own greed, or a person whose heart is pure and who throws away his own evil? If he were a man full of the greed to get under you, do away with you, and make your property his own, you would not choose him. You too know at a glance. You know just by hearing the voice. Then would God not know it?

God is the One who searches our hearts and inward parts. He is the God who searches everything within our hearts. How could such a One not know our evil thoughts and desires? Desire means looking to one's own great greed and chasing off in that

direction. To put it simply, with a person who says, I want to become rich and live trampling on those beneath me, the Lord never goes together, and salvation does not come either. Though he himself claims to believe, the Holy Spirit never comes upon that heart. What master would use as his worker a person who seeks only his own good living?

Therefore, John the Baptist preaching the baptism of repentance means this: point out the evil, turn back from the direction you were going, and receive as your Savior the Lord, who came to remove all those sins. This is the first thing John the Baptist did. You and I within our church must also cast off greed. The desire to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world is a righteous and right desire, but the greed that says, I alone will become rich, I will divert money behind the scenes and live well alone, no matter whether the church is ruined or not—that greed must be cast off.

If you hold such greed, you never become rich. It is said that there is a way of becoming rich even while giving generously, and a way of becoming poor instead even while sparing excessively. Money exists to be used, and to be used for what is right. We must cast off human greed, personal greed. And we must pray before God, casting off the greed of the flesh and following the will of God: “Thank You, God, for removing my sins; after receiving the remission of sins I want to live as God desires; I will not seek only the greed of my flesh but follow the way God desires, so, God, take responsibility for my life.”

While giving generously and doing what is right, we ask Him to bless us to be people through whom those who work with us also eat well, live well, and live uprightly. That is our heart, and the heart of Jesus Christ. The Lord said that He blesses the person who is united with Him. But concerning the person who does not repent, He said that the ax is already laid to the root of

the trees, and that He will cut him off not from the middle but from the root and throw him into the unquenchable fire. Therefore, now we must cast off greed from the root.

Even a person outside the church—one who truly wants to live uprightly before God and before people but cannot manage it—can receive the remission of sins when he hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit through our books. But for a person full of human greed, even when he meets that gospel it is of no use. If you who live within this church are also full of human greed, that greed becomes your god. Then you become a castaway, and without even achieving your greed, both spirit and flesh come to ruin.

The one who has not cast off greed lives for his own desire and tries to make even others become like that. There are even those who take powerless children, use them like their own slaves, and send them out begging; it is exactly the person full of the desires of the world who does such things. Among those who worked with me, too, there were some who, even after receiving enormous support, diverted it behind the scenes and chased only their own greed, and in the end became thieves. Seeking to live well alone like a queen, one ends up becoming a castaway.

One person who went out like that confessed that she had not believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and confessing one more thing, she left these words: I want to turn back, but I cannot turn back from what I have done wrong—this must be the curse of the LORD. Truly painful words. Salvation does not come by saying with the mouth only that one throws away his greed. Do you take God for a fool? Salvation does not come. Someone betrayed God twice and yet says he now believes and speaks of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but that is only his own logic; unless he casts off the greed, it is hell. We must

know this clearly. The person who does not cast off greed cannot enter heaven, and salvation does not come to him.

Blessed are the poor in spirit

He said that blessed are the poor in spirit. The heart must be poor. What if we have nothing at all? We live once and go anyway; if we have nothing, we can live without. When spring comes, if you go out to the fields and pick wild greens and boil them and season them, several dishes come out. We can live like that and then go; what would be so different if one became rich in the world and had billions of money?

Once you know someone's true colors, many thoughts vanish at once. You come to know: ah, this person was one who had not cast off greed. You too must know this well. If you do not cast off the greed of the flesh, salvation does not come into your heart. Nor do material things become yours because you are greedy. One becomes rich only when God makes him rich; one does not become rich by being greedy. Who is without greed, and has everyone who was greedy become rich?

We must be poor in spirit, and since blessed are those who mourn, we must mourn. Asking ourselves, must I really live this way?—if we truly love ourselves, we must strive to become people who are upright before God and before people. We must go forward in that direction. Is not a human being an existence that resembles the image of God? To be human means wanting to live like a human being; though there may be weak points, should we not at least set our goal that way?

The person who says, I want to become a thief, I want to live according to my desire, that is my goal—all such people go to hell. If we believe in Jesus that way, it is wrong. If one does not

cast off greed but chases after personal greed, nothing is accomplished; rather, he is cast away by God. Knowing this, we must cast off greed. And we must believe in the Lord and live as the Lord desires. Then I believe the Lord will bless us. I have finished the message. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

We must have a right mind before God

< Luke 3:1-14 >

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’ So the people asked him, saying, ‘What shall we do then?’ He answered and said to them, ‘He who has two tunics, let him

give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.’ Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than what is appointed for you.’ Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, ‘And what shall we do?’ So he said to them, ‘Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.’”

God is Spirit, so we must believe spiritually

It is good to see you. It is very good that the deacons are here and all our workers, men and women, are here together. The gracious God has led us and held us up until now. Truly, when we think of it, we are all a miracle; each and every person here is a miracle. So we can only give thanks to God. Before long we too will grow old and either go before the Lord or the Lord will come to us; that day will arrive before long. So we must treasure this time and know God rightly. And with a right mind we must serve the Lord and live.

In John chapter 4 the Lord said, *“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”* (John 4:24). That God is Spirit means that He is not flesh. If, while living the life of faith, we try to know God only in the flesh, it is very hard, and we cannot follow at all. But because God is Spirit, we must look to God with the faith that believes the word in our hearts.

The Lord not only made the universe; He also came to this earth to save you and me, and saved us with the water and the blood. All those sins as many as the fog—so many sins—the Lord took on once and for all and removed completely. Believing that is precisely our faith in the Lord. We believe God, who is Spirit, by the word. God put on a human body and came

to this earth, and He Himself became a man in order to save man. That is the wisdom of God and the love of God toward us.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit accomplished by the justice of God

Traveling on overseas missions, I meet people who ask this question. If Jesus is God and our Savior, and He took on all the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, then did He not also become a sinner? How can a sinner save sinners, and in that case, must He not also be forsaken by God?

But Jesus actually was forsaken by God. Jesus was turned away from on the Cross. He cried out, *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* Nails were driven into His hands and both feet, and in that extreme agony, in which with every breath the blood of His heart flowed out through the arteries, God the Father turned His face from His Son. He turned away, as if to say: did You not take on the sins of mankind? Then You must suffer that pain and die. So for three hours the whole world became dark.

Even though He was God the Father, because He had passed the sins on to Jesus through John the Baptist by the baptism, He could not but nail His own Son to the Cross and put Him to death. Why did He do so? It was to finish the judgment on our sins. God is truly wise. That He Himself became a man in order to save man—that is precisely the wisdom of God.

If God had remained as Spirit and only said, I love you; I have removed all your sins, so believe—our faith would rather have been in trouble. Salvation cannot be completed that way. For Satan the Devil opposes even in the face of the truth. Though

he cannot resist before God, if he slips into our thoughts and resists there, we cannot endure it.

If God had either made man unable to sin, or, after man sinned, had simply said, I have removed all your sins, so only believe, and whoever believes obtains salvation—Satan the Devil would have opposed, saying, what kind of game is this? But God did not do that; He Himself came as a man and saved us by a fair and righteous way. Therefore there is no flaw in our salvation.

We are people who resemble the image of God. In Genesis, God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, and He made man. Just as God is just and fair, we who resemble His image also want what is fair. Therefore, even when God saved us from sin, He did not suddenly appear unconditionally and declare, you have no sin; He saved us by the fair way of taking over the sins, resolving them, and removing them.

That we resemble the image of God does not mean we resemble His outward appearance. Since God is Spirit, it means our hearts resemble God. When He created the heavens and the earth, He planted a just heart and a fair heart within us. So if something is not fair, our hearts cannot accept it. That He saved us by this truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit means that He saved us by His own fairness. That is why we can believe. If we were beasts, we would just wag our tails and follow whatever was given, but man is not so. That is precisely the wisdom of God.

God has pity on all whom He will have pity on. But the one who utterly refuses to turn back and who, if left alone, would make the pitiful his slaves and try to destroy them all—God does not leave such a one alone but settles accounts with him, as we see in many places in history. Therefore we must know and

believe in the Spirit what kind of God He is.

By the fruit the tree is known

The Lord said that the tree is known by its fruit. However much a person confesses with his mouth, I believe, whether he is one who truly believes or one who is false—the fruit gives the answer. Suppose the Lord were on this earth now, and someone came to Him saying, Lord, have You saved me? Are You my Savior? I really believe, and he tried to follow the Lord's will. Even then, the Lord does not rashly say to him, you are false. He only says, by the fruit the tree is known. For it is the fruit that testifies that he is a false one.

In everything there must be evidence. Jesus, too, did not expose and rebuke Judas Iscariot from the beginning but left him alone to the end. He only said at the last that the one who dipped his hand in the dish would betray Him; He endured to the very end. Only when the fruit is clearly revealed do we come to know what kind of person he was. Only then do we realize: ah, this person was one who would not believe from the start. When such a thing is revealed, the church too cannot but come to know what kind of person he was.

So we must look back at our own selves from time to time. It is often the case that the false ones are more proper in conduct and better at greeting than those who truly believe. It is like a rice paddy where rice and barnyard grass grow together: the barnyard grass grows greener and stands straighter. By the outward appearance alone it is hard to discern.

Even so, the church cannot rashly cast someone out, saying, you are one who does not believe, so leave. That is not the Lord's will. We must wait. Only, we must always stay awake and be

careful. If someone truly sets out to deceive with a made-up plan, there is no one who would not be deceived. As the saying goes, ten men cannot stop one thief; we cannot block it all.

So what we must do is truly believe in the Lord and enjoy peace and thanksgiving in our hearts. There are those who, even when they go through hard things, gain a great lesson instead. They learn that even a proper-looking person can be like that, and so they come to depend on the Lord still more and give thanks. It is because we believe in the Lord that there is peace and thanksgiving in our hearts at all. Therefore we must give thanks all the more.

There are many who come to give thanks instead through such things. Money can be earned again, and it is enough that the children live unharmed. Also, we see that when one lives with the righteous, a person gets better and better, and when one is with a person whose heart is evil, it is not so. Therefore we must serve the Lord together with those who have a right heart and a right mind. Many gain a great lesson through such things and offer a thanksgiving offering. No teacher, however excellent, can give such a lesson.

The Bible is the word of God.

Today we read the passage together. The Bible is the word of God. Even in Jesus' day there were many who bore the name Jesus. So the Bible greatly emphasizes historicity. Luke in particular specifies the king, the tetrarchs, and the high priests of that time, recording as if nailing it down: when, where, who did what.

Look at verses 1 and 2 of the passage. *“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being*

governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness” When Caesar was emperor of Rome, Israel was a subject state of Rome. A tetrarch is one who rules a region. In this way it discloses the circumstances of that time one by one.

There is a reason it nails down that the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias. The word of God is not without historicity; its historicity and its sense of place are all clear. Therefore man cannot corrupt it at will or disregard it. It cannot be called a mere religious book. Without knowing this Bible one cannot know history, and that is why even scientists and archaeologists study it.

The way John the Baptist prepared

Now people came out to John the Baptist to be washed of their sins. In the midst of that, John cites the word of the prophet Isaiah. *“As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God”* (Luke 3:4–6) This speaks of our salvation. Regardless of whether one’s position is high or low, lowly or noble, whoever believes can become a child of God. Just as the rough ways become smooth and the crooked places are made straight, it says: prepare the way to receive the Lord.

The role of John the Baptist was to prepare the way by which

Jesus Christ would come to this earth and save us mankind from sin. The Lord would come to this earth, take on our sins by the baptism, die hanging on the Cross, and rise again from death to save us, and John's work was to prepare people so that they could know this. What was that preparing work? It was precisely the work of turning them back from evil. It was the work of making them admit and turn back from the wrong way, the way of doing evil, and return before God.

When John the Baptist appeared, it was a time when for four hundred years there had not been a single servant crying out the word of God. Because the people of Israel kept serving idols and following sin, God had cut off His servants. In the old days there were prophets who rebuked the sins of kings and people and led them in the right way, but now there was no such one, so the people were waiting anxiously for someone to rebuke them and lead them.

At that time John the Baptist appeared and boldly rebuked sin even toward King Herod. He rebuked him, saying, is it right that you have taken your brother's wife and made her your wife?—and he pointed out the sins of the people one by one. And he said: wash your sins and return before God, turn back—and he gave baptism as the sign of that turning. John the Baptist did two things. One was giving people baptism as the sign of turning back, and the other was giving Jesus the baptism that passed the sins of mankind on to Him. John the Baptist clearly testified of these two things to the people. First he said: turn back from evil. Then people flocked to him like clouds.

Repentance is turning back from one's own sins

People flocked to him, but among them were those who

inwardly cherished their pride: that they were, after all, descendants of Abraham. So John the Baptist cried out, Brood of vipers! Throw away the pride of being descendants of Abraham, and if you would receive the washing of sins, return before God. He warned that the ax was already laid to the root of the trees, and every tree that does not bear good fruit would be cut down without exception and thrown into the fire.

Then the multitude came forward and asked, “*What shall we do then?*” (Luke 3:10) John the Baptist said: he who has two tunics, share with him who has none, and he who has food, do likewise. The tax collectors also came and asked, what shall we do?—and he said: do not take more than the appointed taxes. It means: receive only the tax Rome has appointed and do not exploit beyond it.

The soldiers also asked, what shall we do?—and he said: do not do violence to anyone, do not accuse falsely, and be content with your wages. It means: do not go around with your sword and harm people at will. How right every single word is! John the Baptist, having said to turn back from evil, spelled out one by one, in this way, the way of living uprightly.

And yet, though he said to turn back from evil, there are those who do not turn back but continue in evil while saying, I too want to receive the washing of sins. The soldier still harms people and the tax collector still exploits, and yet, since they sin much, they mean to come back and just get the remission of sins. What John the Baptist is saying is that in that way one cannot receive the remission of sins. Therefore, one must have a right mind.

John the Baptist is the man God sent first. He sent him to cry out repentance. Therefore, just as he cried out, we must turn back from evil and return to God.

Here we must listen carefully to the words of John the Baptist.

If we truly want to return before God and receive salvation and live uprightly as new people, we must not seek only to receive the remission of sins. Before that, we must first have the thought and the resolve: I want to live uprightly before God; I want to live a right life. If, without even such a resolve, one says, I am this kind of person, so I will just receive the remission of sins no matter what, and yet I thank the Lord who removed my sins—if one believes in the Lord as Savior in that manner, that is not the way to receive the remission of sins. I am saying that one must have a right mind and right thinking.

Everyone, do you understand these words? When we come before God, we must come with a right mind and right thinking. Otherwise, however much one believes in Jesus, salvation does not come.

We must stand before God with a right mind

Everyone, you must not hold a double mind. With the heart that says, I want to earn money by exploiting people, I want to steal, I want to live rich, but since I have many sins I will just believe in Jesus and get the remission of sins—one cannot receive salvation. Do not try to receive the remission of sins that way. Only when one comes saying, at least in mind I will live with a right mind and right thoughts; I truly want to live uprightly; but I have no ability and many sins, so I want to believe the righteousness God has given and receive the remission of sins—then God has pity on him and gives him salvation.

Whether one lives well or not in conduct after receiving the remission of sins is a secondary matter. At the least, the heart—the mind—must be right. The sins we commit because our flesh

is lacking and weak—such sins are not the issue. But the sins committed willfully and by plan are different. To the person who cherishes the thought of stealing money within the church all his life and someday becoming rich, and who with that heart means to believe the gospel within the church, receive salvation, steal money, become rich, and keep living as a thief until he goes before the Lord—to such a person God does not give salvation. Would God not know that heart? God is not deceived by such a person.

We believe in Jesus alike—why then does one person receive salvation and another fail to receive it? Because he tried to believe in Jesus as Savior without having the posture that says, I am a lacking person, but I want to live uprightly before God and before people—that is why, though believing, he fails to receive salvation. But there are those who, though truly lacking, one day say, I believe, and the person changes. He wanted to live uprightly before God, but could not live uprightly, and so believed in Jesus as his own Savior. So he received salvation and received the grace God has given.

There is the person who says, I stole before believing in Jesus and I will keep stealing after believing, and with that I will receive the remission of sins and also become rich and then go before the Lord. To such a person God does not give salvation. Would God not know that heart? To such a person, however much he claims to believe the gospel, salvation does not come. Though we are alike in the church like this, the difference lies precisely in the right mind.

The word repentance here does not mean begging. It means “to turn back. Going along, one realizes, ah, I am going in a wrong direction; my doing evil is wrong; I want to live uprightly—and he turns and returns to God. As one makes a U-turn and comes back onto the right road, so one returns to God,

wanting to receive the remission of sins and to live uprightly. God is the One who searches our heart and our center and our inward parts. He does not look at our outward appearance but looks at the heart..

Therefore God says that He came to seek sinners. He seeks the one who wants to live uprightly but keeps committing sin and so mourns in heart, the one who looks back at himself and laments. That is precisely one like the tax collector. The man in charge of taxes says: I do not want to skim off much money and fill my own pocket, but my colleagues do so, and if I do not do likewise it is hard to get by; in mind I want to live uprightly, but when it comes to real life it does not go well. Even so, he must have that mind that says: when others take ten, I will take only five—the mind that at least wants to live uprightly. We can see that if the person who believes in God does not have a right mind, even though he believes, salvation is not accomplished.

The one God loved was one like David. It was not Saul. Saul was tall and fought well, but God did not want such a man. What about David? He said: I fear God and I want to live uprightly; I want to live as God commands.

David confessed like this: I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. He confessed: I have already inherited sin from my mother and father, and I was born in iniquity from my birth on this earth, so I am one who commits such evil. But he said: I want to live uprightly. So God said, very well, I have remitted all your sins—and He said that the one He loves is one like David. If we judge by deeds, Saul never took another man's wife and killed her husband, but David did even such things. Yet God looked at the center of his heart and called David the one He loves. God hates the one whose heart is evil and loves the one whose heart is right, so we too must make the center of our hearts right and become those whom God loves.

As I preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit, I find there is such a thing as the field of the heart. Some people look stiff on the outside, yet when the word is preached to them, they submit at once. Some seem to submit and seem to receive it well, yet there is another heart inside their heart. There is no need to think of many things; it is simple. One must believe in God with the thought of wanting to live rightly. Such a person, when his sin is told him by the Law, knows it at once. He immediately admits: ah, I am a person who can only go to hell. Otherwise it is hard to receive salvation.

Otherwise one ends up an utterly false hireling. The person who ministers in order to take money, to steal money, to exploit others, is an utter thief. Who among us does not have such a heart rise up once in a while? Even so, at the least one must want to live uprightly, and one must live uprightly. The faith that says, I am lacking, but I believe You, God; I too am a person who can be like that, but I want to live uprightly; let me live uprightly—that faith admits one's own weakness and depends on God.

You and I must believe in Jesus, yes—but we must keep the posture of our hearts right. God searches our hearts and our center and knows all. If one outwardly claims to believe while inwardly cherishing the heart to entice these people, rake in their property, strip it all, and run off—however much the gospel is preached to him within the church, until he throws away that evil thought, until he comes to have the heart to live uprightly before God, salvation does not come.

We must not each seek only our own good living. With a right mind we must cooperate with one another, so that the whole church and all the brothers and sisters together seek to live uprightly before God. We must live with such a mind.

Everyone, look back at yourselves once. Though you and I are lacking, did we not at least want to live uprightly? We did

want to live uprightly. If there is anyone who is not so, I ask you to turn back. Truly, I ask you to turn back. If there is anyone who has no desire even to live uprightly, saying, I have already given up, I ask you to repent even now.

Everyone, is it so, or is it not? Though our conduct does not follow well, we did want to live uprightly before God. When we believe in Jesus with such a heart, God has pity on us and bestows the grace of salvation. Therefore we must listen carefully to these words John the Baptist spoke.

Turn back from evil and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit

This is precisely the role of John the Baptist: as the low places are raised and the crooked ways straightened and the obstacles cleared away, to make people return to God with at least the thought of wanting to live rightly. It says: do not come to God without even wanting to live rightly, receive only the remission of sins, and then claim, I am a descendant of Abraham, I have been saved by faith. If we look back at you and me, it is most exact. When we believed in Jesus, when we came to know and believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, did we not come to Jesus and believe because we truly wanted to live rightly but could not manage it? Our conduct did not follow well, but we did want to live rightly.

John the Baptist had his head cut off while rebuking the sin of King Herod. Because he was a right man before God, he spoke such words at the risk of death. If there had been no John the Baptist, how could we have known what kind of God He is and how He saved us? John the Baptist was born six months ahead of Jesus and first did the work of pointing out people's

sins, and afterward Jesus came and received baptism from John the Baptist, took on the sins of mankind, died hanging on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so saved us. John the Baptist came only to do the work of preparing that way.

Therefore we must return rightly before God; we must throw away idols; we must throw away stealing other people's money, exploiting, and harming people at will. When we throw that away and return before God and believe in Jesus Christ, we receive salvation. Otherwise we receive judgment, as the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Do not set store by worldly success. What use is it to be a descendant of Abraham? God has pity on even a Gentile who, with a right mind, believes in God alone and seeks to live uprightly.

We must truly turn back from evil. With the heart that says, I have lived this way until now, but I do not want to live this way; I want to live uprightly—with that heart we must believe in Jesus Christ as our own Savior. And so I hope you will receive the remission of all the sins of spirit and flesh. Everyone, do you believe? That is precisely salvation.

Therefore we must believe in Jesus with a right mind. If one believes in the Lord while cherishing evil in his heart, salvation does not come. That evil must be turned from. One must turn from the fundamental evil and believe in Jesus Christ and receive salvation; leaving the evil as it is and merely believing in Jesus does not make salvation. With the mind that says, I have lived this way until now, but I do not want to live this way; I want to live uprightly—believe in Jesus Christ as your own Savior, and so I hope both your spirit and your flesh will receive the remission of sins.

If we have been born again, should we not at least try to live rightly? Should we not seek to preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world, and unite with one another,

and live for the Lord whether the work goes well or not? Entrusting the outcome to God, we must live with such a mind. To the person whose fundamental mind is not right, however much he believes in Jesus, salvation does not come.

If it were said that even the evil, without throwing away their evil, all receive salvation by only believing in Jesus, how could such a place be the church of God? That would be a den of thieves and a den of the devil. That is why the churches of the world today are pointed at with scorn. Even if such a person sits before us, we must preach this sermon. Only, such a one, even hearing this word, far from turning back, merely summarizes the saying that one must have a right mind and uses it instead to control others, while he himself goes on exploiting. But even though such people do evil on this earth, He said, vengeance is God's, so leave it to God. God will surely judge them. Throwing them into the unquenchable fire—that indeed is the true judgment.

The one who delivers the word must unfold it simply, at the level of the hearers. If he uses difficult letters and the hearer stumbles over them, the whole time spent listening to the sermon comes to nothing. Therefore it must be delivered as simply as possible, so that anyone can understand.

I am a truly lacking person, but God had pity on me and met me. In the old days people said my faith was good, but with sin in my heart, what good faith could I have? Even while believing in Jesus I had sin in my heart. But I spoke honestly before God: I am a sinner; I have such and such sins; and I said, I want to live uprightly; I want to minister and pastor without sin. At that time God met me and said, I will make you a person without sin, so live uprightly—and He made me hold on to that word and follow. That is how I have lived to this day.

The Lord has always come to me with the word. When He

saved me, He did it with the word, and when He admonished me, He did it with the word. Every person has human hot temper, but if you harm a person who has only one life, how could you preach the gospel afterward? Since I was born again, I have never once grabbed someone by the collar and fought. I could not do it, nor did I want to. I am lacking, but I have sought to live making it plain before God: right is right and wrong is wrong. If there is someone whose faith is more upright than mine—then you lead me; that is in fact the more right way.

What I want to say is this: all our family and the churches across the country, all people, men and women, must live with the thought of having a right mind before God and seeking to live a right life. Believing or not, born again or not, the basic thing is living with a right mind. Everyone, does this word become amen in you?

God had pity even on Gentiles who, with a right mind, believe in God alone and seek to live uprightly, and He took on all their sins once and for all through the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, died hanging on the Cross, rose from the dead, and saved them. So He spoke, and so He fulfilled. Therefore we must believe in Jesus with a right mind.

What pleases God in those who have received salvation by faith is preaching this gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world. All we have to do is preach it. To believe or not is up to them. So I make books and preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world. We will deliver it, and believing or not is their part. If you do not want to go to hell, then believe—that is the message. Preaching the gospel to the whole world like this, I cannot tell you how thankful and happy I am.

As we live, there are times when the heart grows heavy and anxieties multiply over this matter and that. There are nights

when we cannot sleep. But at such times God brings that word to mind. Though my sins be as scarlet, the Lord has made them white as snow. Though my sins be as many as the fog, He has removed them all. When I think on that word, peace comes into my heart and joy comes. However many vexing things there are—did not the Lord save me? Do I not believe in that Lord and, lacking as I am, strive to live uprightly? Right there I receive great comfort.

When I think of how our co-workers and the men and women servants of God strive to live uprightly and to uphold the Lord's will, that also is a great comfort. As we live, we meet all kinds of people. Still, are we not laboring like this, lacking as we are, out of the desire to follow the Lord? Then it is enough. And so the heart grows quiet and calm again.

What is there about me that is superior in the flesh? I am lacking and you are lacking. But to believe before God with the heart, with the mind, by faith, and receive salvation, and to live with a right heart and a right mind holding on to this word as the Lord speaks—that is what is right. We must believe this way to receive salvation. God does not give salvation to the person whose heart is not right.

However lacking we are and however little there is to choose between us, God is Spirit, so we must believe spiritually. There is no use in comparing who is better or worse in the flesh. To come forward saying, I am lacking, but I believe You, God; I too am a weak person, but I want to live uprightly; let me live uprightly—that is precisely faith. The Lord said, “*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matthew 6:33). When we say, I can do nothing, but I believe God; let me live uprightly—God leads us so that we can live well without stealing.

Therefore you and I must believe in Jesus with a right mind.

Believing or not, born again or not, the basic thing is to have a right mind before God and to seek to live a right life. Though lacking, from now on, if I eat, the saints and the workers all eat together, and if we go hungry, we all go hungry together—that is all. What more is there? God has given us all our food and blessed us this much, so now we only want to preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world and live uprightly.

When we come forward saying, I am lacking, but I believe You, God; I want to live uprightly; let me live uprightly—God leads you and me and gives us faith. Then God blesses us and keeps us. I do not know how much of life remains, but I only want to live uprightly before God and then go. I hope you also will live with such a mind and such a heart. Then I believe that God, however lacking we are, will keep us and lead us and bless us so that we can preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit. And I want God to give you faith and to bless you. God, let us live with a right mind and right faith. And let us preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world. Let us all pray together and close. ☒

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Admit that you are a sinner; the Lord has saved sinners

< Luke 3:1-17 >

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’ So the people asked him, saying, ‘What shall we do then?’ He answered and said to them, ‘He who has two tunics, let him

give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.’ Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than what is appointed for you.’ Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, ‘And what shall we do?’ So he said to them, ‘Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.’ Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, ‘I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.’”

The Bible is historical fact

Today I want to share the word of Luke 3:1–17 with you. This word of God, that is, the history of Jesus Christ, does not begin from absurd tales or invented illustrations like the religions of the world. It begins from actual reality, from a factual place. As evidence of this, Luke, the writer of the Gospel of Luke and a disciple of Jesus, recorded verses 1 and 2 like this.

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness” (Luke 3:1–2) John the Baptist appears at this very time.

At this time the nation of Judea had become a subject and dependent state of Rome. Caesar had reigned fifteen years, Pontius Pilate had been sent as governor of Judea and was ruling, Herod had been set up as tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip as tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis. To put it simply, it was like the time when Japan ruled our country as a colony, setting up a governor-general and placing provincial governors over each province to rule the whole land. Just so, at that very time when Rome was ruling Judea, the word of God came to Zacharias, and John the Baptist appeared.

We must not regard the coming of Jesus Christ and all He did on this earth as a tale passed from mouth to mouth. It stands on historical ground. Within the history of mankind, at the very time when one man was king and another was tetrarch, John and Jesus Christ came exactly and worked. Therefore the word of God is not a story made up to glorify a family line, like the myth of Dangun or the tale of Bak Hyeokgeose. People invent stories of being born from an egg to make their ancestors mysterious, but the Bible is not such a myth; it is a record of fact.

Over whether Jesus Christ was a real person, one man considered all this to be nothing more than a groundless story of the nation of Judea. So, declaring he would rescue the people of the whole world from that fiction, he spent money and excavated and investigated ancient remains together with archaeologists. But when the historical evidence the Bible speaks of came out in such abundance, he knelt down instead and confessed: truly You are alive, and You are our Savior. Bending the knees of his body and the knees of his heart together, he believed in Jesus Christ, and he wrote his confession of faith as a novel, which was also made into a film. That story carries the historical fact of the saints of the early Church who, persecuted by the Roman emperor Nero, were torn by lions in the arena and yet praised

even as they died. The man who sneered that the Bible was preposterous came, through his own investigation, to believe like this.

In this way the Bible records Jesus Christ's coming and the things that took place within the history of this earth, so it is historical fact. And it testifies that Jesus Christ is the Savior of mankind. As we see in verse 2, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. Zacharias was a descendant of Aaron, of the family of the high priesthood, and the word of God came to his son John. At this time John was about thirty years old.

John the Baptist, who preached the baptism of repentance

Introducing John the Baptist, Luke cites the word of Isaiah in the Old Testament. This is the word of verses 3 to 6. Among them, Luke 3:4–6 reads: *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”* John came into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. He cried out: repent, repent, brood of vipers!

Repentance is turning back while going down a wrong way. It means: you have now left God and are serving idols and going away from God down the road of destruction, so turn back. If you shorten and shorten the word repent, it is in the end the word turn back—turn back and return to the way of God. When Isaiah said that the valleys would be filled and the mountains brought

low and the crooked made straight, it meant that through the Lord's coming, people would repent and turn back and receive the washing of sins. Through that repentance all mankind become equal before God, and whoever believes receives salvation and becomes the people of God. Turn back, turn back and return to God—that was the word.

To give baptism is a token of washing sins. Wash your sins, repent—the token of that was baptism. The baptism John gave people was a sign that they turned back from the wrong way, received the washing of sins, and now truly returned to God. Then what is the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist? It was the baptism that passed the sins of all mankind on to Jesus. That is, the baptism people receive is the sign of repentance, and the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist was the baptism by which He Himself took on the sins of all mankind. Do you see this? That is exactly it.

The people of this world, born as descendants of Adam, have lived divided into countless classes. In India there is a caste system dividing ranks, and in our country too there was the division of nobleman and commoner and the absurd logic that man is heaven and woman is earth. The high were served, and the low were despised. But through the Lord's coming to this earth, when people repent and turn back and believe in the Savior, all become the same before God. Truly the same human beings before God—together they receive the remission of sins and become the people of God and become equal. That is exactly what this word says.

That all flesh shall see the salvation of God means that all people alike believe and alike receive salvation. Before Jesus Christ came, there were masters and slaves, lords and servants in the world, and many ups and downs. But wherever the gospel of the water and the Spirit has entered, these yokes have

collapsed. The freeing of the black slaves in America, and in our country the collapse of the old Confucian idea that woman is earth and man is heaven, are its fruits. Before Jesus Christ came, such things were never leveled, but through the Lord's coming all these things are leveled. Thus, through the Lord's coming, all flesh has come to see the salvation of God.

Brood of vipers, repent

This appears in the word of Luke 3:7–9. *“Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father. For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”* Crying out for repentance, John called the multitude, Brood of vipers!

Would you like it if someone cried out toward you, Brood of vipers, repent? Yet this is the most fundamental word. Instead of all sorts of other words, John the Baptist pierced the root with this one phrase. For within the person who has not been born again, an evil spirit rules, and his behavior is like a viper's. The outside is a man, but the inside is fearful. Therefore we must always be careful. Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, he says. The ax is already laid to the root of the trees, so do not say only with the mouth that you return to God; throw away the idols, throw away oppressing others and stealing, turn back from what is wrong, and return to God. That is the token of having truly returned.

The Lord does not only speak; He makes us throw away what is wrong in our hearts and makes us turn. Before I was born again, I had a temper that would finish a fight in one stroke once it started, and when a neighbor did well, even while saying congratulations outwardly, a cursing heart rose up inside. In those days everyone was like an enemy to everyone. But after I was born again, even when someone opposed me and such a heart entered for a moment, it was not actually carried out in my heart. Even though the temper of the flesh remains like that, the Lord has kept our hearts and changed them so that what is wrong is not carried out.

The life of the one who returns to God

Then what must we do? It is Luke 3:10–14. *“So the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answered and said to them, He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise. Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, Teacher, what shall we do? And he said to them, Collect no more than what is appointed for you. Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, And what shall we do? So he said to them, Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.”*

The one who returns to God must throw away what is bad. He who has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and he who has food is to do likewise. To the tax collectors who gather taxes he says not to collect more than what is appointed and pocket it, and to the soldiers he says not to oppress people at will or accuse falsely, and to be content with their wages. The soldiers would beat the powerless common people at will and take from them, and raise an uproar that their pay was small—

stop such doings, he says. Throwing away what is bad like this and sharing what one has with his neighbor is precisely the life of the one who has returned. If someone claims truly to believe in God while doing evil, oppressing others, and harming others, we could not call him one who believes in God.

Long ago, Saint Francis is said to have taken off what he had and given it all away. The one who has truly returned to God is such a person, who shares clothing and food with his neighbor. I too, with that heart, have sought to share much of what I had. Of course, even among those who believe in God there can be those who do wrong, but the one who truly believes does not live doing evil.

In the history of Israel there was never so bold a prophet. Isaiah and Jeremiah and Daniel and Moses also proclaimed the word of the LORD, but John the Baptist, the moment he appeared, cried out, piercing the root: Brood of vipers, repent! To say, be content with your wages; to say to the tax gatherer, do not take what belongs to those who have nothing; to say to the soldier, do not beat people at will and take from them—this was a truly remarkable thing.

So when John the Baptist cried out like this, the people were astonished and expectant: has the Messiah spoken of in the Old Testament truly come? Verse 15 says, *“Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not”*. There had never been such a prophet until then, so people murmured in their hearts, is this not the very Christ?

The One who baptizes with the gospel of the water and the Spirit

John the Baptist hears that talk and answers. It is Luke 3:16. *“John answered, saying to all, I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”* John gave baptism with water to make people repent and return to God. But he confesses that the One coming after him is One so great in power that he is not worthy even to loose His sandal strap.

He said that He would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. To baptize with the Holy Spirit means that to the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receives the remission of sins, the Lord gives the Holy Spirit as a gift. When we believe in our hearts that the Lord has removed all our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the sin of the heart is really gone, and upon that heart from which sin is gone the Lord gives the Holy Spirit and sets His seal. The Lord gives the Holy Spirit as a gift like that. So even without any special sensation, the Holy Spirit is with him and he becomes a man of God. That is why he is called a Christian. It means a man, yet a man of God—one who has become Christ’s own.

Fire means judgment. The Lord came to this earth and loved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, took on all our sins, died on the Cross, rose from the dead, and saved us. Yet to the person who does not believe and does not receive this love of God, He gives baptism with fire. That is, for the person who does not believe in judgment and does not receive the love of God, there is the judgment of fire. The one who receives the Holy Spirit is a happy person who has received the remission of sins, and the one who receives fire is a person under curse. That is, to

the believing He gives the Holy Spirit, makes them children of God, and gives every blessing; and the unbelieving He judges with the fire of hell.

Verse 17. *“His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire”*

When you winnow grain with a fan, the wheat gathers inside and the chaff flies out. Even so, He gathers the wheat into the barn and burns the chaff with unquenchable fire—this means the Lord is the Judge. The very Lord who saved you and me is the Judge who judges all peoples.

The Lord is our Creator who made us, our Savior who delivered us from sin, and our Shepherd who loves us forever. But toward those who call that God a liar and call Him evil and refuse His love, He stands as the Judge. He is the One mightier than John—who is He? He is the One who gives salvation to those who believe and makes them all equal, and brings down judgment on those who do not believe. Therefore Jesus Christ is not someone whom one may believe in or not, as one pleases.

Who is Jesus Christ? He is the Creator who made the universe. He is the One who made everything out of nothing. He is the Creator. He is the Creator who made all things out of nothing. That Creator made man also, and man, being weak, sinned and came to leave God. Then the Lord, to save us from sin, put on a human body Himself and came to this earth to find us. And Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on our sins, died on the Cross shedding His blood, and rose from the dead, and saved us. This is precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit that gave us life. He completed this gospel entirely and said: proclaim this to the whole world.

The one who admits he is a sinner receives salvation

Therefore the one who believes must repent and turn back. The one who was doing evil must throw it away and turn back. The person who, while believing in Jesus, still swindles in the world and lies daily and seeks only to receive the remission of sins—even when he comes to God, it is hard for him to receive the remission of sins. It is because, fundamentally, he does not admit that he is evil and does not admit his sins, and without admitting how much he deserves God's judgment, he seeks only the remission of sins. If one believes in Jesus and yet does not turn back in his heart, that is not truly returning. And so, in the end, he fails to receive the remission of sins.

Though the Lord has removed all our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, if a person does not admit his sin and does not admit the fact that because of his sin he is bound for hell, then even though he knows Jesus Christ, who came by the water and the Spirit, he cannot believe in Him in his heart. Though he says he believes, that truth does not enter his heart. If one has sin and has done bad things, he must admit: by this sin alone I am one bound for hell. Because God has given man a conscience, even without knowing the Law and without knowing the word of God, that conscience says: you are bound for hell. If one does not admit even that, then though he has sin, it becomes as if he had none.

If he considers himself without sin, how can he receive the remission of sins? So although countless people believe in Jesus and hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they divide into those who receive the remission of sins and those who do not. Hearing the same gospel of the water and the Spirit, one believes and receives the remission of sins, and another, while claiming

to believe, still cannot believe. The difference is only the difference between a prepared heart and an unprepared heart. John the Baptist crying out, Brood of vipers!—means that we must know that we ourselves are that brood of vipers.

Just as our first ancestors Adam and Eve sinned against God, and by one man many became sinners, we are people born with twelve kinds of evils, committing those enormous sins all our lives. We must admit that. We must know that we are people who sin all life long. We must know and admit that, because of the sin inherited from our ancestors and the sins we ourselves commit, we can only go to hell. Setting everyone else aside, each must admit that he himself is the one bound for hell. Is it so, or is it not? The person whose heart is right before God admits himself so.

Such a person meets the Lord and believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receives the remission of sins, and receives the Holy Spirit. I hope all of you will believe so. But the person who says, I am not going to hell—what sin do I have?—even if you brought Jesus and set Him before him again, he goes to hell. Since he did not admit his sin, it is as though he has no sin, and how can a person without sin receive the remission of sins? How can you rescue from the water a person who has not fallen into the water? What use is a savior to such a person? Therefore we must admit before God that we are bound for hell. Is it so, or is it not?

One evangelist, it is said, prayed even when riding a bus or a taxi that he would arrive safely without dying. That is a right heart. It is the heart that knows that if he dies now, he goes to hell. I too knew that if I died, I would go to hell. I had not done only great evils, but comparing man with man, this one and that one were no different, and when I thought about myself, I clearly admitted before God that if I died I was bound for hell.

So I first went to a chapel to have at least my sins removed. Not even knowing how to pray, I prayed: Jesus, they say You died on the Cross in the place of sinners; they say if I believe in You, You remove sins; before I die I believe in You, so remove all the sins of my heart. After setting foot in the chapel like that, as I gradually came to know the word and to know the Law, I became all the more a true sinner. And ten years after I began to believe in Jesus, I finally realized and believed the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins.

The Lord is the One who gives the Holy Spirit to the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and brings down judgment on the person who does not believe. Therefore this word of Luke chapter 3 teaches us who the Lord is, who John the Baptist is, and how we must believe in the Lord. How must we believe in the Lord? We must truly throw away evil. Even if we cannot throw away every action and habit, we must have the repentant heart that knows what is wrong to be wrong and turns back. If one has a temper that always beats people, or a bad habit that comes out whenever he drinks, or a heart that mistreats others, he must turn back from it. In our believing in the Lord, there must be this repentant heart that turns back from what is wrong.

And we must believe in Jesus as our Savior—the One who as our Redeemer took on the sins of mankind, our sins, by the baptism He received from John, and died on the Cross. We must believe in that Jesus, who took on our sins by the baptism received from John and died on the Cross for us. Then we receive the Holy Spirit, then we become children of God, and we obtain eternal life. We come to obtain eternal life and enjoy eternal blessedness.

Therefore, when we preach the gospel of the water and the

Spirit, we must first teach calmly about sin so that people know their sin. The wages of sin is death. Wages are like a day's pay for a day's work or a month's salary for a month's work; the wages the person who has sin receives is death—spiritual death and the judgment of fire. Man realizes his need of salvation when he admits his own sin. Only when a man knows his own sin does he seek the Savior who delivers him from that sin, and receive that grace of salvation into his heart. God has said, *“the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:23).

He also said, *“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). We must believe and know this love of God. We could only go to hell, but the Lord pitied that so greatly that He loved us. If we were people who would not go to hell even if left alone, there would be no reason for Him to love us so; but because we were pitiful beings under eternal curse, He could not but love us, and He loved us and saved us from that destruction and sin. Because we could only go to hell, the Lord pitied us all the more and loved us.

For this the Lord came to this earth, took over our sins onto His own body by the baptism He received from John, received the judgment on the Cross in our place, came to death, and entered the tomb. He bore all the suffering we should have suffered and paid the price in full, and so saved you and me. The Lord's coming to this earth, John the Baptist's crying out, and the Lord's saving us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit—all this was for each one of us, for you and me. Not for someone else: among all mankind, it was precisely for you and me, each one.

So let us confess together. For me the Lord came; for me the Lord came. To save me from sin and destruction the Lord came

to this earth; to save me from sin and destruction the Lord came to this earth. We were bound for hell, but the Lord saved us. And yet the Lord saved us. I was bound for hell, but the Lord saved me with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. I believe that the Lord loved me. Lord, truly thank You.

You may say, we are not elementary school children—why repeat like this? But spiritually we may be first graders, or kindergartners, or toddlers just learning to walk. Such as we are, the Lord has saved us like this, and He is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire. Our Lord, who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire, is such a One. Before this Lord I give thanks from the heart. ☒

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

John the Baptist testified of Jesus Christ, who is mightier than he

< Luke 3:15-20 >

“Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, ‘I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.’ And with many other exhortations he preached to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.”

The people were looking for and waiting for the Christ whom God would send. At that time John the Baptist appeared, exposed the sins of those who relied on the lineage of being descendants of Abraham, and cried out to the tax collectors and the soldiers also to turn back from the evils they had been doing. Those who were waiting for the Christ discussed in their hearts whether John was the Christ, and before their expectation John clearly

distinguished himself from Jesus, who would come after him, and testified of Him.

If we follow John's answer, the center of this passage becomes clear. John, who gave the people the baptism of repentance, was a servant of God, and Jesus, to whom he pointed, was the Savior who actually removes sin and gives the Holy Spirit. That John proclaimed that the One who would separate the wheat and the chaff is also Jesus is because the authority of salvation and of judgment both belong to Him. Therefore we must not stop our gaze at John the witness, but must hear how the mightier Jesus Christ, of whom he testified, has saved us.

John turned the people's expectation to Jesus, who is mightier

The work God entrusted to John was to prepare the people to realize their sins and receive the Savior, who was soon to come. John gave the people the baptism of repentance and cried out to them to turn back from their wrong ways, and he was also given the office of giving baptism to Jesus and passing the sin of the world on to Him. Exposing the sins of the people and giving baptism to Jesus were joined into one mission of preparing for and testifying of the Christ, who would save sinners.

So when people discussed whether John was the Christ, he answered, *"I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming"* (Luke 3:16). The baptism of water John gave the people was a sign expressing that they admitted their sins and would turn back to God. The One who would take the sin of the world upon His own body to redeem it, and give the Holy Spirit to those who receive the remission of sins, was Jesus, who was coming after John. John said that he was not worthy even to

loose His sandal strap, making plain the difference between a servant of God, who is a creature, and the Savior, who is God in His origin.

From this confession we can know where a true servant of God leads people. The one who delivers the word explains the gospel of the water and the Spirit and leads us to receive the remission of sins, but he is not a savior who redeems our sins like Jesus Christ. Church office and long career also cannot remove sin. A true servant of God does not hold people to himself but proclaims who Jesus is and how He saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. You also must not put the ground of your faith in the character or reputation of the one who delivers the word, but believe in Jesus Christ, to whom he points, and the gospel He has accomplished.

Jesus, who is mightier, holds the authority of salvation and of judgment

John proclaimed that Jesus, who was coming after him, would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. He went on to explain that the Lord would take His winnowing fan in His hand and thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, gathering the wheat into the barn and burning the chaff with unquenchable fire. Before Jesus there are two outcomes: salvation and judgment. The one who believes the salvation the Lord has accomplished receives the remission of sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and the one who refuses that salvation to the end receives the judgment for his own sins. The reason John testified that Jesus is mightier than he is that the authority to save sinners and to judge sin belongs wholly to Him.

Luke recorded that John, *“with many other exhortations he*

preached to the people” (Luke 3:18). In the good news John preached, the rebuke that exposes sin and the warning of the judgment to come were included together. If it is not made clear what sin is and what judgment that sin brings, a person cannot know why he needs the Savior. John exposed the people’s reliance on their lineage and pointed out the concrete evils of the tax collectors and the soldiers, and so prepared the way for them to admit their sins and receive the Christ, who would actually remove those sins.

When the church today preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit, it must speak clearly of sin and judgment for the same reason. The person who admits before the word of God that he is under sin and judgment comes to understand why Jesus put on a human body and came, and why He had to receive baptism from John the Baptist to take on those sins and be judged on the Cross. The church must make sin and judgment plain and then proclaim Jesus Christ, who took on all our sins and finished the judgment. John’s rebuke also prepared the way for the people to realize their state and come to the mightier Savior.

How this good news deals with man’s sin appears still more concretely in the affair of Herod. John rebuked the evil of the king by the same standard of God he had preached to the common people. Before that word, Herod had either to admit his sin and turn back, or to keep his present evil.

Herod heard the word and yet kept his evil

John rebuked concretely the fact that Herod had taken Herodias, his brother’s wife, and all the evils he had done. Because the word of God sets the people and the king before the same standard, Herod also had to admit his sin and turn back

from that conduct. But he did not correct himself in the light of the word; he shut up in prison the John who had pointed out his fault. Luke records this as yet another evil that Herod added on top of his former evils.

Herod acted as though, if he silenced John's mouth, the rebuke that made him uncomfortable would also end. But even after he shut John in prison, his sin, laid bare before God, remained as it was, and God's judgment on that sin did not change either. Herod did not admit the sin already exposed, but by imprisoning the servant who delivered the word, he added disobedience on top of that sin. A man's position and power can afflict the servant who delivers the word, but they cannot change the judgment of God.

Therefore, the person who still has sin in his heart must, when the word exposes his sin, accept that verdict and come to Jesus Christ, to whom John pointed. The Lord is the Savior who took our sins upon His own body and actually removed them. We who have already believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and become children of God also, because the word is right, admit and correct our wrong thoughts and conduct, and go on living according to the Lord's will.

Herod shut John in prison, but the word John preached is recorded in the Bible and points us to Jesus Christ even today. After recording how Herod refused John's rebuke, Luke turns his eyes to the scene where Jesus receives baptism. John, who exposed the sins of the people and prepared the way to receive the Savior, gave baptism to Jesus and passed the sin of the world on to Him. Jesus, of whom John testified that He is mightier than he, took on that sin and was judged, and completed our salvation.

Jesus, of whom John testified, saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Jesus, of whom John testified that He is mightier than he, is God in His origin, who put on a human body and came to deliver us from sin. The sinless Lord, by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, took onto His own body the sin handed down from Adam and all the sins of the world that we commit throughout our lives. The baptism John gave the people expressed their intent to turn back from their wrong ways, and the baptism he gave Jesus caused all the sins of the world, including the sins the people had admitted, actually to pass over onto the body of the Savior. Through this work John carried out an office beyond rebuking sin—the office of passing the sin of the world on to the Savior, who would remove it.

Jesus bore that sin He had taken over by the baptism and carried it all the way to the Cross. On the Cross He received the judgment of God in the place of us sinners and, shedding His blood, actually died, and so paid in full the price of the sin of the world. And on the third day after He was buried, He rose from the dead and overcame the power of sin and death. The Lord took on sin by the baptism, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and then rose again, and so fulfilled all the righteousness of God and the eternal redemption, and completed our salvation.

The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of all sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God. This is the way in which Jesus, the mightier One of whom John spoke, gives the Holy Spirit to those who believe. Since the Lord has already taken on the sin of the world and been judged, for the one who believes there remains no judgment of sin to receive. The person

who refuses this salvation to the end receives, with his sins upon him, the judgment of fire that John warned of. If sin still remains in your heart, confirm by the word where that sin was moved when Jesus received baptism from John and how it was judged on the Cross, and believe in your heart the salvation God has completed.

A true servant of God testifies of Jesus Christ

When the people discussed whether John was the Christ, John did not hold their expectation to himself but turned it to Jesus. He rebuked the sins of the people and prepared the way to receive the Savior; he gave baptism to Jesus and passed the sin of the world on to Him; and he proclaimed that the authority of salvation and of judgment belongs wholly to Jesus. Though he was shut in prison for rebuking Herod's evil, John's testimony is recorded in the Bible and points us to Jesus Christ even today.

A true servant of God also preaches the gospel from the same place. He delivers the word so that the hearer realizes his own sin and judgment, and shows from the Scriptures how that sin passed on to Jesus and was judged on the Cross. The one who delivers the religious doctrines of the world leaves the baptism Jesus received from John out of salvation, or teaches that one must wash his sins daily with prayers of repentance offered over and over, and so obscures the eternal redemption. A true servant of God proclaims that Jesus has completely removed our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and leads the hearer to believe this salvation.

You and I also were originally under sin and judgment, but we were saved by believing the gospel of Jesus Christ, of whom John testified. Now we too must direct the eyes of our families

and neighbors not to human ability or religious career, but to Jesus, who actually removed our sins. Just as John pointed to the One mightier than he, we also clearly proclaim Jesus Christ, who completed salvation with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, and serve this gospel. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took over all the sins of the world

< Luke 3:21-38 >

“When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, ‘You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.’ Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Janna, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Semei, the son of Joseph, the son of Judah, the son of Joannas, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmodam, the son of Er, the son of Jose, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim, the son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of

Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Cainan, the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.”

When all the people were baptized, Jesus, who has no sin, also came forward to John the Baptist and received baptism. In this one scene is contained a question we must surely answer. The people received baptism with the intent of admitting their sins and turning back—but Jesus, who has no sin at all, entered the same water of the Jordan to accomplish what?

Luke recorded that when Jesus was baptized and prayed, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and the voice of God the Father was heard. He then states that Jesus was about thirty years old when He began His ministry, and records His genealogy going back from Joseph all the way to Adam and to God. The baptism, the testimony from heaven, and the genealogy form one flow. The voice from heaven makes plain that Jesus, who was baptized, is the beloved Son of God, and the genealogy shows that this Son of God came into the history of mankind in the body of a true man. Jesus, who is God in His origin, received baptism from John the Baptist in order to take on our sins in this body and receive the judgment of the Cross.

The sinless Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist in order to take on the sin of the world

John the Baptist preached the baptism of repentance around the Jordan and led the people to admit their sins and turn back to God. Just as the tax collectors and the soldiers who heard John's rebuke asked what they must do, people received the baptism of water expressing their intent to turn back from the wrong way they had walked until then. Since the baptism the people received was a sign expressing the heart that would return to God, the act of going into that water and coming out did not move the sins of the heart over to the Savior or remove them.

But when the people were being baptized, Jesus also came forward to John. Jesus is God in His origin and came in a human body without any sin, so He had no sin to repent of like the people. The Lord received baptism from John in order to take over onto His own body the sins the people had admitted and the sins committed by all the descendants of Adam. The baptism John gave the people expressed their intent to turn from sin, and the baptism he gave Jesus accomplished the work of actually passing all the sins of the world on to the body of the Savior.

The Gospel of Matthew makes still more direct the intent with which Jesus received this baptism. When John hesitated to baptize Him, Jesus said, "*Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness*" (Matthew 3:15). As John the Baptist, representing mankind, passed on the sin of the world, and Jesus received that sin, God fulfilled all the righteousness of saving sinners. To pass the sins on to the Son and judge those sins and so actually save sinners—this was the right will of God.

In the sin of the world that passed to Jesus are included the sin handed down from Adam and the sins every person commits

in heart and deed throughout his life. Not only the past sins and present sins of you and me, but also the sins we will commit in the flesh in the future had already passed to the Lord at that time. Since the wages of sin is death, the Lord had to go toward the Cross carrying the sins He had taken on by the baptism. The baptism of the Jordan is the event in which sin passed to the Savior, and the Cross is the event in which that sin was judged. Only when these two events are joined does it become clear how God removed our sins.

The baptism of water that a believer receives in the church today expresses the heart that believes the salvation Jesus accomplished. The actual passing of the sin of the world to the Savior was accomplished once and for all when Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist. The word that God passed our sins to His Son at the Jordan is the ground of our salvation.

The opened heaven and the Holy Spirit and the Father's voice testified of this baptism

When Jesus, in order to take on the sin of the world, received baptism and prayed, heaven was opened. The Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Jesus, and the Father said, "*You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased*" (Luke 3:22). Through this scene God Himself made plain that Jesus, who had received baptism from John, is His own beloved Son.

The One who took on the sin of the world according to the Father's will was Jesus Christ, God in His origin and the sinless Son of God. John, representing mankind, bore the office of giving the baptism and passing on the sins, and Jesus received those sins upon His own body and bore them all the way to the Cross. By the Father speaking and the Holy Spirit descending

upon Him, they testified that the baptism of Jesus is the way of salvation God established and delighted in.

Therefore the sure ground of our salvation is this event, which God actually accomplished and recorded and testified to in the Scriptures. God showed at the Jordan where He moved the sins, and made plain by the voice from heaven that the One who took on those sins is His own beloved Son. The baptism of Jesus is the beginning of the salvation in which God passed the sin of the world on to His Son.

After the voice from heaven made plain who Jesus is, Luke records His genealogy. Heaven testifies that Jesus is the Son of God, and the genealogy that follows shows that this Son of God put on the body of a man and entered into the actual history of mankind. When we see these two testimonies together, we can know that Jesus, who took on our sins, is true God and at the same time true man, who would be judged in our place.

The genealogy shows that the Son of God came among us as a true man

Following the voice heard from heaven, Luke recorded that Jesus was about thirty years old when He began His ministry, and that, as people supposed, He was the son of Joseph. People knew Jesus, who had grown up in Nazareth, as the son of Joseph, and God the Father Himself declared that the One coming up out of the water was His own beloved Son. These two records show from heaven and from earth one fact: the Son of God came into actual history clothed in the same human body as ours.

Luke carries the genealogy of Jesus back from Joseph, past David and Abraham and Noah, all the way to Adam. The many names recorded in the genealogy show that Jesus came as a true

man within the history of mankind, passed down through the generations. At the end it records past Adam even to God, making plain where the beginning of every person lies.

The descendants of Adam are born with the disposition of sin and live committing sin in heart and deed all their lives. Therefore the flow of the genealogy reaching to Adam shows the fact that every person under sin and death needs the Savior. Jesus, with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, took over the sin of the world committed by all the descendants of Adam, and within that sin are contained the sins of people of every age and every nation.

The purpose for which Jesus, God in His origin, came in the body of a true man also becomes clear here. The Lord could receive baptism from John in a sinless body and take on the sins of mankind, and with that body be judged on the Cross in our place. The voice from heaven testifies that the One who took on our sins is the Son of God, and the genealogy shows that this Son of God came in the body of a man to stand in our place. The baptism of Jesus, the testimony from heaven, and the genealogy make plain in one flow who He is and whose sins He came to bear.

The sins passed on at the Jordan were all judged on the Cross

The saving work of Jesus did not end at the Jordan. The Lord bore the sin of the world He had taken over by the baptism received from John and carried it all the way to the Cross. There He received the curse and judgment of God in the place of us sinners and, shedding His blood, actually died. The death of the Cross was the judgment upon those very sins that had passed to the Lord by the baptism, and because Jesus paid the whole price of sin by His death,

the sin of the world was dealt with, none remaining.

Jesus rose from the dead on the third day after He was buried. The Lord overcame the power of sin and death and rose again, and so opened the way of eternal life for us. Jesus took over the sins at the Jordan, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross and died, and then rose again, and so completed all the righteousness of God and the eternal redemption. This salvation, in which the water of the baptism and the blood of the Cross and the testimony of the Spirit are joined into one, is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The person who believes this gospel in his heart receives the remission of all sins. God pronounces the believer to be without sin, gives him the Holy Spirit as a gift, and makes him His own child. The way for us, born under sin and death as descendants of Adam, to become children of God lies in believing this salvation completed by the only begotten Son, Jesus. Since the Son of God took on all our sins and finished their judgment, the person who believes this gospel is a righteous person without sin before God.

If sin still remains in your heart, confirm by the recorded word where that sin went. Within the sin of the world that Jesus took on with the baptism received from John the Baptist, your lifetime of sins was also included, and by the death of the Cross the price of those sins was paid in full. Believe in your heart the word that the Lord rose from the dead and completed this salvation, and accept the verdict God has pronounced: no sin.

We believe the salvation God accomplished and testified to

Luke recorded in one flow the baptism Jesus received, the

Father's voice heard from heaven, the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the genealogy reaching to Adam. The baptism shows that the sin of the world passed to Jesus, and the voice from heaven and the Holy Spirit testify that the One who took on that sin is the beloved Son of God. The genealogy that follows makes plain that the Son of God came in the body of a true man to save all the descendants of Adam. All these records proclaim with one voice who Jesus is and why He received baptism.

Our salvation stands on this word, which God accomplished and Himself testified to. The fact that Jesus received baptism from John and took on the sin of the world, was judged for that sin on the Cross and died, and then rose again, has already been completed within history. The person saved by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit believes, according to this unchanging word, that he is a righteous person without sin before God and a child of God.

We who have become children of God believe and depend on the Father and pray, and learn the word in the church. When our fault is exposed by the word, we admit that the word of God is right and correct our thoughts and conduct, and go on living according to the Lord's will. And we deliver, step by step, the gospel of the water and the Spirit the Lord accomplished, so that our families and neighbors also receive the same salvation.

The reason the sinless Jesus also received baptism when all the people were baptized is clear. The Lord received baptism from John the Baptist in order to take all our sins upon His own body, and the Father and the Holy Spirit testified that He is the Son of God and the Savior. Jesus, who came as a true man to save you and me, completed the eternal redemption with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. Believe in your heart this will that God has made plain. ☒

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The son of God

< Luke 3:23-38 >

“Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Janna, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Semei, the son of Joseph, the son of Judah, the son of Joannas, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmodam, the son of Er, the son of Jose, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim, the son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Cainan, the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.”

The passage we read today, Luke 3:23–38, is the word about the genealogy of Jesus. Luke emphasizes that Jesus is One who came to this earth as the Son of Man. So he watched closely how Jesus showed mercy to people, and recorded His humanity in detail. The Gospel of Matthew recorded the line of Jesus Christ, descending from Abraham and David, from the viewpoint of faith. But the Gospel of Luke follows the genealogy of the flesh as it is, and at the end goes up all the way to Adam and to God.

The core of what I will deliver today is the fact that Jesus is true man and, in His origin, God. Jesus put on a human body and came to this earth. So He is also man. But He is God in His origin. Jesus is our Savior, and at the same time, because He is God, He is the One we ought rightly to fear and revere. This is the word I intend to give today.

Not long ago a certain book was made into a film. That book portrayed Jesus only as a human being just like us. It dressed up as fact the imagination that Jesus left fleshly descendants on this earth through Mary Magdalene and that those descendants exist even now. But this is only the imagination of people without faith. In fact, such claims had already come out several times before, in many countries, as books denying the divinity of Jesus.

Among those who believe in Jesus there are two kinds. One kind believes in Jesus as the Son of God, the Creator who made the heavens and the earth and all things, and the Savior who saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The other kind, while calling Jesus the Son of God, sees Him not as the Creator who made the universe but as merely a man. Even in the churches today, even among pastors and clergy, there are not a few who see Jesus only as a mere man like this.

Now, throughout the whole world, many people regard Jesus as merely a man and think of Christianity as one of the religions of the world. Perhaps about 80 to 90 percent of those who

believe in Jesus believe this way. There are even those who attend church and yet have their fortunes told and hold shamanistic rites, regarding Christianity as one religion among many. But such people do not know who Jesus is. They do not know the meaning of the name of Jesus, why He came to this earth, or what His origin is.

The Creator God, who made all things, became our Savior

It says, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1)*. In the beginning there is God, who made the universe and all things. When He said, Let there be light, there was light; and when He said, Let there be a firmament, the firmament came to be. Who is that God who divided the light from the darkness? That very God put on a human body and came to this earth. Upholding the will of God the Father, He came as a man just like us. And He received baptism from John the Baptist and took on our sins, died hanging on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and saved us. Therefore Jesus is both our Savior and the Master of creation who made us. That is why we call Him the Savior.

The meaning of the name Jesus Christ

The name Jesus means Savior. The name Christ means the One who came to this earth holding the three offices of King, Priest, and Prophet, and fulfilled those offices completely and saved us perfectly. So we call Him Jesus Christ. This One is the Creator who made us. When we fell into sin, He upheld the will

of God the Father and Himself put on a human body and came. He took on our sins upon His own body by the baptism received from John, died hanging on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and became our true Savior. When we know Him rightly and fear and revere Him rightly, we receive blessing both in this world and in the world to come. If we do not know the reality of Jesus Christ, our believing in Jesus is in vain.

Jesus is the Creator who made the universe and all things. The galaxies and the earth, the things visible and the things invisible—who made them? God made them. God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit made them together. The God who came to this earth for us and saved us is the God who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, made the universe. Jesus is the Savior who saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. He is also the Judge who lives forever and will judge the righteous and sinners, and He is our God forever. If one does not know and believe this fact, and does not honor and serve that God, that person believes in Jesus in vain. To believe in Jesus truly and well, one must know that Jesus is God. And one must acknowledge that He removed our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Only then can one believe in Jesus properly.

Yet people, not knowing this truth, portray Jesus as a mere man in order to sell books and profit from films. They say that God did not make the universe and all things, but that all things evolved by themselves. The theory of evolution claims that man too, given long ages, changes into a beast. But there is no such thing as one born a man becoming a beast. One may act like a beast for lack of learning. One may do beastly things, drunk on drugs or alcohol. But acting that way does not make a man a beast. A man is a man, and therefore, as a man, he receives the punishment for his sins.

To believe in Jesus well, we must know who Jesus is. Jesus

is God. He is also our Savior. Jesus saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. He put on a human body and came to this earth, received baptism from John the Baptist, died hanging on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and saved us. That God is alive even now. He has come into your heart and mine as the Holy Spirit and is with us. He is the First and the Last. Everything began from God.

Then why did God allow the devil to come into being? God makes everything personal. He made the angels also personal beings and gave them free will. He does not force them to serve Him. God desires to receive respect and love from His creatures. That is why He did not make us like robots. Though there are strong and weak, high and low, He made His creatures so that they would honor Him because He is worthy of honor, love Him because He is lovely, and follow Him because they want to follow. God truly desired to receive honor and worship.

Hell, prepared for the one who opposed God

But one angel who served close to God coveted the seat of God's authority and challenged Him. In the Book of Isaiah it is recorded that Lucifer, the morning star, eyed the throne of heaven and fell to the earth. It was because he tried to pull down the authority of God and sit in that seat. The creature who opposed God like that became the devil, and became the enemy of God. So God prepared hell for that enemy.

It is the same with man. Among many people there are those who want to know God rightly, honor Him, love Him, and obey Him. Such a person confesses before the power and authority of God: "I am not a being to be compared with You. I am a being that exists to honor and love and praise You. I am not one to

covet Your place.” To the person who fears God like this—who honors Him and also stands in awe of Him—God desires to give blessing. Even when such a person does wrong, God desires to remove all his sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit and give him true salvation.

But there are also people who do not acknowledge God. They do not acknowledge God’s power and authority and highness, His will and love and goodness, but try to become gods themselves. What Buddhism says—that you too can become Buddha, that Buddha is in your mind, that you yourself are god—is like this. The person who does not acknowledge the God who lives and saved us and made us God’s children, God regards the same as the devil and sends to the place prepared for the devil.

The duty of man is to remember his Creator and worship Him and love Him and obey Him. But if a man, being a man, opposes and despises the Creator who made him and the Savior who saved him, what will become of him? Even a beast, if it fails to recognize its master and bites him, is dragged to the slaughterhouse. How much more, if a man opposes the God who made him, is it fitting that he go to hell. On the other hand, for the person who acknowledges and believes the highness and love and kindness of God and seeks His grace and mercy, God has prepared heaven. This is the justice and the authority of God.

God, who confirmed His love by dying for sinners

Romans 5:8 says, *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”*. When we were sinners, descendants of Adam, the Son of God came to this earth. About two thousand years ago, through the baptism received from John, He took on our sins, received the

judgment of those sins in our place, and saved us from sin. By this, God confirmed His love toward us through His own Son.

Romans goes on to say: *“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life”* (Romans 5:9–10) What does it mean here that we have been justified by His blood? It means that the Son of God put on a human body and came to this earth, took on our sins through the baptism received from John, and shed the blood that was the price of our sins.

To save you and me, the price of life had to be paid. It is because we are beings that have life. So God Himself had to put on a human body and come to this earth. He had to come and take on our sins Himself by the baptism received from John, and hang on the Cross and shed His blood. And so we obtained salvation from that wrath. If we have sin, we are enemies of God. But the Son of God, Jesus Christ, came between us and God, took on our sins by the baptism received from John, died on the Cross in our place, and rose again from the dead, and so reconciled us to God.

The grace of salvation, greater than the transgression of Adam

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12) Through one man, Adam, sin came upon all mankind. Just as through one man all mankind came into being, so sin also reached all people. But another One came. He is the One who, though God in His origin, was born as a man,

borrowing the body of Mary. He took on our sins by the baptism received from John, died hanging on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and saved us. By believing in that God, who saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we could become the children of God.

We are all sinners from birth. Adam sinned by eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that sin came upon the heart and was handed down to his descendants. So we must be born twice. We are born once as sinners, and we must be born again by believing the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who saved us. And so we must become the children of God. By the sin of one man all became sinners, but the salvation God has given us was greater than that sin.

It says, *“But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many”* (Romans 5:15). The Lord came to this earth, took on our sins by the baptism received from John, shed His blood on the Cross, received all the judgment of those sins, and saved us. And so, to those who believe, the gift of becoming children of God and people without sin was given overflowing.

The gift of salvation God has given us is not like the sin inherited from Adam. Rather, even though one is born a sinner and commits many sins, to the person who knows his sin and believes, the salvation of God overflows. That grace is greater than the transgression of Adam. *“For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ”* (Romans 5:17) Because our ancestor sinned against God, death reigned, and all people came to death. What man fears most is death. Even a hero who commanded the whole world—when he dies, nothing remains.

However famous a man is, all fear in the face of death.

It is because the wages of sin is death. For the sinner, death waits, and destruction and hell wait. But now, when we obtain salvation by believing in Jesus Christ, we obtain new life. And we come to reign in the kingdom of God. Before, death was king over us, but now we have become the children of God. It says, *“Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life”* (Romans 5:18).

In whom was all this grace accomplished? It was accomplished in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ gave us new life, made us reign, and gave us eternal life and many blessings. Who is the One who gave all this? It is Jesus Christ. Then who is Jesus Christ? He is God. If Jesus were not God, then even if we believed in Jesus, there would be nothing that comes back to us. For only the One who has power can bestow. If we regarded a man with no power as someone great and followed him, what could that man do for us? We would obtain nothing. If Jesus were not actually God, our believing in Jesus would also be like having dreamed a dream.

But Jesus is God. The One who brought into being the trees and every living thing is Jesus. Our Savior Jesus—His name means Savior, and He is our God. God came as our Savior and saved us. In knowing and believing this, we come to worship God. When we believe that He came to this earth and saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, true remission of sins is accomplished for you and me. Eternal life comes, and we receive the spiritual blessings of heaven. To the one who believes, to the one who knows, to the one who knows in his heart that He is God and follows Him, this blessing comes.

On the contrary, to the person who wrote the book denying

the divinity of Jesus, salvation does not come. It is because he does not believe that Jesus is God. To such a person the gospel is a mere theory. It is only a story he finds nice and then forgets after a night's sleep. In that person's heart there is no Savior.

The Master of life, who raises the dead

The apostle Peter confessed Jesus like this. Jesus asked His disciples, who do you say that I am? Then Peter confessed, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matthew 16:16). Jesus said that faith was right, and said that the One who made him know this was not man but God.

Peter went through such a thing once more. The disciples were crossing over in a boat when at night a storm arose and they were about to drown. Then Jesus came walking on the sea. When the disciples were terrified, thinking He was a ghost, Jesus told them not to be afraid. Peter said, Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water, and Jesus said, Come. Peter got down out of the boat and walked on the water. But looking at the waves he grew afraid, and he began to sink. Jesus took his hand and lifted him up.

Jesus walked on the water because He is God. When He said to the storm, Peace, be still, it became calm. When He said to the dead Lazarus, Come forth, he came out alive. He also raised the dead son of the widow. Who can raise the dead? Can a magician do it? Magic is all trickery. Only the Master of life can truly raise the dead. Making people live and die is entirely the work of God. Therefore we must not see Jesus only in His humanity. Jesus is the One who knew no sin. We are weak and commit sin, but the Lord was the One who could govern sin and drive it out. This is precisely what shows that Jesus is God.

Know Jesus as God and live fearing Him

We must know that Jesus is your God and mine, and live fearing and revering Him. In this last age it is all the more so. We must not only believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but also know that Jesus is our God and live revering Him. To honor and love and follow Him, and to live with the faith that gladly submits to Him, is right.

The person who fears God is the most blessed person. For only when one reveres Him does one receive the word of God. If there is no heart that honors and loves God, however much God speaks, that word does not enter the heart. But the person who fears God receives that word, and comes to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit as well.

In the days ahead, the whole world will come into the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We must fear and honor and love and follow God. Seeing great natural disasters come, what must we prepare? We must prepare faith. It is fitting to live quietly for the Lord, to show grace according to the Lord's times, and to put the Lord's work first. If we put only the affairs of our flesh first, we are not right before God.

To keep our faith to the end, we must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. And we must know how to fear God. We must know how to honor Him and stand in awe of Him, to love Him, follow Him, and obey Him. Then we receive blessing from God, and we come to know the will of God and follow that will. So I believe. ☒

CHAPTER

4

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Luke Chapter 4

seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Introduction

In Luke chapter 3, Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist. The Holy Spirit descended upon Him, and God the Father testified that Jesus is His beloved Son. Luke chapter 4 begins with the scene in which Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

The devil tempted Jesus, but Jesus drove back every temptation with the word of God. Afterward He returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee and taught the word. In the synagogue at Nazareth He read the writing of Isaiah and proclaimed, “*Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing*” (Luke 4:21). He made plain that He Himself is the Christ, who would preach the gospel to the poor and set the captives and the oppressed at liberty.

In the latter part of this chapter appears Jesus, who casts out demons with the authority of His word and heals the sick. But the central purpose for which Jesus was sent was the work of preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. When we read Luke chapter 4 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we can see that Jesus is the Savior who saves people from the power of sin, death, and the devil.

1. He overcame the temptations of the devil with the word of God (Luke 4:1–13)

“Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.’ But Jesus answered him, saying, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’” Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’” Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’” And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘It has been said, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’” Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:1–13).

After receiving baptism from John at the Jordan, Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, went into the wilderness. When He had eaten nothing for forty days and was hungry, the devil tempted Him to turn a stone into bread. The word Jesus cited is Deuteronomy 8:3, which taught Israel in the wilderness that they must live by the word of God. Israel was tested in the wilderness for forty years and disobeyed, but Jesus obeyed this word for

forty days in the wilderness. Jesus did not put the needs of the flesh before the word of God, and He drove the devil back with the word that man shall not live by bread alone.

The devil enticed Him with the authority and glory of all the kingdoms of the world if He would worship him. Jesus answered with the word, “*You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve*” (Luke 4:8). This answer is the word of Deuteronomy 6:13, which said to worship and serve God alone. Jesus did not gain the glory of the world by bowing to the devil. He obeyed God the Father and accomplished the ministry of salvation.

The devil used even the word of the Scriptures, tempting Jesus to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. The word the devil cited is Psalm 91:11–12, but this was not a right application of the word; it was a temptation that used God’s promise of protection. But Jesus drove back that distortion with the word, “*You shall not tempt the LORD your God*” (Luke 4:12). Jesus answered with Deuteronomy 6:16, which warned of how Israel had tempted God at Massah. Citing the word does not by itself make right faith. We must not use the word to achieve our own desires, but must obey the will of God.

Jesus overcame all the temptations of the devil. Adam and Eve fell for the lie of the serpent, but Jesus, who came as the Seed of the woman, obeyed the word. This victory shows that the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, which said the Seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent, is under way. He is the Savior who took on the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John, and who would afterward overcome the power of death and of the devil with the Cross and the resurrection.

2. He taught in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14–15)

“Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all” (Luke 4:14–15).

Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee. His ministry was not a work of building up human knowledge or reputation. It was the ministry of teaching the word and accomplishing the work of salvation as the Christ whom God sent.

The Gospel of Luke records that the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus at His baptism, that He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, and that now He taught in the power of the Spirit. The word and ministry of Jesus proceeded within the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

3. The word of Isaiah was fulfilled ‘today’ (Luke 4:16–21)

“So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.’ Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’” (Luke 4:16–21).

Jesus read the writing of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth.

The word Jesus read is Isaiah 61:1–2, and the content about setting at liberty those who are oppressed is connected also with Isaiah 58:6. It was the word that the One upon whom the Spirit of the Lord comes and who is anointed preaches the gospel to the poor and sets the captives and the oppressed at liberty. Jesus proclaimed that this writing was fulfilled that day in the hearing of the people.

The anointed Christ whom Isaiah prophesied is Jesus. He preaches the gospel to the person who realizes his own sin and looks for the salvation of God. He sets free the person bound under the power of sin and death and the devil.

At the center of that liberty is the remission of sins. *“The acceptable year of the LORD,”* which Jesus proclaimed, shines a gospel light on the release shown by the Jubilee of Leviticus chapter 25. Just as in the Jubilee the slave gained freedom and recovered his lost inheritance and returned to his family, so in Jesus the debt of sin is canceled and the slave of sin gains freedom and returns to God. With the first coming of Jesus the acceptable year of the Lord was opened, and when He comes again, the day of vengeance of our God in the latter part of Isaiah 61:2 will finally come to pass. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on the sins of mankind, and bearing those sins He received the judgment on the Cross. And He rose from the dead and gave eternal life to those who believe. In Jesus the sinner can escape from the condemnation of sin and return to God.

4. He was rejected by the people of His hometown (Luke 4:22–30)

“So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, ‘Is this not Joseph’s son?’ He said to them, ‘You will surely say this

proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.’ Then He said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.’ So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way” (Luke 4:22–30).

The people of Nazareth marveled at the gracious words of Jesus, and yet saw Him only as the son of Joseph. Because they knew how He had grown up close by, they could not believe the true identity of Jesus. Jesus came clothed in a human body, but He is the Creator God, who made the universe and man. Rather than believing the word, they harbored the intent to demand that He show signs in His own hometown as well.

Jesus spoke of the widow of Zarephath and of Naaman the Syrian. The story of the widow of Zarephath is recorded in 1 Kings 17:8–16, and the story of Naaman in 2 Kings 5:1–14. The two were not Israelites, but they received the word of God and received grace. These two events show in advance that the grace of God is not confined to lineage, and that the gospel of Jesus would afterward be delivered even to the Gentiles. Lineage and familiarity do not guarantee salvation. The person who believes and receives the word God has spoken receives grace.

Hearing this word, the people of Nazareth were filled with

wrath and tried to kill Jesus. The gospel does not exalt man's boasting; it reveals the heart. The person who holds on to his own thoughts and lineage refuses the Lord, but the person who knows his own poverty and believes the word receives the grace of the Lord.

5. He cast out a demon with His word of authority (Luke 4:31–37)

“Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!’ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet, and come out of him!’ And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, ‘What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.’ And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region” (Luke 4:31–37).

There was authority in the teaching of Jesus. Even the unclean demon recognized that Jesus is the Holy One of God. When Jesus rebuked him, the demon came out without being able to hurt the man.

Jesus did not promise freedom with words only. He actually released the man oppressed by the devil. This authority shows that Jesus is not a mere teacher but the Son of God and the Christ. The One who would afterward break the power of the devil and of death with the Cross and the resurrection is also Jesus.

6. He healed the sick (Luke 4:38–41)

“Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon’s house. But Simon’s wife’s mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them. When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of God!’ And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ” (Luke 4:38–41).

Jesus rebuked the high fever that had seized Simon’s wife’s mother, and it left her. When the sun was setting, He laid His hands on every one of those sick with various diseases and healed them. The Lord did not turn away from suffering people.

The demons knew that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ. That is, they knew that He is not only the Savior but the Creator God, and they feared before His name. Jesus did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.

7. He preached the gospel of the kingdom of God to the other cities also (Luke 4:42–44)

“Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them; but He said to them, ‘I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.’ And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee” (Luke 4:42–44).

The people wished that Jesus would not leave them. But Jesus said that He must preach the gospel of the kingdom of God to the other cities also. He was sent for this work.

Healing and casting out demons show the authority and compassion of Jesus. But His ministry did not stay at solving the problems of one region. Isaiah 52:7 proclaims the good news that God reigns as King and saves His people. Jesus preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God to the other cities also is connected with the gospel flow of this promise. It was the work of widely preaching the gospel that brings sinners back under the reign of God.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit that Luke chapter 4 shows

The Jesus of Luke chapter 4 is the Son of God, who overcame the temptations of the devil with the word. He is the Christ, anointed with the Holy Spirit, and the Savior who preaches the gospel to the poor and sets the captives and the oppressed free.

The freedom Jesus gives begins with escaping from the power of sin. In the previous chapter, Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on the sins of mankind. And bearing those sins He died on the Cross and rose again. The person who believes this fact of salvation receives the remission of sins and comes to belong to the kingdom of God.

The person who hears the gospel must not refuse Jesus with his own thoughts and familiar judgments, like the people of Nazareth. Like the widow of Zarephath and Naaman, he must receive the word of God. The sinner must receive by faith the liberty and the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished with the water and the Spirit.

Conclusion

Luke chapter 4 testifies that Jesus is the Christ, who fulfills the word of the Old Testament. He overcame the temptations of the devil with the words of Deuteronomy, and appeared as the One anointed with the Spirit whom Isaiah prophesied. He proclaimed liberty to the captives and the oppressed, cast out demons with His word of authority, and healed the sick.

But the people of Nazareth saw Jesus only as the son of Joseph and refused Him. The thought of knowing Him closely, or the boast of lineage, cannot take the place of faith. We must believe according to the word that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ, who came to save sinners.

Jesus did not stay in one city but preached the gospel of the kingdom of God. That gospel is the news of Jesus Christ, who took on the sins with the baptism received from John and accomplished salvation with the Cross and the resurrection. We must believe this gospel in our hearts, worship the Lord alone, and obey the word. ☑

Questions and Answers on Luke Chapter 4

[Question] 1. What important events does Luke chapter 4 record?

Luke chapter 4 records the event in which Jesus overcame the temptations of the devil in the wilderness, the beginning of His ministry in Galilee, the event in which He made plain in the synagogue at Nazareth that He is the Christ promised in the Old Testament and yet was rejected, and His casting out a demon and healing the sick in Capernaum and preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.

First, Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, was tempted by the devil for forty days in the wilderness.

“Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry” (Luke 4:1–2).

The devil enticed Jesus with the temptation to turn a stone into bread, the temptation that he would give Him the authority and glory of all the kingdoms of the world if He worshiped him, and the temptation to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple to prove the protection of God. But Jesus drove back all the temptations of the devil with the written word. He said that man shall not live by bread alone, that one must worship God and serve Him only, and that one must not tempt God.

Second, Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee

and taught in the synagogues. The news of Jesus spread through all the surrounding region, and the people praised His teaching. This shows that the public Galilean ministry of Jesus had begun in earnest.

Third, Jesus read the writing of Isaiah in the synagogue of Nazareth, where He had grown up.

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.’ Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:18–21).

Jesus made plain that He Himself is the Christ whom Isaiah prophesied. The liberty Jesus gives is the true liberty that saves the soul taken captive by sin and oppressed by the devil. Jesus came to set free the person shut up in sin, by taking on the sins of mankind with the baptism, receiving the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rising from the dead.

At first the people of Nazareth marveled at the gracious words of Jesus, but soon they saw Him only as the son of Joseph and did not believe. When Jesus spoke of the widow of Zarephath and of Naaman the Syrian, they were enraged and tried to push Him off the cliff and kill Him. But Jesus passed through the midst of them and went His way. This event shows the unbelief that judges Jesus only by fleshly conditions, and the fact that the grace of God is bestowed on the person who receives it by faith.

Fourth, Jesus taught with a word of authority in the synagogue at Capernaum and cast out an unclean demon. The

demon recognized Jesus as the Holy One of God, but Jesus rebuked the demon, silenced him, and made him come out of the man. He then healed Simon's wife's mother of a high fever, and laid His hands on every one of the many sick people who were brought to Him and healed them. Jesus is the Son of God, who has the authority to subdue demons with His word and to heal diseases.

Fifth, Jesus said to the crowd that tried to hold on to Him that He must preach the gospel to the other cities also.

“But He said to them, ‘I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.’” (Luke 4:43).

Luke chapter 4 shows Jesus overcoming the temptations of the devil and, as the Christ who fulfills the prophecy of the Old Testament, saving those under the power of sin and of the devil and preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. We must not see Jesus merely as a man who grew up in Nazareth or as a great teacher. We must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, who came clothed in a human body, and the Savior who saved us from sin with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. And when we are tempted, we must hold to the written word and worship and serve God only.

[Question] 2. Luke 4:1–2, when Jesus returned from the Jordan filled with the Holy Spirit, what was waiting for Him?

What was waiting for Jesus when He returned from the Jordan filled with the Holy Spirit was being tempted by the devil for forty days in the wilderness.

“Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from

the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry” (Luke 4:1–2).

After receiving baptism from John at the Jordan, Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. The baptism of Jesus was the beginning of the ministry of salvation, in which He would take on the sins of mankind and receive the judgment of those sins on the Cross. Yet what was waiting for Jesus right after His baptism was not the welcome of people or the glory of the world, but the solitude and hunger of the wilderness and the temptation of the devil.

The passage clearly distinguishes: Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, but the one who tempted Him was the devil. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, and the devil tempted Him there to make Him fall. Therefore it was not the Holy Spirit who enticed Jesus to evil. God revealed that Jesus is the Christ, who would overcome the temptations of the devil and accomplish the ministry of salvation.

Jesus ate nothing for forty days and was very hungry. The devil used that very weakness of the flesh to tempt Jesus. He tried to make Him follow the needs of the flesh first by telling Him to turn a stone into bread; he enticed Him with the authority and glory of all the kingdoms of the world if He would worship him; and he tried to make Him test the protection of God by throwing Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. But Jesus drove back every temptation with the written word of God.

This event shows that Jesus truly put on a human body and went through hunger and temptation, and yet is the Son of God, who did not yield to the enticement of the devil. Jesus said that man shall not live by bread alone, that one must worship God alone and serve Him only, and that one must not tempt God.

For us also, being saved and having received the Holy Spirit

does not mean that there is no temptation at all. Rather, when we try to live by faith, temptations may come concerning the needs of the flesh, the power and honor of the world, and doubts about the protection of God. At such times we must not decide according to our own thoughts or greed, but must hold to the written word like Jesus. We must worship and serve God only, and believe in Jesus, who saved us with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, more than the enticements of the world.

[Question] 3. Luke 4:2–3, what was the devil’s first temptation of Jesus?

The devil’s first temptation of Jesus was to say to Him, who had eaten nothing for forty days and was hungry: if You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread and eat.

“Being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.’” (Luke 4:2–3).

The devil used the time when Jesus was hungriest. To Jesus, who had fasted forty days, eating was a most pressing need. The devil seized on that very need of the flesh and enticed Him: if You are the Son of God, solve Your hunger with Your own power by turning the stone into bread. This was not because Jesus lacked the power. Jesus is God, who created all things by the word, so He is the One who could turn the stone into bread.

But in the devil’s words there were two enticements. One was to put the needs of the flesh before the will of God, and the other was to make Jesus prove His identity with the words *“If You are the Son of God.”* The devil enticed Jesus to solve His immediate hunger with His own power rather than to depend on

God and obey.

Jesus did not follow the devil's demand but answered with the written word.

“But Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’” (Luke 4:4).

The word of Jesus does not mean that the food of the flesh is unnecessary. It means that man needs bread, and yet cannot truly live by bread alone. The body of man lives by eating food, but the soul lives by hearing and believing the word of God. However important it is to solve the problem of making a living, we must not leave God or throw away the word because of it.

The same temptation comes to us as well. The devil uses the problem of making a living and material needs to entice us to follow the circumstances of the flesh before the word of God. He tries to make us yield our faith and leave the will of God in order to gain what we need right now. At such times we must believe, not denying the needs of the flesh, but believing the fact that God and His word are more important than they are.

Jesus overcame the devil's first temptation with the written word. We too, when we are tempted because of material things and the hardships of living, must not follow our own greed and calculations but hold to the word of God. We must believe in Jesus, who saved us with the baptism received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, and live with the faith that God knows our needs also and cares for us.

[Question] 4. Luke 4:4, with what word did Jesus stand against the first temptation to turn the stone into bread?

To the devil's temptation to turn the stone into bread and eat,

Jesus answered with the written word that man shall not live by bread alone.

“But Jesus answered him, saying, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’” (Luke 4:4).

Jesus did not argue with the devil out of His own thoughts or feelings; He said, *“It is written.”* This means that the word of God is the standard that discerns and drives back the enticement of the devil. The word Jesus cited is Deuteronomy 8:3, which explains how God fed the people of Israel with manna in the wilderness.

“So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD” (Deuteronomy 8:3).

Luke records the answer of Jesus as *“Man shall not live by bread alone,”* but the parallel text in Matthew conveys its meaning more fully.

“But He answered and said, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” (Matthew 4:4).

The word of Jesus does not mean that man need not eat food. The body needs bread to live, but man has not only a body but also a soul, so he needs the word of God as well. Bread makes the body live, but the word of God gives life and faith to the soul. Therefore, even if food is plentiful and material things abound, no one can truly live apart from the word of God.

The devil enticed Jesus with the idea that solving His hunger right away was more important than following the will of God. But Jesus, without denying the needs of the flesh, did not put them before the word of God. Jesus chose the way of depending on God the Father and obeying the word.

We too can be tested in our faith when we meet the problem of making a living and material hardship. At such times we must not throw away the word of God or yield our faith on the grounds of meeting the needs of life. Together with the food of the body, we must hear and believe the word of God. Above all, we must receive by faith the salvation of Jesus, who received baptism from John and took on our sins, received the judgment on the Cross, and rose from the dead. This word of the gospel is the true food of the soul, which brings us to life from sin and gives eternal life.

[Question] 5. Luke 4:5–7, what was the second temptation the devil attempted on Jesus?

The second temptation the devil attempted on Jesus was to show Him the authority and glory of all the kingdoms of the world and entice Him that he would give it all to Him if He worshiped him.

“Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.’” (Luke 4:5–7).

The devil did not stop at showing Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. He proposed a deal: in exchange for bowing down and worshiping him, he would give the authority and glory of the world. The core of this temptation was to turn to the devil the worship that must be offered to God, in order to gain everything of the world.

If the first temptation used the need of the flesh called hunger,

the second temptation used the desire to gain power and glory. The devil enticed Jesus as though one could gain the high places and glory of the world without obeying God. But to accept that offer would have been to acknowledge the devil as master and to betray God.

The devil approaches people in a similar way even now. He entices us that if we yield just a little of God and His word, we can gain more money, higher position, honor, and success. Outwardly it looks like an offer of good things, but what it actually demands is to leave God and serve the greed of the world. When we see what a person counts most precious, and for what he yields his conscience and faith, it is revealed whom he is worshiping.

Money and power and honor are not all evil in themselves. But if one throws away the will of God and follows the word of the devil in order to gain them, they become that person's idols. Even if one gains everything in the world, if he loses God, he has not gained the true blessing. The glory the devil promises makes a person leave God, but the blessing God gives makes a person dwell in God.

Jesus counted worship and obedience to God more precious than the authority and glory of all the kingdoms of the world. Jesus did not bow to the devil, and He drove back the temptation with the written word that one must worship and serve God only.

We too must not yield our faith to gain the success and profit of the world. We must worship and serve only God, who made us and saved us from sin with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. To count the salvation and eternal life Jesus has given more precious than all the power and glory of the world—that is true faith.

[Question] 6. Luke 4:8, before the enticement of being given all the kingdoms of the world, whom did Jesus say we must worship and serve only?

Jesus overcame the second temptation—that the devil would give Him the authority and glory of all the kingdoms of the world if He bowed to him—with the written word that we must worship God and serve Him only.

“And Jesus answered and said to him, Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve’” (Luke 4:8).

Jesus did not weigh how great and good the authority and glory the devil offered were. Nor did He demand better terms or compromise with the devil’s proposal. Because bowing to the devil is itself a betrayal of God, He declared firmly that the object of worship is God alone.

The word Jesus cited is grounded in the word of Deuteronomy, which commanded the people of Israel to fear and serve God only.

“You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name” (Deuteronomy 6:13).

To worship does not mean only the act of bending the body and bowing. It is to exalt and honor and love God most highly, to acknowledge Him as Master, and to obey His will. To serve is to set the purpose and choices of one’s life on God and to follow His word. Therefore one cannot worship God and at the same time follow the will of the devil in order to gain the power and glory of the world.

Jesus chose the way of obeying God the Father rather than all the glory of the world. Jesus is the King of kings and the Creator of all things, so He is not One who should receive authority from the devil. Jesus did not bow to the devil, but

obeyed the will of God the Father, took on the sins of mankind with the baptism, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so revealed the true kingship of salvation.

We too may be tempted to yield our faith in order to gain money and honor and power. When the thought comes that we could live better and gain what we want if we left God, we must hold to the word Jesus spoke. We worship God not according to what He gives us, but because He is our Creator and our Savior; therefore we must worship and serve Him.

Even if we gain everything in the world, if we lose God, there is no profit at all. On the other hand, even if we do not gain the glory of the world, the person who dwells in God and believes the salvation of Jesus is a person who has obtained eternal life. Therefore we must worship God only, with our hearts and our lives, and serve Him following His word and His will.

[Question] 7. Luke 4:9–11, what was the devil’s third temptation of Jesus?

The third temptation the devil attempted on Jesus was to set Him on the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem and demand that, if He is the Son of God, He throw Himself down from there.

“Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: “He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,” and, “In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.”’” (Luke 4:9–11).

As in the first temptation, the devil again said, *“If You are the Son of God.”* He enticed Jesus to throw Himself down from

the pinnacle of the temple and prove His identity as the Son of God through whether God would send angels and protect Him.

This time the devil also cited the word of the Scriptures. What the devil cited was the promise of God's protection recorded in Psalm 91.

“For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone” (Psalm 91:11–12).

But the devil did not use this word according to the will and purpose of God. The word of the Psalm is a promise that God keeps the person who depends on Him and walks in His ways. It is not a word telling anyone to jump from a dangerous place on purpose and then demand that God save him. The devil turned the word that promised God's protection into a means of testing God's power.

Therefore the core of the third temptation was to make Jesus force a proof of God's protection. True faith is not doing something dangerous and then demanding a miracle from God. It is believing that God is good and faithful and obeying His will. Believing God and testing God are different things.

The fact that the devil cited the Scriptures is also important. Using the words of the Bible does not make everything one says agree with the will of God. If one tears a verse from its original context and uses it to justify his own desire or claim, he goes against the will of God even while citing the Scriptures. Therefore we must not look only at the fact that someone has cited the Bible, but must discern whether what he says agrees with the meaning of the whole Scriptures.

We too must not demand special signs from God to prove our faith. To say that we will believe only if God answers in the way we want is not faith but an attitude of testing God. We must believe the word and the finished work of Jesus, who has already

saved us with the baptism received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. To believe the word of salvation God has given and to obey His will is true faith.

[Question] 8. Luke 4:12, to the demand that He throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple to prove God's protection, with what word did Jesus respond?

To the devil's temptation that, if He is the Son of God, He should throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple and prove the protection of God, Jesus answered with the word that one must not tempt God.

"And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"' (Luke 4:12).

Jesus did not deny the word of Scripture the devil had cited. The promise of the Psalm, that God keeps His people and sends His angels to protect them, is a true word. But believing that promise and deliberately doing something dangerous and then demanding that God work a miracle to save oneself are entirely different things.

Jesus corrected the devil's wrong use of the Scriptures with the word recorded in Deuteronomy.

"You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him in Massah" (Deuteronomy 6:16).

The people of Israel at Massah in the wilderness doubted whether God was among them and demanded water. Though they had already experienced God's salvation and guidance, they showed the attitude that they would believe God only if He showed miracles in the way they wanted. To tempt God is to make God prove whether He is faithful, by conditions and

methods man has set.

The devil demanded the same attitude of Jesus: if You are the Son of God, jump from the high place and show whether God sends His angels to protect You. But Jesus had no need to prove that He is the Son of God by dangerous acts and miracles. Because Jesus believed the word of God the Father and obeyed His will, He refused the devil's demand.

True faith does not force a test on God. It believes the fact that God is good and faithful and cares for His people, and lives rightly according to that word. On the contrary, doing reckless things on the pretext of proving one's faith, or setting conditions that God must answer in the way I have decided before I will believe, is not an attitude of trusting God.

We too must not think that God is with us only when a special miracle appears whenever we meet hard things. God has already shown His love and His salvation clearly through the word. Jesus received baptism from John and took on our sins, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead. Rather than continually demanding new proofs, we must believe the word of salvation already recorded.

Jesus discerned and drove back the temptation the devil presented by misusing the Scriptures, with yet another written word. We too must not interpret one verse of the Bible according to our own greed, but discern it according to the meaning of the whole Scriptures, and must not tempt God but believe and obey His word.

[Question] 9. Luke 4:14, in what power did Jesus return to Galilee after overcoming the temptations of the devil?

After overcoming all the temptations of the devil, Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.

“Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region” (Luke 4:14).

Luke 4:1 records that Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, went into the wilderness. Jesus was tempted by the devil for forty days in the wilderness, and He overcame every temptation with the written word of God. And when the temptation was over, He returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. Luke shows that both the wilderness temptation of Jesus and His Galilean ministry took place within the working of the Holy Spirit.

That He returned in the power of the Spirit means that Jesus did not minister depending on the strength of the flesh or the power of the world. Jesus refused the authority and glory of all the kingdoms of the world that the devil offered, and obeying God the Father, He began the ministry of salvation in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus returned to Galilee, the news of Him spread through all the surrounding region. Verse 15, which follows, records that Jesus taught in the synagogues and was praised by many. Therefore verse 14 does not merely state the fact that Jesus moved to a certain region. It is the turning point at which Jesus, who had overcome the temptation of the wilderness, began His public Galilean ministry in the power of the Spirit.

Jesus is from the beginning the Son of God and the God who created all things. Yet He put on a human body and came to this earth, obeyed the will of God the Father, and ministered in the

power of the Spirit. Preaching the gospel to the poor, giving liberty to those taken captive by sin and the devil, healing the sick, and casting out demons—all these He did in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We too must not think that we can overcome the enticements of the devil or do the work of God by our own will and ability alone. We must believe the written word and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the person who believes the salvation Jesus accomplished with the baptism received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, and He leads him to believe and follow that word.

The fact that the ministry of Jesus began after He overcame the temptation is also important. The purpose of overcoming temptation is not to boast of one's own faith. It is to go forward to the work of serving God, preaching the gospel, and bringing people to life. We must depend on the Holy Spirit to overcome temptation, and live preaching the gospel of the salvation Jesus accomplished.

[Question] 10. Luke 4:16, what did Jesus do on the Sabbath when He came to Nazareth?

When Jesus came to Nazareth, where He had grown up, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as His custom was, and stood up to read the Scriptures.

“So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read” (Luke 4:16).

Jesus' going to Nazareth was not a visit to a strange place for the first time. Nazareth was the place where Jesus had grown up, and the people there knew His family and how He had been

brought up. When the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue as His custom was. This shows that Jesus had continued the practice of worshiping God and reading the word of the Scriptures in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

In the synagogue of that time, on the Sabbath, people gathered together to read the Old Testament Scriptures and hear teaching about that word. When Jesus stood up to read the Scriptures, the writing of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. Jesus opened the book and found and read the place that said He would preach the gospel to the poor, give liberty to the captives, and set at liberty those who are oppressed.

Jesus reading the Scriptures in the synagogue does not mean only that He took one part of the order of worship. After reading that word, Jesus declared, *“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”* He made plain the fact that He Himself is the Christ whom Isaiah prophesied, and that He came to fulfill that prophecy.

Jesus came to give liberty to the person taken captive by sin and oppressed by the devil. That liberty does not mean only escaping the oppression or hardships of the flesh. It is the spiritual liberty of being saved from sin and judgment, which Jesus accomplished by receiving baptism from John to take on the sins of mankind, receiving the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rising from the dead.

The people of Nazareth heard the word Jesus read, but they thought of Him only as the son of Joseph, whom they knew. Hearing the Scriptures alone is not enough. One must believe in Jesus, of whom that word testifies, as the Son of God and the Savior. We too must not stop at reading the Bible out of habit, but must realize and believe from that word who Jesus is and how He saved us.

Just as Jesus went into the synagogue on the Sabbath and

read the Scriptures, we too must treasure drawing near to the word of God and learning it. And through the word we must know and believe still more clearly Jesus, who saved us from sin with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

[Question] 11. Luke 4:21, after reading the writing of Isaiah in the synagogue, what did Jesus declare concerning that word?

After reading the writing of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus declared that this word was fulfilled that very day in the hearing of the people gathered there.

“And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’” (Luke 4:21).

The word of Isaiah that Jesus read was the prophecy of the saving ministry that the Christ, anointed with the Spirit, would come and perform.

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD” (Luke 4:18–19).

The word *“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”* means that the prophecy of Isaiah no longer remained only in the distant future. Because the Christ who would fulfill that prophecy was standing before them and speaking, it was the declaration that the fulfillment of the prophecy had already begun. Jesus made plain that He Himself is the Christ, anointed with the Spirit and sent.

The poor and the captives, the blind and the oppressed of

whom Jesus spoke do not refer only to those who are materially poor or oppressed in the flesh. They include the person who has no righteousness of his own before God, who is taken captive by sin, whose spiritual eyes are blind, and who is pressed down by the power of the devil and of sin. Jesus came to preach the gospel to such people and to give them true liberty.

Jesus did not proclaim this prophecy with words only. He received baptism from John and took on the sins of mankind, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so actually opened the way of release from sin and death. Therefore the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled through the coming of Jesus and the ministry of salvation He accomplished.

But the people of Nazareth, even while hearing the words of Jesus, thought of Him only as the son of Joseph. Though the Christ who fulfills the prophecy was before their eyes, they could not believe, because they judged only by the flesh. Hearing the Scriptures and marveling at the word is not enough. One must believe in Jesus, of whom that word testifies, as the Son of God and one's own Savior.

Today we also must not read this word only as a word proclaimed long ago in the synagogue of Nazareth. When the person taken captive and oppressed by sin believes the salvation Jesus accomplished with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, he receives the remission of sins and true liberty. We must believe in our hearts and receive the fact that the word of grace Isaiah prophesied has been fulfilled in Jesus.

[Question] 12. Luke 4:23–24, what response did Jesus say in advance the people of His hometown Nazareth would show Him?

Jesus said in advance that the people of His hometown Nazareth would demand that He do also in His hometown what they had heard He did in Capernaum, and that they would not receive Him as a prophet and as the Christ.

“He said to them, ‘You will surely say this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.’ Then He said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.’” (Luke 4:23–24).

The people of Nazareth heard the gracious words that came out of the mouth of Jesus and marveled. But soon they said, “*Is this not Joseph’s son?*” Because they had watched Jesus grow up in Nazareth and knew His family, they did not receive Him as the Son of God and the promised Christ. They judged Jesus only as an ordinary man of their hometown whom they knew.

The proverb “*Physician, heal yourself!*” was used to mean: if you did works of power elsewhere, first show them here in your own hometown as well. The people of Nazareth showed the attitude that they would acknowledge the words of Jesus only if He performed before them the works they had heard He did in Capernaum. Rather than hearing and believing the word, they demanded visible miracles first.

Jesus knew their hearts and said, “*no prophet is accepted in his own country.*” Here, not being accepted does not mean only failing to receive praise or hospitality from people. It means that they do not believe but refuse the prophet God has sent and his word. The people of Nazareth heard the words of Jesus, but because of the thought that they knew Him in the flesh, they did

not believe in Him.

Their problem was not that there was no evidence at all. Jesus read the prophecy of Isaiah and declared that the word was fulfilled through Himself. They heard the word of the Scriptures and the gracious teaching of Jesus, and yet demanded that He show them the miracles they wanted. They set the conditions of faith themselves and told Jesus to prove Himself by them.

We too must not think that we know Jesus fully just because we have heard much about Him and are familiar with Bible knowledge. Even if we have read the Bible a long time or are used to church life, if we do not believe in Jesus as the Son of God and our own Savior, we can fall into the same unbelief as the people of Nazareth. Familiarity cannot take the place of faith.

Jesus received baptism from John and took on our sins, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead. We must not demand that Jesus first show us the signs we want, but must believe the word recorded in the Scriptures and the work of salvation He has already accomplished. To receive Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior, without judging Him by fleshly conditions, is true faith.

[Question] 13. Luke 4:25–27, knowing that the people of His hometown Nazareth would not receive Him, by which events of the Old Testament did Jesus explain their hearts?

To explain the unbelief of the people of Nazareth who would not receive Him, Jesus spoke of the widow of Zarephath in the land of Sidon, who received the grace of God in the days of Elijah, and of Naaman the Syrian, who was healed of leprosy in the days of Elisha.

“But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” (Luke 4:25–27).

The first is the event of the widow of Zarephath, recorded in 1 Kings chapter 17. In the days of Elijah, when a long drought and famine came, there were many widows in Israel too, but God sent Elijah not to a widow of Israel but to one widow of Zarephath in the land of Sidon. That widow meant to make food with her last handful of flour and little oil and eat it and die, but she believed the word of God delivered through Elijah and obeyed.

“The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by Elijah” (1 Kings 17:16).

The second is the event of Naaman, recorded in 2 Kings chapter 5. In the days of Elisha there were many lepers in Israel too, but the one who was cleansed was Naaman, the commander of the army of Syria. At first Naaman could not accept the word of Elisha to wash seven times in the Jordan, but when he laid down his own thoughts and obeyed the word of God, he was made clean.

“So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean” (2 Kings 5:14).

The widow of Zarephath and Naaman were both Gentiles, not Israelites. Yet they received the word delivered through the servants of God and received grace. On the other hand, the

people of Israel had the standing of being God's people and the condition of having the prophets close at hand, but because they did not believe the word, they did not enjoy that grace.

Through these two events Jesus pointed out that the hearts of the people of Nazareth were like those of the unbelieving Israel of that time. The people of Nazareth had seen Jesus up close and knew how He grew up, but precisely because of that familiarity they judged Him only as the son of Joseph. They did not believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ whom Isaiah prophesied, and they demanded that He first show them the miracles they wanted.

The grace of God is not given automatically because of a particular nation or hometown, lineage or acquaintance. The person who hears the word of God and receives it by faith receives grace. Jesus spoke of the widow of Zarephath and of Naaman not merely to emphasize that they were Gentiles, but to show the fact that the heart that believes and receives the word of God is what matters.

We too must not take the grace of God for granted just because we have attended church long or heard the Bible much. We must believe in our hearts the word that Jesus received baptism from John and took on our sins, received the judgment on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so accomplished salvation. The person who, like the widow of Zarephath and Naaman, lays down his own thoughts and believes and receives the word of salvation God has given receives the true grace.

[Question] 14. Luke 4:33–36, what did Jesus do when He met the man with a spirit of an unclean demon in the synagogue at Capernaum?

The first miracle Jesus performed in the synagogue at Capernaum was casting the demon out of the man with a spirit of an unclean demon. Jesus rebuked the demon with His word of authority and commanded him to come out of the man, and the demon came out without being able to harm him.

“Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!’ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet, and come out of him!’ And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, ‘What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.’” (Luke 4:33–36).

The unclean demon knew who Jesus is. The demon called Jesus “*the Holy One of God*” and asked whether He had come to destroy them. People thought of Jesus only as the son of Joseph who grew up in Nazareth, but the demon recognized that Jesus is the Holy One of God, the One who holds the authority to rule and judge him.

But the fact that the demon knew the identity of Jesus does not mean he had saving faith. The demon knew Jesus and feared, but he did not love Him or believe in Him as Savior and obey. Jesus did not accept the demon’s testimony, and rebuked him, saying, “*Be quiet, and come out of him!*”

In the command of Jesus there was actual authority and power. Jesus did not chant spells or perform long rituals. He

commanded by the word only, and the unclean demon obeyed that word and came out of the man. The demon threw the man down in their midst, but the man was not hurt. Jesus not only cast out the demon but protected the man who had been seized by the demon and set him free.

The people in the synagogue saw this and were amazed at what kind of word this was, that with authority and power it commanded the demon and he came out. The parallel text in the Gospel of Mark also records that the people called the teaching of Jesus a “*new doctrine*” given “*with authority*,” and were amazed to see the unclean spirits obey His command.

This miracle shows that the word of Isaiah that Jesus read in the synagogue at Nazareth was actually being fulfilled. Jesus came to set free those oppressed and taken captive by sin and the devil. Casting out the demon in the synagogue at Capernaum reveals that Jesus is greater than the power of the devil, and that He is the Son of God, who can release people from that oppression.

What we need is not to stop at knowing in our heads who Jesus is, like the demon. We must believe in our hearts the fact that Jesus received baptism from John and took on our sins, received the judgment of sin on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so saved us from sin and the power of the devil. The person who believes the word of Jesus and His authority of salvation escapes from the captivity of sin and obtains true freedom.

[Question] 15. Luke 4:34–35, how did Jesus rebuke the unclean demon in the synagogue at Capernaum?

To the unclean demon crying out that He was the Holy One of God, Jesus gave the rebuke to be quiet and come out of the man.

“Saying, ‘Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!’ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet, and come out of him!’ And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him” (Luke 4:34–35).

The unclean demon called Jesus *“the Holy One of God.”* The demon knew the identity of Jesus, which the people had not yet known, and also feared the fact that Jesus is the One who holds the authority to destroy him. But Jesus did not leave the demon to speak; He first commanded, “Be quiet.”

What the demon said—that Jesus is the Holy One of God—was not wrong. But speaking true content does not make that demon a witness of the truth. The demon did not believe in Jesus and obey and receive salvation; he only knew His authority and feared. Jesus had no need to reveal His identity through the testimony of an unclean demon.

Jesus then commanded, *“come out of him!”* In this word appears the authority that sets the person seized by the demon free from his oppression. The demon could not defy the command of Jesus and came out of the man. The demon threw the man down in the midst of the people, but could not hurt him. Jesus protected the man and released him from the power of the demon.

The parallel text in the Gospel of Mark also records that

Jesus commanded in the same way, “*Be quiet, and come out of him!*” and that the unclean spirit came out crying with a loud voice. Jesus did not use spells or complicated rituals. He rebuked the demon with the word only, and the demon obeyed that word of authority.

This event shows that the word proclaimed in the synagogue at Nazareth was actually being fulfilled. Jesus came to set the oppressed at liberty and to save those taken captive by sin and the devil. Commanding the demon and setting the man free in the synagogue at Capernaum reveals that Jesus is the Son of God, who holds authority greater than the devil.

We too must not stop at knowing facts about Jesus as knowledge, like the demon. If one knows that Jesus is the Son of God and yet does not believe in Him as Savior and obey, that is not saving faith. We must believe in our hearts the fact that Jesus received baptism from John and took on our sins, received the judgment on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so saved us from sin and the power of the devil.

[Question] 16. Luke 4:42, why did Jesus go to a deserted place when it was day?

Luke 4:42 does not directly state the reason Jesus went to a deserted place. But according to the parallel text in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus prayed there, and He went on to carry out His mission of preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God to the other cities also.

“Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them” (Luke 4:42).

The parallel text in the Gospel of Mark, recording the same

event, tells us what Jesus did in the deserted place.

“Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed” (Mark 1:35).

On the previous day Jesus had cast the unclean demon out in the synagogue at Capernaum, healed Simon’s wife’s mother of her fever, and at sunset laid His hands on every one of the many sick people who were brought to Him and healed them. Even after finishing so much ministry, Jesus sought out a deserted place in the early morning and prayed to God the Father.

Jesus went to the deserted place not because He disliked people or wanted to avoid the ministry. Rather, it was to have fellowship with God the Father and to continue His ministry according to the purpose for which He was sent. The crowd came and tried to keep Jesus from leaving them, but Jesus did not stay bound to the needs and popularity of one region.

“But He said to them, ‘I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.’” (Luke 4:43).

Because the people of Capernaum had experienced the teaching of Jesus and His power to heal, they wanted Him to stay with them. But Jesus did not forget His mission of preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God to the other cities also. He did not let the welcome and demands of people take the place of the purpose for which God sent Him.

The prayer of Jesus was not simply a time of rest after hard work. It was a time of following the will of God the Father and going forward toward the next ministry. The Gospel of Luke records later as well that Jesus withdrew from the people and prayed in deserted places. In the ministry of Jesus, together with preaching the word and caring for people, there was time spent alone in prayer to God.

We too, the busier we are and the more demands people make of us, must stay quietly before God and pray. We must not equate people's praise or demands with the will of God. We must discern what to do and where to go, not by human popularity but by the word of God and our mission.

The gospel of the kingdom of God that Jesus preached is the news of salvation that sets free those taken captive by sin. Jesus received baptism from John and took on our sins, received the judgment on the Cross, and rose from the dead. We must depend on God in prayer, and live according to the mission of delivering this gospel of salvation Jesus accomplished to others as well.

[Question] 17. Luke 4:43, what kind of gospel is the gospel of the kingdom of God that Jesus preached?

The gospel of the kingdom of God that Jesus preached is the joyful news that the person who was under the power of sin and death receives the remission of sins and eternal life by believing the work of salvation Jesus accomplished, and becomes one of the people who receive the reign of God.

When the people of Capernaum tried to keep Jesus from leaving them, He said this.

“But He said to them, ‘I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.’” (Luke 4:43).

This word shows that preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God was the central purpose for which Jesus was sent to this earth. Jesus is not One who came to stay in one region and only heal the sick or only perform miracles. He came to preach the gospel of salvation to people far from God because of sin, and to lead them into the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God does not mean a visible territory or a political nation set up in the world. It is the kingdom in which God reigns as King, and in which the people saved from sin live as the people of God. This kingdom came to this earth through the saving ministry of Jesus, and when Jesus comes again it will appear in perfect glory.

The Gospel of Mark records the right response of man to the gospel of the kingdom of God as follows.

“Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.’” (Mark 1:14–15).

Therefore, the person who hears the gospel of the kingdom of God must turn from depending on his own thoughts and deeds and believe the salvation Jesus accomplished. Repentance here does not stop at merely regretting one’s faults or resolving never to sin again. It is admitting that one is a person who can only receive the judgment of God because of sin, throwing away the thought that one can be saved by his own efforts, and believing the saving work of Jesus.

At the center of the gospel of the kingdom of God are the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection that Jesus accomplished. Jesus took on the sin of the world by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, bore that sin and hung on the Cross and received the judgment of sin, and rose from the dead and overcame the power of sin and death. The apostle Paul also testifies of the core of the gospel as follows.

“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3–4).

The person who believes the salvation Jesus accomplished

with the baptism received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection receives the remission of sins, is justified, and becomes a child of God. He is no longer a person belonging to the power of sin and the devil, but becomes one of the people belonging to the kingdom of God. The gospel of the kingdom of God is precisely the gospel in which the sinner obtains new life and eternal life by believing not his own deeds but the salvation Jesus completed.

Jesus saying that He must preach this gospel “*to the other cities also*” shows that the kingdom of God does not belong to any one nation or region. This gospel must be delivered to all people, and whoever hears and believes it can be saved from sin and enter the kingdom of God.

Therefore we must not stay at seeking from Jesus only miracles or worldly blessings. We must believe in our hearts the gospel of the kingdom of God—that Jesus completely resolved our sins with the baptism received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. And we must live with the faith that delivers this joyful news of salvation to those who have not yet heard it, serving the kingdom of God. ☒

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Resist Satan the Devil in the name of Jesus Christ

< Luke 4:1-13 >

“Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.’ But Jesus answered him, saying, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’” Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’” Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’” And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘It has been said, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’” Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.”

He took on the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John

Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on the sins of mankind, and so His ministry began in earnest. The work of God that saves mankind from sin had begun. Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan and took over all the sins of mankind, and then, filled with the Holy Spirit, He went out into the wilderness and for forty days was led by the Spirit and was tempted by the devil.

People often harbor this question. They say that Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan and took on the sins of mankind once and for all—then how could a sinner save mankind from sin? But we must know this clearly. Jesus put on a human body, but He is fundamentally God, and at the same time He is also man. We must know the fact that He is both.

Jesus Christ, who is the God who saves us from sin

That Jesus, putting on a human body, took on the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John at the Jordan means that He took on the sins of man in His own body. This is just as, in the Old Testament, on the Day of Atonement the sacrificial offering received the laying on of hands that passed the sins of the people of Israel onto it once and for all, and bore them. Because there was the lamb of sacrifice, because there was the body of that lamb, the high priest could lay his hands on that body and pass the sins onto it. In the same way, it is a fact that He took on the sins of man with the body of Jesus, and it is also a fact that the sins of man had come over onto the body of Jesus.

But He Himself is God. He is the One who has both divinity and humanity, and He is exactly as the name Immanuel says—God with us. So someone once brought me this question: was Jesus really forsaken by God the Father? When He hung on the

Cross, God the Father turned His eyes away, and Jesus cried out, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani—My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Because Jesus had received baptism from John in that body and taken on the sins of mankind, when He hung on the Cross, God the Father had to judge that Son, and so He did not help Him. He deliberately looked away. That was the wisdom of God to remove your sins and mine. I mean that it was His wise will that fully accomplishes and completes a work. For God to save man, He first had to become man. It is because God is just. So He became man for us, received baptism from John and took on the sins of man for us, and hung on the Cross and received all the judgment for those sins. And He went to His death and rose again by the power of God, and became the Savior of us mankind. When we believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we receive the remission of sins and receive salvation.

Therefore we must always think of both together. Because Jesus said that He Himself was the Son of God, there was a time when people seized Him and tried to throw Him down from a cliff and kill Him. But the Bible records that Jesus walked calmly out through the crowd on that very spot. This shows the fact that Jesus is not merely a man with a body. He is Jesus Christ. As God, as the King of kings, as the High Priest, and as the Prophet, He carried out the three offices that save man from sin. He is the lamb of sacrifice, but He also became to us the Almighty God, the God of the resurrection, and the God who saves us from sin.

Man shall not live by bread only but by the word of God

Jesus, who had taken on all the sins of mankind like this and

been filled with the Holy Spirit, is tempted. That He is tempted means that He is tested. Whether You are really man, and whether You are really God, the Son of God—all of this was put to the test. Jesus put on a human body to become our Savior, so He is true man. Though He received baptism from John at the Jordan and took on all the sins of us men, He is still the Savior God.

The first temptation was a temptation that came through eating. He had eaten nothing in the wilderness for forty days while praying, so how He must have craved food! What the human body finds hardest to endure is the desire to eat. When food does not come in, at first sounds come from the stomach, and later even those sounds stop, the strength drains away, and the body begins to waste away. That the body wastes away means that one begins to lose flesh. If you try fasting prayer and have something of a belly, you will find the third day hardest. Then on the fourth day it grows calm again, and after several more days it becomes very hard. But after about a week, from then on it is not so terribly hard because of eating. In any case, because this body wants to eat, the devil came at Jesus—who had taken neither water nor food for forty days—with this very matter of eating.

Then why would Jesus have undergone temptation? This is the same as our being tempted—that is, tested—by Satan the Devil after we are born again. Are you really one who believes in and follows God—will you follow God even so? The devil knows that Jesus is the Son of God, that He is God who created the universe and all things. That is why he said, if You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread. When Jesus speaks, it comes to pass just so. If He tells a stone to become bread, it becomes chewy, delicious bread; and if there is no water, He has only to say, let there be water, and there is

water for Him to drink.

But Jesus answered like this. He said that man shall not live by bread alone. The Gospel of Matthew records that man lives by the word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Luke, who recorded this Gospel, was a physician by profession when he was in the world. So he is a man who thought very carefully about eating. If a man does not eat he dies, and yet Jesus stayed alive for forty days without eating. At just such a time the devil tempted Jesus with eating.

Jesus said that man shall not live by bread alone; He did not declare that bread is unnecessary. This word is based on the word in the Old Testament in which God the Father said that man shall not live by bread alone. That is, it means that there must be bread, but there must also be something else. For us to live in this world, our bodies must also have delicious food. But there must be one more thing. For us the righteous, there must be the word of God. Without the word, we die.

Even though you and I have received the remission of sins, if after being born again we do not come to church and worship, do not listen to what is preached with the word, do not fellowship, do not praise God, and do not pray, we end up becoming exactly the same as a person who is not born again. So we live by two things. We live by food, and by faith through hearing the word of God.

The devil tempts us just as he tempted Jesus

Just as Satan the Devil tempted Jesus like this, he tempts us in exactly the same way after we are born again. What is the first thing the devil tests after we are born again? It is this: you come out to church all the time and live like this—how are you going

to manage your life in the world? You have to learn a skill and graduate from a good school to make a living, do you not? Other people prepare like that and still fret over whether they can make it or not—if you go on like this, how are you going to live from now on? I know that the devil has done that to you. He did it to me too. He says: you need something to eat, do you not? People say the most important thing for a person is money, but really, is it not food? Even if you have everything—an apartment, a car, a handbag, shoes, a smartphone—what happens if you have nothing to eat?

Second, the devil took Jesus up to a high place, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said, “If You will bow down to me, I will give You all this authority and their glory.” The devil does the same to us. He says: if you listen well to my words, I will make you rich in this world; if you turn your back on the church and on God, I will make you live well and have plenty of worldly possessions and honor. But Jesus drove him back with the written word. He said, “*You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve*” (Luke 4:8). He was saying: even if you give Me all this, I cannot serve you—how could I serve the devil?—it is right as it is written, worship God and serve Him only.

Third, the devil set Jesus on the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem and said, “*If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here*” (Luke 4:9). It is written, he said, that God will command His angels to keep You, so that Your foot will not be dashed against a stone. But Jesus drove him back, saying, “*You shall not tempt the LORD your God*” (Luke 4:12).

You and I also surely undergo such temptations. The first is the problem of food, clothing, and shelter—the temptation that comes through eating. The second is the temptation that makes it seem that if we listen well to the words of Satan the Devil and

reject the church of God and walk out, things will go well and we will become rich. The third says: if you are a son of God, God will bless you, so put Him to the test. We are the people of God. So God keeps us. But Jesus drove the devil back, saying: do not tempt God; we must live by faith—how could we put God to the test?

All of these are tests that come to you and me. They are tests of whether we really live by faith, whether we desire to serve God only. For the righteous, just as God said, there must be bread, but there must also be the word, and we must live by faith. We must believe that when we worship God and live following His will alone, God is with us, keeps us, and blesses us. If we believe, we must live by faith accordingly. We must not fall for the devil, who tests us with such enticements, and betray God, or leave the church, or give up living by faith. We must not think, after becoming righteous, that we can live as long as we have food, clothing, and shelter.

This is tremendously important. If, after becoming righteous, we leave God and submit to the devil as he entices and tests us, and follow his words well, we often come to feel as if we would become great rich people, gain honor, and prosper. That is how the devil entices. He keeps throwing such enticements at us through a friend, through parents, through anyone.

It was so with me as well. After I met the Lord through the word, my mother took hold of me. She enticed me, saying she would send me to study abroad, buy me a car, and give me some property. But I said this to her: I do not need the property, I do not need study abroad, I do not need to be set up to live well; I want to go out and preach the gospel. If I went abroad to study and came back with a doctorate, people would call me Doctor, Doctor, and my honor would rise—but is that really a good thing? In truth, to the righteous it is a useless thing. Rather, doing so is

committing sin.

For a person, after receiving the remission of sins from God, not to live by faith, but to listen to the words of the devil, the words of the world, and follow them with human means and methods, trying to become rich in worldly ways, to gain honor, and to prosper—that is greatly standing against God. God wanted you and me to live by faith; He did not want us to tempt God. Why tempt God? God works on us just as it is recorded in the word. Therefore, when we follow this word by faith, just as we believe it, that word is fulfilled in us. It is fulfilled practically in our lives as well, fulfilled in reality just as the word became flesh.

“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”

To preach the gospel to the whole world was the will of God. We were few in number, but we believed by faith, prepared, preached, and made books. We translated them into many languages of the world, and as we preached the gospel to the whole world through electronic books and paper books, the gospel was spread throughout the whole world like that. The people of the whole world came to hear the gospel. That is exactly what faith is. *“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1)*. Even if it is not visible to the eyes, if the word of God says so, it comes to pass just so. If we doubt this and do not believe, it is not fulfilled, but if we believe, it is fulfilled just as it says.

When I first met the Lord, I received this word: *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33)*. To seek the kingdom of

God and the righteousness of God—that is, to think first of the work of preaching the gospel so that the people of God multiply and the kingdom of God expands, and to take up that challenge first by faith—then God adds to us all the worldly things: the problems of food, clothing, and shelter, and honor. So I did it by faith. It is the same even now. Even now I live by faith—how else would I live?

There are two things a person relies on. Does he rely on the material, or does he rely on what is not material—the spiritual, that is, God? We must not rely on the material only. We must rely on God. However, to fulfill the will of God, we must make use of this material.

To return to the point: man shall not live by bread only. It seems that with bread alone one can live, and with money alone one can get through this world, but for the righteous it is absolutely not so. The righteous must have the church of God, must have one who preaches the word, must receive guidance, and must also have the work of God—the work of expanding the kingdom of God, the work of preaching the gospel. There must be food, but there must also be the church, and there must also be a life of faith. If the righteous have no life of faith, it is exactly the same as a dead life. Even if, in worldly terms, one has money and has everything—eating, sleeping, clothing, riding around—if there is no workplace where one can serve God, no companions of faith with whom to worship together with the word of God, and no work of God, one cannot live on this earth and there is no joy in living.

Resist Satan the Devil in the name of Jesus Christ

There is one thing we must make clear. Satan the Devil can

tempt and harass even the righteous. He harassed even Jesus—how much more you and me! Therefore, when a negative thought enters your heart, or a fleshly thought or an evil thought arises, you must do this without fail. You must cry out: in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I command you, Satan the Devil, be gone! Even if it is something rising out of your own heart, if it is not right before the will of God, you must drive it back just as you would drive back Satan the Devil in the name of Jesus.

If you do not do so and stay still, you end up being taken captive by it. The devil enters into your thoughts and with those thoughts makes you stand against the church and despise the church. If you know it is not right and yet stay still, you become a slave of the devil. You must resist. Satan, be gone!—you must resist in the name of Jesus Christ. Even a person who is not born again finds that when he resists in the name of Jesus Christ, the devil retreats. He said, resist the devil and he will flee from you; the devil flees when you resist him, and does not flee when you do not.

Next to the house where I used to live, there lived people possessed by demons. A young person was demon-possessed, and an older person was demon-possessed too. Living in that house after moving in, there were times when I came home late in the evening. When I went up the stairs and was about to open the front door and go in, something in a white traditional robe would be standing on the neighboring rooftop in front—the rooftop over the first floor of someone else's house. It was so tall, and it would flap that robe in front of the crocks, and the sound of it was very loud. At first, even when I saw it, I felt so uneasy that I pretended not to see it and just went in.

Then one day I came out having mistaken the time. Sleeping alone, I had misjudged the time to go down to eat, and without even washing my face I threw on some clothes and was hurrying

to go down. As I opened the front door and was about to go down, something felt chilling. I looked, and that white thing had come over from the rooftop onto our veranda and was waiting as if to press down on me. In that instant it was utterly chilling.

When I am startled suddenly like that, my body reacts first, reflexively. Crying out in my heart, Satan, be gone!, I rebuked it resolutely. You wicked thing, be gone! If you do this once more, I will not let it pass!—strength surged up from within me and I resisted it fiercely. That is what happens when a person is startled in an instant. And after that, it never came up again. Even when it had come up, when I came up it would slip away back down, as if to say, this stubborn one is defying me again.

That house I lived in had layer upon layer of locks inside even before I took it over. Seeing that every window was like that, that demon had threatened the people who lived in that house in former days just so. It seems it passed its time amusing itself by threatening people. Satan the Devil retreats when you resist him, but if you fear him and hide and avoid him, he takes all the more pleasure in it and torments you more. He can even come right up to your door and torment you.

Because it is a spiritual being—because, human though the person may be, it is the devil working inside—it cannot stand before the name of Jesus Christ. That demon does not care whether you have faith or not. When you resist in the name of Jesus Christ, it is bound to retreat and bound to flee. It is the name of Jesus Christ that we call on so often, and yet what Satan the Devil fears most is that very name. It is because that Jesus Christ is God. Jesus Christ is the Savior, the Shepherd, and truly God. Therefore Satan the Devil is nothing before God. When you resist, he retreats. So you must resist.

Do not rely on the material only, but rely on God

There are negative thoughts that rise up in the heart, the whisperings of the devil. The devil came even to Jesus and did so. It seems we could live if only we had money, and when someone says he will give us money, the thought of quitting the life of faith often arises. But it is not so. He said that man shall not live by bread alone but by the word that proceeds from the mouth of God. There must be bread, but there must also be the word of God. We must live the life of faith, and there must be the work of God. Without the work of God, we cannot live.

The devil acts as if he would give everything if we submit to him, but once we actually submit, he tramples us down. We end up beggars. If we do not believe the word of God, do not live by faith, and live looking only at our circumstances, we are ruined. That Jesus was tempted by the devil like this shows that you and I are tempted like this too. Therefore we must live by faith; we must respect, love, and fear God; and we must believe by faith what God has said and follow it.

Even if we are born again, if we live without believing the word of God and without believing God, we are ruined. We are nothing. It is even worse than not having been born again. It is like that word Jesus spoke to Judas, that it would have been good for him if he had not been born. Even if we have been born again, believed the word of God, and received the remission of sins, if we do not live united with the church, united by faith with the work the church does, we are nothing. It is exactly the same as a paper tiger. The devil can toy with such a person as he pleases.

I ask that we know these things and truly live by faith in that way. Let us not rely on the material only, not rely on the material world only, but rely on and believe in God even though He is not visible to our eyes, and believe the words He has spoken and

follow His will. To preach the gospel to the whole world is the will of God, so let us follow that will of God by faith and act by faith. And so let us live receiving many blessings, receiving protection, receiving love, and enjoying many fruits of blessing as well. ☒

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Worship God and serve Him only

< Luke 4:1-13 >

“Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.’ But Jesus answered him, saying, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’” Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’” Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’” And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘It has been said, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’” Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.”

Today I want to share the word about fearing God. After Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, He was led by the Spirit and was tempted by the devil. Because He had eaten nothing in all those days, He was terribly hungry. Then the devil appeared and said, if You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread. Jesus answered, saying, “*It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone’*” (Luke 4:4).

By the will of God the Father, He was tempted by Satan the Devil, as if to say, test the Son of God, Jesus, and see. And those temptations were all fleshly things. It was to lead, through the fleshly, to the spiritual.

“Man shall not live by bread alone”

The first temptation was made with eating. When He was terribly hungry, the devil told Him to command these stones to become loaves of bread and eat. Then Jesus said, it is written that man shall not live by bread alone. The Gospel of Matthew records it: “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*”.

Much of what we pursue in this world is this bread. Is not the desire of man’s flesh exactly this? It is all material things. How to pile up wealth and become rich and enjoy power and gain honor—it feels as if we could live if only we had such things. So people chase after them, but a person does not live just because he has food, just because he has money.

Only when the heart is filled with the grace of God is there true satisfaction

The Book of Hebrews says that it is good that the heart be established not with foods but with grace. It means that man's heart is not satisfied by food, but must be made rich through the grace of God. People pursue money or honor or power, but if you ask whether they can live well once they gain it, it is not so. What a person pursues first after being born into the world is food, clothing, and shelter. People think that if they achieve it there will be satisfaction, and they live their whole lives for it. But when they achieve it, are they really satisfied?

With material things and honor alone, true satisfaction cannot be obtained. The Lord rather said that blessed are those who are poor in the flesh and poor in spirit. A person who is rich in the things of the world and says he is satisfied with them is not a spiritual person but a person like a beast. Material things are needed for us to live and function as human beings; they are not what makes a person happy. True satisfaction lies in holding the grace of God in the heart; it is not that a person is happy because he has material things.

The temptation of offering all the kingdoms of the world

Next, the devil took Jesus up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said, *"All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours"* (Luke 4:6–7). He was saying, if You submit to me, I will give You all authority

and glory.

Concerning this the Lord said, “*You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve*” (Luke 4:8), and resisted him with the word of God. Even the Lord did not act on what came out of His own heart, but cited the word recorded in the Old Testament. Satan the Devil also cited the word, but the Lord drove Satan the Devil back, saying that it is so written in the word of God and that this is what is right. To worship God and serve Him is what is most right.

To worship God is true satisfaction

As for worshiping, there is worship offered willingly, truly respecting, loving, and fearing the object of worship, and there is also worship pressed out by force. “*You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve*”—this is the most fundamental thing for you and me, and I know that it is for this that we must live and that we exist. Whether God has given us anything or not, apart from all that, to respect and worship God Himself and to uphold His will is our greatest happiness and blessing. For us who are born again, this is the most fitting faith, risen to the highest level.

We pursue worldly things and also do the work of God, but in truth it is not by these that our hearts gain satisfaction. We do them because they are the will of God. The satisfaction of our hearts lies in worshiping God—in knowing His highness and His mercy, knowing that He is the truth, knowing that He is the One worthy of respect, and obeying and submitting to Him and upholding His will. To serve Him like this is what we are to do. When we do, we have true joy and satisfaction. True satisfaction, having nothing to do with material things, is found when we

worship and serve God.

If one does not know how to worship God, it is nothing at all. Even a born-again person, if he fails to hold in his heart as the foundation that worshiping God is true satisfaction and delight, and instead follows his own self-interest and desire, making that his goal and living for it, it is truly nothing at all. It says, “*A man who is in honor, yet does not understand, Is like the beasts that perish*”—and it is really so.

Man is a being made in the likeness of the image of God, a being who can worship God. That God removed all our sins, made us the children of God, made us worship God and serve Him, and made us honorable in God. If we think on this and give thanks, and if, setting aside every condition, because God has loved us and bestowed all these blessings on us, and because of His highness and worthiness of respect, we respect and serve Him and delight to live so, that is the right life. When our hearts believe what God has done and, without any condition, bow our heads before God, give thanks, display His glory, and live rejoicing in Him, that is true satisfaction and the greatest blessing. If not this, it is nothing at all.

The temptation to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple

The third temptation Satan the Devil made was to take Him up to a high place and tell Him to throw Himself down. He took Jesus to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said, “*If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone’*” (Luke 4:9–11). And Jesus

answered and said to him, “*You shall not tempt the LORD your God*” (Luke 4:12). There is nothing to test. Is it not obvious?

We have only to worship God, respect Him, and live giving thanks for the grace He has given. Because He is the good God, we have only to live thinking of all He has done, saying, what shall I render to the LORD for the grace He has given, and giving thanks. God is good, so of course He keeps us, gives us food, gives us work, makes us honorable, and lets us enjoy riches and glory. He is the God who does so when we worship God, uphold His will, and serve Him—so what is there for us to test God about?

In truth, it was not from lack of power that Jesus was tempted by Satan the Devil. Because you and I live our whole lives receiving such temptations from Satan the Devil, He personally underwent temptation to teach us how to live at such times. I know He meant for us to overcome with this kind of faith. To worship God is the highest blessing and the highest faith. Satan the Devil tempted Jesus, but Jesus taught us rightly with the written word. He drove him back, saying: worship God and serve Him only; man shall not live by bread alone; you shall not tempt the LORD your God.

Do not tempt God

Some people say that there is a word in the Bible telling us to test God. In the Book of Malachi there is a word telling them to bring the tithe and test Him, to see whether God makes it overflow abundantly. But that was spoken because the other party was such a perverse brood—to let them taste the mercy and lovingkindness of God. Because the people of God were so perverse and did not know the love and goodness and marvelous

power of God, He said, test Me this once.

But do we become rich because we give much tithe? Within it there lies the heart of worship. When we have gained ten of income, we offer a tenth of it to God: since the One who gave all this material is God, and it is all God's, this expresses, I offer this one part with thanksgiving. There is no other meaning. He told them to offer the tithe as the payment of a worshiping heart.

That is why our church never says a word about offering the tithe or not, giving a thanksgiving offering or not, giving a special offering or not. Such things are hardly worth talking about. When we think of the Lord who removed our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit and made us the children of God, the Lord who glorifies us and blesses us and has kept us at all times, we truly cannot help but give thanks to God. For those who know such things, tithes and thanksgiving offerings are nothing to be desired. For those are things one could offer even without heart, as a few coins.

The men and women workers themselves work and cover what is needed within the church. If we did not do so, we would be demanding tithes every day and announcing who has not paid. Is not hanging up an offering graph precisely an indirect way of announcing it? Our Lord's being tempted by the devil teaches us that when we are tempted with material things and honor and the various things of the world, we should know that this word—worship God and serve Him only—is the truth, believe this word, and, thinking of the blessings God has given and the blessings He will give, worship and respect Him as we live. It is only right.

Satan the Devil always tempts us

Here it says that when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time. He tempted Jesus and left, and later comes again and tempts Him. When does he tempt Him? At the time when Jesus would shrink from being crucified, Satan the Devil comes and entices Him. So Jesus prays to God the Father: "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." He is saying that He does not want this. He does not want to be stripped of His garments, to have nails driven through both feet and both hands, to shed blood and die miserably in fear and pain.

At that moment, praying before the Father, He says at the last, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." What is the will of God the Father? It is that Jesus take on all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross and receive the judgment of those sins and die, and rise again from the dead. Jesus was crucified and died according to that will. When we believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we receive the remission of sins and receive salvation.

Satan the Devil always tempts. With what does he tempt? When we are starving, he tempts us to turn stones into bread and eat, and when the problem of food, clothing, and shelter is solved, he tempts us with the honor and wealth and power of this world, saying, "If you bow down to me, I will give you all this." When he makes this temptation, we are tempted for a while.

When the devil tempts, the person who does not really know what it is to worship God falls for it. But when we set our hearts in order, remove the dregs of the heart, and come to our senses, we come to know that even if we live only for ourselves, there is nothing that counts as living well. Knowing all that, by faith we must be able to determine: I have been crucified with Christ; whether I live this way or that way, I live for the Lord. I

determined in my heart: if I leave the church I cannot serve the gospel, so I will live within the church together with the righteous; like Moses, I will choose to suffer affliction together with the people of God. Moses, too, gave up the kingship of Egypt like that. But there are many who fell while being tempted by Satan the Devil. Wavering—if I just listen to this one word of Satan the Devil, all these things come to me—they fail at last to overcome their greed, bow down of themselves to that greed, and go out on that road. Such a person dies.

Everyone, have you ever gone hungry for forty days? Jesus fasted forty days, so He must have been terribly hungry. If you decide not to eat from today until the day after tomorrow, will you crave food or not? It was in such a state that Jesus was tempted by Satan the Devil. To give a test means to test whether you know or do not know, whether you really know it in your heart. And Jesus passed all those tests. He overcame, saying that man shall not live by bread alone but by the word that proceeds from the mouth of God, and that even if one were given all the things of the world, if he does not worship God he goes to hell; and the temptation to throw Himself down from a high place He also drove back, saying, you shall not tempt God—God of course keeps us, so why test Him?

To worship and serve God in every circumstance is the will of God

Such temptations come to us as well. In a person who has solved the problem of food, clothing, and shelter, the desire arises to possess the wealth and glory and honor of the world. Satan the Devil stirs up such greed and fans our hearts to live for it. At such a time, I must know that even while worshipping God

in this situation, there is wealth, a glorious life, and blessing in God. We have only to drive him back, saying: I can live even better while serving the Lord, so why do you tell me to live only for myself? Satan the Devil, be gone!—and, like Jesus, saying: worship God only and serve Him. But there are people who cannot do so.

We must pass through and overcome such temptations by faith. The scene where the devil actually tempts appears in the four Gospels and in the Gospel of Luke, and this temptation tests you and me without ceasing. The people of the world also tempt us with very sweet words, saying, if you just listen to me, it will turn out like this. Sometimes he tempts us not with a good card but with a shabby card, and even then there are times when we are led astray. Even we who are born again are still tempted.

In this temptation we must set our hearts, like Jesus, saying, “serve God only.” Whether I live or die, I am Christ’s; I am one who has lived with Christ, died with Christ, and lives with Christ; if Christ glorifies me, I will be glorified—we must have this united heart and faith. If we only have such faith, the Lord glorifies that person.

It is so with me as well. To a person whose heart is firmly set, I want to entrust this work and that work, and better work still. But if someone has skill and works hard, yet seems not to have set his heart, then whether he does well or poorly is of no account at all. He has already gone down below sixty points. A person who has set his heart is given sixty points to start, and can receive at least up to seventy. I deal with the brother workers and laborers in this way: have you set your heart before the Lord? Have you been united with Christ? Are you now following greed, or do you live with your heart set? I look at that and lead them. If the vessel is not ready, I want to make it into such a vessel, and if that does not work, I also wait.

To the person who has set his heart I want to entrust work, and I want to glorify him. As for the one who has not, I rather worry that things might go well for him. Jesus is the same. Showing us that He underwent several temptations for us, He asks: I underwent such temptations; you undergo such temptations too—have you set your heart? Do you overcome that temptation by faith? We cannot deceive God, who knows the center of the heart. Even after we are born again, temptations come often. To some ten times, to some fifty times—countless times they come. The one who overcomes well overcomes by faith. He drives it back, saying: I can live eating three meals a day—with something like that, what are you trying to entice me with? If I listen to you, what could you possibly give me?

Everyone, does the devil really give? The devil is a liar. He says he will give and absolutely does not give; he says he will do you good and absolutely does not do you good. That is the devil. Before I believed in Jesus, I went through such a temptation from Satan the Devil. I was once tempted by the rumor that if you enter a certain religious organization and do as they say, they give you food and riches, everything. They first win people over and take them in, and for a while they brainwash them, coerce them, and entice them sweetly. But once you bow down there, they give you nothing and instead make you a slave.

The devil absolutely does not give. If he gives at all, he demands a price greater than what he gave. Must you suffer such things yourself before you know? It is also wisdom to know indirectly by watching what others have suffered. As the saying goes about learning from another's stone, we come to know by listening to what other people have gone through. Satan the Devil absolutely never gives us anything good. He lies even to the people of the world—how much more will he lie to the people of God! So whatever happens, to worship God and serve

Him is our duty. What is there for you and me to do after receiving the remission of sins? It is to worship God and uphold the will of God. That is your happiness and mine, our blessing, and right faith.

Satan the Devil often leads us astray, but we must not keep falling into such things; we must worship God and serve Him only. When we serve the righteousness of God, God gives us blessing and gives us grace. In any case, we must know that we face such temptations, and live so by faith. It is the will of God that the gospel be preached to all the whole world. And I know that to worship God and serve God in whatever circumstance is the duty of you and me. In every circumstance we must worship and serve God only. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Serve only the Lord

< Luke 4:1-15 >

“Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.’ But Jesus answered him, saying, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’” Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’” Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’” And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘It has been said, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’” Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time. Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the

surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.”

Jesus received at the Jordan, from John the Baptist, the baptism by which He took on the sins of mankind, and now He returns and begins His public ministry in earnest. But before beginning that ministry, the Lord was tempted by Satan the Devil in the wilderness.

That the Lord underwent this temptation was for us. To show in person how Satan the Devil tempts us after we are born again, and how we must overcome that temptation by faith, the Lord first received all those temptations and overcame them. Here lies the reason this event was left to us in the word.

The Bible records it like this: *“Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry”* (Luke 4:1–2). For forty days the Lord was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, eating nothing, and went hungry. It was at that very time of hunger that Satan the Devil appeared and tempted the Lord. He aimed at that weak moment when the flesh instinctively craves to eat.

The first temptation: make bread out of stones

Satan the Devil said, *“If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread”* (Luke 4:3). Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father, is the Creator who created the universe. Because Satan the Devil also knows that fact, he incited Him: if You are the One who creates something out of nothing, surely You can

manage to turn this stone into bread? He was saying, do not suffer with hunger—use that power and fill Your stomach.

But Jesus answered, “*Man shall not live by bread alone*” (Luke 4:4). It is a truly simple and clear truth. Satan the Devil held up only the one thing, bread, but the Lord said that bread and the word of God must both be there. How can a person live eating bread only? Without the word of God, without believing and following God, a person truly cannot live. At this one word of the Lord, Satan the Devil ended up retreating.

The temptation we face every day

This temptation is not something only Jesus underwent. It is the temptation that we Christians today undergo exactly the same. There are times when we have other things to some degree, but exactly one thing is lacking. One person has no material means, another has no honor, and for another, a loved one’s problem remains unresolved. It is precisely when the heart is captivated by that one lacking thing that we are tempted.

Then Satan the Devil appears and says this: I will solve that problem for you, if only you do this for me. The time a person most easily falls is exactly this time. Just as taking a test at school reveals whether you have studied or not, Satan the Devil tests in this way whether we truly fear God, whether we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, have received the remission of sins, and follow the Lord to the end.

What would it be like if we had the power to change stones into bread? Probably, without doing any work, we would command every stone to change into gold and diamonds and bread, enjoying power, exalting only ourselves without God. But we, who have no such power, look for human methods instead.

Chasing after a place that pays a higher salary, or turning over this way and that whatever talent we have, we try to solve the problem by those methods rather than by God. And in doing so we end up falling forever.

Here we must choose without fail. Is it more important that this hard problem we are now going through be solved, or is it more important to believe in and follow God? Even if this problem is never solved, we must choose God. God, or the road that promises to meet my need—at that crossroads we must set our hearts.

But does Satan the Devil really give us what he promised? He never gives. Even the people of the world say they will do something for you and then do not do it. Satan the Devil only takes the one thing you need most as bait, hangs it on his fishing rod, and drags you around this way and that. Saying, if you do this I will give you this, and if you do that I will give you that, he works people like slaves.

In that way people spend their whole lives clinging to the problem of food, clothing, and shelter, living as slaves of the devil. And even so they do not eat their fill, and in the end they fall sick and despair, and some even take their own lives. This is the method of Satan the Devil. He entices you to yield just one thing—to quit just believing in God and coming out to church. But for whose sake is it that we come out to church and believe in God? It is for our own selves.

Suppose someone sets the condition that he will supply what the flesh needs, and actually grants it. Does that person then become blessed? Never. From that moment, rather, wretchedness begins. The moment you kneel, Satan the Devil turns about, asking when he ever said such a thing. You believed because he said he would give, and he mocks you, saying it was just something he said.

It is the one who has not set his heart who falls

Then why do we Christians fall? It is because we believe that there is something the flesh needs, and that if we follow the words of Satan the Devil we can obtain it. We are taken in by the thought that if we yield just this one thing, we will gain what we need. But are we God? Does Satan the Devil really keep his promise? Never.

Before such a temptation, the person whose core is not firm falls. He barely believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit and barely knows that his sins have been remitted, but deep in his heart he has not yet drawn a clear line before God. So countless people have fallen, and many more will fall. Even among pastors and evangelists and workers there are such people.

If we believe and follow God wholly like Abraham, then even if such a problem strikes and we are shaken for a moment, we come to stand firm by faith. Such a person shines all the more. But the person who has not set his heart—as time passes, his true root is exposed in the end. What is truly important is not whether a problem has struck or not, but where we have set our hearts and stand right now.

Jesus is not merely the Son of God; He is God, who created the universe. That is why, if He says to a stone, become bread, it becomes bread. The Lord fed five thousand men, counting only the men, with five loaves and two fish, and had twelve baskets left over. The One who makes what is not to be, who commanded the stars to be and made the whole universe, is God. When we say Jesus Christ, we are calling on our God, the King of kings, the God who created the universe.

The second temptation: bow to me and I will give you all

Satan the Devil again led Jesus up, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said this: *“All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours”* (Luke 4:6–7). It is a word that sounds truly astonishing and powerful. If You just bow down to me, he says, I will give You all of this.

This is the method Satan the Devil uses, then and now alike. He piles up diamonds as high as a pulpit and deceives: bow down to me and I will give you all of this. But the person who knows God never falls for it. Though he were given not just diamonds but this whole earth, he would not exchange God for it.

Jesus answered, *“You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve”* (Luke 4:8). Serve God only and worship Him only, He is saying. We too must hold fast to this word. However Satan the Devil deceives us with promises to give us something, we must serve only the Lord and worship Him only.

The third temptation: throw Yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple

Satan the Devil again took Jesus to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said, *“If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here”* (Luke 4:9). He even dragged in the word of the Scriptures, that God would command His angels to bear You up and keep You, and so enticed Him. But Jesus answered, *“You shall not tempt the LORD your God”* (Luke 4:12).

When the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Jesus for a while. Here is something we must know. The fact is that overcoming a temptation once does not mean it is over. When we pass a test, the devil comes back again carrying the same problem. The temptations continue. Therefore, each time, we must believe that the words the Lord spoke are the truth. Do not tempt God; worship God and serve Him only; man shall not live by bread alone—chewing over these words again, we must live by faith.

Stand firm by faith and serve only the Lord

We must take this temptation that Jesus Christ underwent, and this temptation that Christians undergo, and apply it deeply to our own selves. Even if we cannot fathom all of this word at this very moment, we must engrave it on our hearts again and again as we live on. Those who walked the way of faith before us also all went through such temptations. When they sought to serve only the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the devil tempted them: I will send you to study abroad, I will set you in a high position, I will turn all the property over to your name. But if they had obeyed those words, nothing would be left now. The person who betrays God and follows Satan the Devil to gain something may look plausible for a moment, but his true colors are soon exposed.

The answer is all within the word. It is to stay alive and not die, to stand before the Lord by faith though we are lacking, to hold on to the Lord by faith, to walk together with the Lord, and to do what pleases the Lord until we meet Him. The person of faith comes to be so. But the person who betrays midway falls and departs and becomes an adversary, and finally perishes. I want our God to keep us to the very end. ☒

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Know and believe that Jesus is God

< Luke 4:16-30 >

“So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.’ Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’ So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, ‘Is this not Joseph’s son?’ He said to them, ‘You will surely say this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.’ Then He said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to

Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.’ So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.”

He read the writing of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth

Following the word we shared in the daytime, let us now look at the scene where the Lord begins His ministry in earnest. The Lord fasted forty days and was tempted by Satan the Devil. And having driven back those temptations by believing the word of God, He now begins His ministry in the power of the Spirit. The first scene of that ministry is today’s passage.

The Lord went to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and on the Sabbath, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue and stood up to read the Scriptures. Handed the writing of the prophet Isaiah, He opened the book and found the place where it was written—namely, this word of verse 18: *“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD”* (Luke 4:18–19). The Lord found and read this word and expounded its meaning as He preached it.

After preaching this word, He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down, and all who were in the synagogue fixed their eyes on Him. Then Jesus said to them, *“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21)*. That is, this word of prophecy the Lord read was the word about the Lord Himself. For the One whom the Old Testament prophesied is the Lord, and that Lord came to this earth and accomplishes this work together with the Holy Spirit. Therefore the Lord read this word that testifies of His own self, and said that this word was fulfilled to the Jewish people listening that day.

The liberty the Lord came to accomplish is spiritual liberty

When the Lord said that He proclaims liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, He was not speaking about the circumstances of the flesh. What He spoke of here is entirely a spiritual matter.

When we had become captives of sin, held fast by Satan the Devil, the Lord gave us the remission of sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit and gave us true liberty. When our spiritual eyes were blind, He washed the sins of our hearts and made us able to see God. When we were oppressed by Satan the Devil, He brought us out of that oppression and gave us true liberty. It was to have this light of the truth of salvation proclaimed that the Lord came to this earth.

Yet today some theologians wrongly understand this word as a word about liberating the flesh. They say that ministry is the work of releasing the oppressed, and that liberating people who suffer low wages and abuse at their companies is the gospel. So

those who follow this theology of liberation went into workplaces and made unions and took the work of liberating people as their ministry. But that is greatly mistaken.

The Lord said that the poor will always be on this earth. There will always be people who press others down and people who are pressed down. It is because this world is not a perfect world. Of course, delivering people out of such circumstances is also a good work. But that is not the whole.

What a person truly needs is to be delivered from sin. It is to meet Jesus Christ in that state of being a captive of sin and a spiritual blind man, and to be washed of sin and receive salvation. This is the true meeting, and the true salvation that comes out from under the oppression of sin. Here lies the purpose for which God came to this earth. That is why the Lord said that this word was fulfilled to them today.

The people heard the gracious words of Jesus Christ and marveled and were pleased. But soon they said, “*Is this not Joseph’s son?*” (Luke 4:22) Jesus was born in Bethlehem and grew up in the town of Nazareth. So the people regarded Him as merely the son of Joseph.

The Lord knew their hearts, and knowing that they would drag in this proverb to challenge Him, He spoke first: “*You will surely say this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country’*” (Luke 4:23). The proverb, Physician, heal yourself, is a saying aimed at a man who claims to heal others’ diseases: heal your own self first. That is, the inward thought of the people was this: your father is Joseph and we all know your brothers—who are you to say such things? If you healed the sick and worked miracles in Capernaum, do it once here in Nazareth too, where you grew up. Then we will believe you.

In the end they did not believe that Jesus is the Son of God

the Father and that He is God. Though the Lord came to this earth to save those pressed down by sin and taken captive, saving them with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, many people did not believe in Jesus. And above all, in the town of Nazareth where Jesus was brought up, however right the word He preached and whatever wonders He worked, they did not believe.

Even in the days of Elijah and Elisha, those who believed were few

Since the people did not believe like this, the Lord spoke of what happened in the days of Elijah and Elisha: *“But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian”* (Luke 4:25–27).

There were countless people then also, but among all those many widows of Israel starving in the famine, the one who received grace was only the one widow of Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Among the many lepers of Israel, the one who was cleansed was only the one man, Naaman the Syrian. The New Testament age is the same. Though the Lord came to this earth and saved us from sin with the gospel of the water and the Spirit and set us free from oppression, those who actually believed were few, and those whose hearts were prepared were very few.

The grace that came upon the one person who obeyed

Those whose hearts were prepared were truly few. There were so many lepers in Israel, but the one who obeyed the word of Elisha to go to the Jordan and wash his body seven times was General Naaman alone. The Lord knew his heart and bestowed grace on him.

The widow of Zarephath is the same. When all Israel was about to starve to death in the famine, God sent Elijah to the one widow of Zarephath. That widow was in such straits that she was going to make bread with the last of her flour, eat it with her child, and die. Yet Elijah, the servant of God, told her to make it for him first and bring it to him. To the thought of the flesh it sounds heartless. But that widow obeyed that word. In that age too, people who could hear the word of God and obey were truly rare.

The one who knows Jesus only as a man receives no grace

It was the same in the New Testament age, when the Lord came to this earth. The Lord came to deliver us from sin and give us liberty with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and He actually did that work, but those who believed were few. It was because people knew Jesus only as a man and thought of Him only as a man.

To speak precisely, Jesus is the Son of God the Father. The Son of God the Father is our God, who created this universe and all things. In preaching we commonly say the Son of God, Jesus Christ, but to express it precisely, He is the Son of God the Father,

Jesus Christ. He is the Creator and He is God.

The person who thinks of Jesus only as a man and judges Him with human eyes can never receive grace. This age is exactly so. When the Lord went to the town of Nazareth, what did the people say? They rejected Him, saying, “*Is this not Joseph’s son?*” (Luke 4:22) But in other towns, which did not know Jesus according to the flesh, they saw the signs and wonders that appeared through Jesus and rather believed well. If one judges Jesus with human eyes only, he cannot believe, and in the end it finishes at that.

Jesus is the Creator and God

The people who heard this word of Jesus were filled with wrath and rose up. The Bible records it like this: “*So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way*” (Luke 4:28–30).

We must think deeply about this situation. If we read it only as words on a page it seems like nothing much, but in reality it is a truly grave scene. Many people seized Jesus and dragged Him to the brow of the cliff to push Him off and kill Him. It was a situation where a few men had only to grab His arms and legs and throw Him from the cliff and it would be over. And yet Jesus passed calmly through the midst of them and went His way.

This was not Jesus running away. It was not that He was caught and about to die and begged for His life and slipped out. Because Jesus is God, He is not One to be killed by man like that. Then how is it that Jesus died hanging on the Cross? Because He

had shouldered our sins, He gave Himself up to hang there and die. This scene of His passing calmly through the midst of the people shows that Jesus is not a mere man but God.

Jesus is God and man, man and God. He has both natures. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, who came to save us from sin.

When Jesus met a demon-possessed man, His divinity was revealed there also. When the Lord commanded in His heart, the legion of demons protested, begging Him not to send them out, and called out to Jesus as the Son of God. Even the demons know that Jesus is the Son of God and the Creator. Here is the reason demons tremble in fear when we command them in the name of Jesus Christ. That they tremble in fear before that name is because He is God.

Therefore we must know Jesus rightly. Whether Jesus is a mere man or God—we must know it clearly through the word. The Bible testifies like this: “*All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made*” (John 1:3). This world was made through Him. Jesus is the very One who made all these things.

Even if one believes in Jesus as the Savior and believes in Him as the Shepherd, if he does not know that He is God, that faith is not complete. For example, suppose someone calls Buddha a savior. Everything is decided by whether Buddha is a man or God. If he is a man, he is imperfect and cannot be trusted, and however much he may say he has saved, that is not true salvation.

But if He is truly God, the story is different. The God who created the universe and made man—when man fell into sin, He personally put on a human body and came to this earth. And He received baptism from John and took over all the sins of us mankind, offered His own body as a sacrificial offering before

God the Father, received the judgment of sin on the Cross and died, and rose again from the dead. Because He saved us like this with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that salvation is complete. Because He is God, He has the power and the qualification for it, and that is why He truly becomes our Savior.

If we read the New Testament, scenes where Jesus and the Jews contend appear again and again. The reason is that they knew Jesus only according to the flesh, only as the son of Joseph. They despised Him, thinking, what could a man brought up in Nazareth do? But it does not matter where one is born. What matters is to awaken and know Jesus as God.

Know and believe that Jesus is God

We must know rightly, through the word revealed in the Bible, who this Jesus is. All those many people tried to kill Jesus, but Jesus passed calmly through the crowd. He did not run away; being God, He was not One to be killed by man.

In the word we shared in the daytime, when Satan the Devil told Him to turn a stone into bread, the Lord drove him back with the written word. In truth, God is the One who can do such a thing. Not as magic—He can actually do it. The One who raises even the dead and makes what is not to be is God. Therefore we must know and believe that Jesus is God. The One who made the universe and made even a single flower blooming in the field is Jesus.

When we know that Jesus is God and our Savior, true faith is born. If we know Jesus only as a man, believing is of no use however much we believe. Knowing Him merely as a savior is also not enough. It is because in this world there are so many who call themselves saviors. The only One who can save us from

sin, without judging and destroying us, is God alone. We sinned against God and could only be punished and go to hell, and only when that God personally comes as our Savior and saves us do we receive salvation.

Therefore we must learn and know this truth. He said, *“You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32). This is the most basic thing in Christianity, its very frame. If this part is not clear, everything comes to nothing. Believing in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, merely to that degree is not enough. We must know and believe that Jesus is God.

All things were made through Him, so you and I also are what He made. Only, He is God, and yet, when we fell into sin, to save those He had made He put on a human body and came to this earth for a time. And He saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit and went up again into heaven. This we must know without fail.

Many theologians and clergy of the world do not know precisely and do not believe that Jesus is God, and so all their striving and labor ends up returning to nothing. Man is never God. However holy and spiritual one pretends to be, it is all useless. Rather, a man who does not smell of humanity and excessively pretends to be spiritual is often a hypocrite. People are easily deceived by such things. But to serve a mountain spirit is to serve a demon, and we must discern this.

Jesus is God. He is the God who created the universe, and the God who saved us from sin. He becomes to us God, and the Savior, and the Shepherd, and the Friend, and He becomes our spiritual Bridegroom, who takes us to the kingdom of the Lord to live together with Him. Because He is God, He becomes everything to us. He is perfect. We look at this word and believe that Jesus is God, and become those who keep that faith in their hearts as they live. ☒

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The word of Jesus with authority silences the unclean demon and casts him out

< Luke 4:31-37 >

“Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!’ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet, and come out of him!’ And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, ‘What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.’ And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region.”

The people were astonished at the teaching of Jesus with authority

Jesus taught the people on the Sabbath in the synagogue of Capernaum in Galilee. They heard the Lord's teaching and were astonished, and Luke made plain the reason: it was because there was authority in the word of Jesus. Because the Lord, who is fundamentally God, spoke, in His teaching there was the authority of God that lights up the heart of man and subdues the evil spirit.

The people of the synagogue also saw that authority actually appear when Jesus spoke. There was a man there who had a spirit of an unclean demon, and when the Lord spoke, the demon inside him let out a loud voice and exposed its presence. Jesus, with His own word, made that demon be quiet and come out of the man, and when the Lord's command was proclaimed, the rule of the evil spirit actually ended.

Everyone, our eyes must turn to Jesus, who subdued with a single word the demon that had cried out with a loud voice. The people of the synagogue heard the word and were astonished at its authority, and then saw even the evil spirit obey the command of Jesus. And yet that demon spoke accurately about who Jesus is. The passage here shows the fact that the knowledge that knows the identity of Jesus and the faith that believes His salvation in the heart are not the same.

The demon knew Jesus but did not believe in His salvation

The unclean demon called Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, and cried out asking what they had to do with Him. It also said that Jesus

is the Holy One of God, who has the authority to destroy them. The demon knew the identity and authority of Jesus and feared, but that knowledge did not lead to the faith that believes in and follows the Lord. So Jesus did not receive the demon's words as testimony, but shut its mouth.

Who the Son of God is, and how He has saved us, must be known through the word God caused to be recorded. The faith that receives salvation does not stop at calling Jesus the Son of God, but receives into the heart the work by which He actually removed our sins. The demon feared destruction before the authority of Jesus, but the sinner hears and believes the word of the salvation the Lord accomplished, and is saved from sin and judgment.

Today too, there are many people who call Jesus a great teacher or the Son of God and who know about the Cross and the resurrection. The passage gathers our eyes not to the demon's words but to the command of Jesus and the result that command accomplished. Therefore we too must not linger on what the demon knew about Jesus, but look in order at how the Lord who has authority delivered that man, and how He removed our sins.

At the command of Jesus the unclean demon went out of the man

Jesus rebuked the unclean demon, commanding it to be quiet and come out of the man. The demon threw the man down in the midst of the crowd and came out, but could not hurt him. Even the evil spirit that had held the man and cried out with a loud voice could not defy a single word of Jesus. The Lord not only silenced the demon's words; He ended its rule and actually delivered a man.

The people who saw this were all amazed and asked one another what kind of word this is, that with authority and power He commands the unclean demon and it comes out. As what they had witnessed became known, the report of Jesus spread into every place in the surrounding region. The passage shows the authority of Jesus as an actual event in which the evil spirit obeys His command and a man is set free.

In the passage that follows, Luke separately records that Simon's wife's mother was held by a high fever. Jesus cast out the unclean demon, and He also healed the sick. Therefore we must not conclude that every disease or affliction of heart is the working of a demon, but must help the sick receive the treatment and care they need. At the same time, we also believe the existence of evil spirits that the Bible makes plain, and the fact that Jesus is above all those powers.

Jesus, who has authority, saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit

The Jesus who commanded with authority in Capernaum is the very One who received baptism from John the Baptist in the previous chapter. Jesus Christ is fundamentally God, and He is the Son of God, who came clothed in the body of a man to save us. The sinless Lord received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, in order to take over the sins of all mankind onto His own body. Through this baptism God transferred all the sins of the world onto the body of Jesus.

Jesus took on those sins transferred to Him by the baptism and carried them all the way to the Cross. On the Cross He was judged in the place of us sinners and shed His precious blood, and by actually dying He paid the whole price of the sin of the

world. And on the third day after He was buried, He rose again from the dead and overcame the power of sin and death. With His baptism, the judgment of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection, the Lord fulfilled all the righteousness of God and eternal atonement and completed our salvation.

Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of all sins. God gives the believer the Holy Spirit as a gift and makes him His own child, and the believer, clothed in the righteousness the Lord completed, becomes a righteous person without sin before God. Unlike the demon, which had only knowledge about Jesus, the believer receives into his heart the word that the Lord took charge of all his sins and finished the judgment.

The devil digs up the believer's weaknesses and past wrongs and accuses him again, calling him a sinner. Then we believe the verdict of God, that Jesus took on all the sins of the world and was judged. When the word exposes our wrongdoing, we admit that the word of God is right and correct our thoughts and actions, and from then on live following the will of the Lord. The word of the Lord with authority, which ended the rule of the evil spirit in the synagogue, leads believers today also to stand firm on the completed salvation.

The true servant of God preaches the gospel with authority

The people of Capernaum saw for themselves that there was authority in the word of Jesus. The authority of the preaching we hear today also comes not from the preacher's forceful manner of speech or his fame, but from the word of God he preaches. The one who preaches the word explains the gospel of the water

and the Spirit and leads us to receive salvation, but he is not a savior who redeems our sins like Jesus Christ. The One who took the sins on His own body, was judged, and removed them is Jesus alone.

The person who takes the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist out of salvation, and teaches that a man must live as a sinner all his life and must wash his sins daily with repeated prayers of repentance, is one who preaches the religious doctrines of the world. The true servant of God preaches as one gospel the baptism by which the sin of the world was transferred to Jesus, the Cross on which those sins were judged, and the Lord's resurrection. He does not hold people captive under his own authority, but leads them to believe the salvation Jesus completed.

Therefore we must examine whether the gospel a preacher preaches agrees with the Bible, rather than his character or career. We must hear clearly who the Jesus he points to is, and how the Lord removed our sins. When the content of the gospel agrees with the word of God, we receive that word into our hearts, give thanks for the servant of God and the church that preached the same gospel, and serve the gospel together.

The unclean demon knew Jesus as the Holy One of God and yet did not believe in Him. We believe in our hearts the gospel that the Lord, with the baptism He received from John, took charge of our sins, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again. The Lord, who ended the rule of the evil spirit in the synagogue and actually delivered a man, has also actually saved us from sin and judgment with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. To the one who believes this gospel, God pronounces the verdict that all his sins are gone, gives the Holy Spirit, and makes him His own child. Believe in Jesus Christ, who saved you and me, and in the gospel He completed. ☒

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus was sent to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God to the other cities also

< Luke 4:42-44 >

“Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them; but He said to them, ‘I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.’ And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.”

The crowd wished that Jesus would not leave them

In Capernaum Jesus taught with the word of authority and cast out the unclean demon. When Simon’s wife’s mother was held by a high fever, He healed that fever, and when the sun was setting, He laid His hands on every one of the many sick people brought to Him and healed them. The people of Capernaum experienced the Lord’s word and power close at hand, and when day came and Jesus went out to a deserted place, they came looking for Him and tried to keep Him from leaving them.

Jesus said to the crowd who had sought Him out that He must preach the gospel of the kingdom of God to the other cities also, and that He had been sent for this work. At the very moment the crowd tried to hold Jesus back, the Lord made plain the reason

He could not stay in one city only. The work the Father had entrusted to Him was to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God to the people of the other cities also, who had not yet heard the word.

Just as He said, Jesus left Capernaum and went to the many synagogues of Galilee and preached. The Lord, who had cared for the sick of one city one by one, went with the same heart to the souls of the other cities as well. This passage shows together what Jesus was sent for, and to whom the gospel of the kingdom of God must be delivered.

Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom of God to the other cities also

Jesus said that He must preach the gospel of the kingdom of God in the other cities also. Outside Capernaum there were still many people who needed to hear the word of the Lord. The Lord went to the many synagogues of Galilee and preached the word, so that the gospel that had come to one city kept on spreading to the other cities as well.

The gospel of the kingdom of God that Jesus preached is the way by which a person estranged from God by sin is saved and enters into the reign of God. The kingdom of God is the kingdom where God reigns as King, and a person with sin in his heart cannot enter that kingdom. Therefore the one who preaches the kingdom of God must make plain how God cleanses sinners and makes them His own people and children.

Jesus, who healed the sick in Capernaum and delivered the man pressed down by the evil spirit, preached in the other cities also the gospel that solves the most fundamental problem of man—sin and judgment. The Lord cared for the sufferings of the

body while giving the word by which the soul receives salvation. Today the church also must give the suffering the help they need, and preach the gospel so that they hear of the salvation Jesus accomplished and enter the kingdom of God.

Jesus, who was sent, completed the way of the kingdom of God

Jesus said that He had been sent for the work of preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. God the Father sent His Son to this earth to save sinners and call them into His own kingdom. Jesus, who is fundamentally God, came clothed in the flesh of man through the body of the virgin Mary, and with the body of a true man in our place He accomplished the saving work of God.

The sinless Jesus, when He turned thirty, received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. Through this baptism God transferred onto the body of Jesus the sin that came down from Adam and the sins of the world that all people commit throughout their lives. After taking over our sins onto His own body, the Lord took charge of those sins and carried them all the way to the Cross.

On the Cross Jesus was judged in the place of us sinners and shed His precious blood, and by actually dying He paid the whole price of the sin of the world. And on the third day after He was buried, He rose again from the dead and overcame the power of sin and death. With His baptism, the judgment of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection, the Lord fulfilled all the righteousness of God and eternal atonement and completed our salvation.

Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of all sins. God gives the

believer the Holy Spirit as a gift and makes him His own child, and the saved person calls God Father and belongs to His kingdom. The gospel of the kingdom of God that Jesus preached and the salvation the Lord accomplished in His own body are joined into one like this.

The true servant of God leads people to the gospel of the kingdom of God

Jesus is the One who preached the gospel of the kingdom of God and the Savior who completed that gospel in His own body. The one who preaches the word explains this gospel and leads us to receive salvation, but he is not a savior who shoulders people's sins and is judged in their place like Jesus Christ. The One who redeemed our sins and became the Head of all who believe is Jesus alone.

The person who separates the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist from the Cross, who sets up man's works as a condition of salvation, and who teaches as though one must obey his authority to be saved, is one who preaches the religious doctrines of the world. Such teaching makes people depend not on Jesus but on a religious leader. The true servant of God preaches precisely the baptism by which the sin of the world was transferred to Jesus, the judgment of the Cross, and the resurrection, and leads those who hear to believe this gospel and enter the kingdom of God.

Therefore we must examine what a preacher preaches as the gospel, rather than his influence or fame. We must confirm whether he preaches the Lord's baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection as one completed salvation. We learn the word through the servant of God who preaches this gospel precisely,

and together with the church we deliver the way of the kingdom of God to those who have not yet heard the word.

We who are saved preach the gospel to other souls

Luke's record that Jesus went to the many synagogues of Galilee shows that the Lord's declaration led on into actual action. The Lord went in person to the people who needed to hear the gospel, and the word that began in Capernaum passed through many synagogues and was delivered to the people of the other cities also.

We too, who believe this gospel and belong to the kingdom of God, go to those who have not yet heard the word. Beside us are family and neighbors who, even with experience of attending church, do not know why Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, or how the sin of the world passed over to the Lord and was judged on the Cross. We must listen to their questions and read the Bible together with them, explaining precisely and intelligibly the salvation Jesus completed.

The work of serving the gospel within the church is also carried out concretely according to this purpose. There are those who preach the word directly, and there are those who prepare and deliver gospel books, or who keep in contact with new people and help them keep on hearing the word. Believers support the work of preaching the gospel with prayer and material things, and each one works together in his own appointed place so that other souls can hear the word of life.

The person who has become a child of God believes the Father and follows the word, serving the gospel together with the church. When the word exposes his wrongdoing, he admits that the word of God is right and corrects his thoughts and

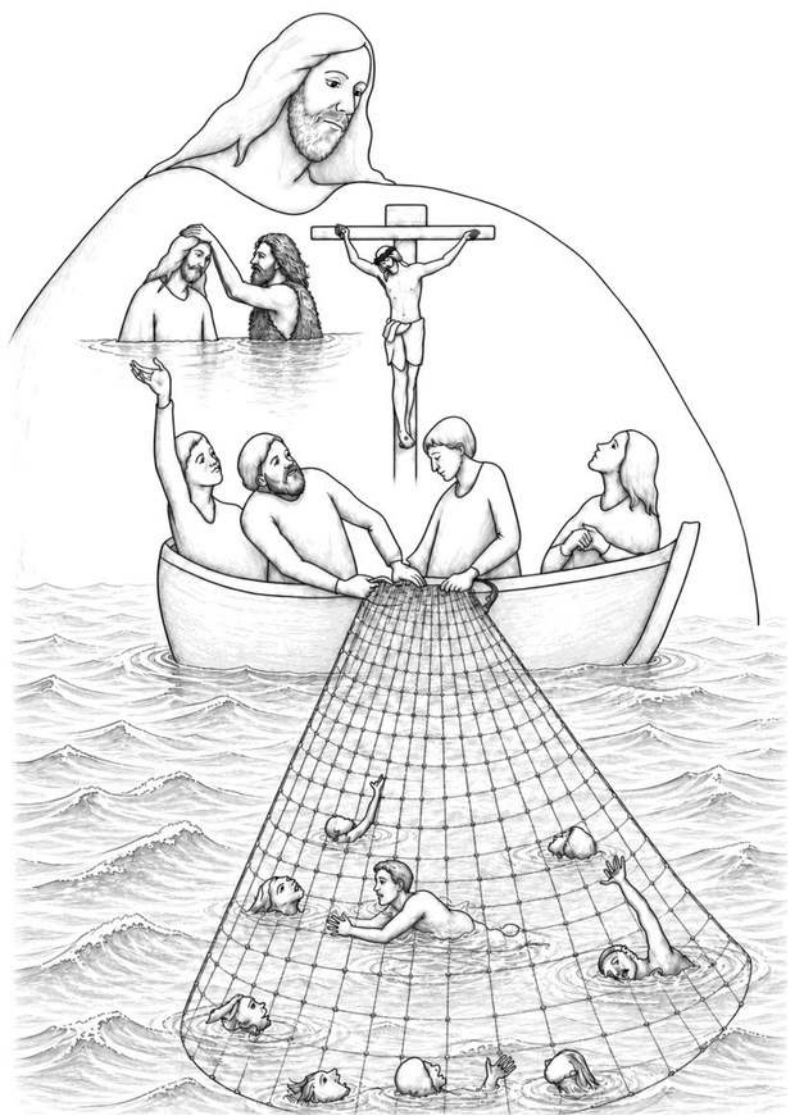
actions, and from then on lives following the will of the Lord. The thanksgiving that the Lord actually removed our sins leads on into the heart that wishes for family and neighbors to receive the same salvation.

The crowd who sought out Jesus wished that the Lord would not leave, but Jesus said that He had been sent to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God to the other cities also. And just as He said, He went to the many synagogues of Galilee. The will of the Lord, who saved you and me, is that this word of life be delivered today also to every person under sin. I ask you first to believe this gospel in your hearts and become the children of God, and, together with the church, to deliver the way of the kingdom of God to the souls who have not yet heard the word. ✉

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CHAPTER

5



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Luke Chapter 5

seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Introduction

In Luke chapter 4, Jesus proclaimed that He is the Christ, who preaches the gospel to the poor and sets the captives and the oppressed free. Luke chapter 5 shows how that word appears in the lives of people.

Peter, who let down the net relying on the word of Jesus, experienced an astonishing catch of fish. But before considering the fish, he saw who Jesus is, and realized that he himself was a sinner. Jesus did not cast him away, but called him as a worker who catches men.

Jesus made the leper clean and proclaimed the remission of sins to the paralyzed man. He called Levi the tax collector and ate together with sinners. And He said that He had not come to call the righteous, but to call sinners to repentance. Luke chapter 5 testifies that Jesus is the Savior, who makes sinners clean, remits their sins, and calls them to a new life.

1. Peter let down the net relying on the word (Luke 5:1–11)

“So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from

them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, 'Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.' But Simon answered and said to Him, 'Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.' And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.' So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him" (Luke 5:1–11).

Simon and his companions had toiled all night but caught nothing. When Jesus told him to launch out into the deep and let down the net, Simon followed the word of the Lord rather than his own experience. When he let down the net *"at Your word"* (Luke 5:5), so many fish were caught that the two boats began to sink.

Simon did not boast of his own ability at the sight of the many fish. He fell down at the knees of Jesus and confessed, *"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"* (Luke 5:8) Before the holy Lord he saw his own true self. This scene, rather than being a direct fulfillment of prophecy, calls to mind the scene in Isaiah 6:1–7 in which the prophet Isaiah, after seeing the holy God, confessed his own uncleanness and received

cleansing. When a person knows the Lord rightly, he lays down his own experience and righteousness and comes to admit that he is a sinner.

Jesus did not cast away the frightened Simon. Saying, *“Do not be afraid,”* He called him as a worker who catches men. The calling of the Lord did not come upon a person who boasted of his own ability, but upon a person who had realized he was a sinner. Peter and his companions left everything and followed Jesus.

2. He made the leper clean (Luke 5:12–16)

“And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately the leprosy left him. And He charged him to tell no one, ‘But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded.’ However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed” (Luke 5:12–16).

The man who was full of leprosy fell down before Jesus and implored Him to make him clean. Jesus touched him and said, *“I am willing; be cleansed” (Luke 5:13).* Then the leprosy immediately left him.

Jesus told him to show himself to the priest and make an offering, just as Moses commanded. This, rather than being a direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, was a command to follow the regulations of cleansing recorded in Leviticus 14:1–32. He had the fact that the man had become clean testified

according to the procedure the Law had appointed. Jesus respected the testimony procedure the Law had appointed and had him act according to that word.

This event shows that Jesus is the Savior, who does not turn away from an unclean person. The Lord put out His hand and made him clean. The One who can make clean the heart defiled by sin is also Jesus.

3. He has power on earth to remit sins (Luke 5:17–26)

“Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them. Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. When He saw their faith, He said to him, ‘Man, your sins are forgiven you.’ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, ‘Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, ‘Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk?’ But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the man who was paralyzed, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, ‘We have seen strange things today!’” (Luke 5:17–26).

People stripped off the tiling of the roof to bring the paralyzed man before Jesus. Jesus saw their faith and said first, “*Your sins are forgiven you*” (Luke 5:20). The Lord did not look only at the sickness of the flesh, but dealt with the problem of the remission of sins.

The scribes and the Pharisees thought that no one can remit sins but God alone. That statement itself shows the fact that the authority of the remission of sins belongs to God. Psalm 103:2–3 proclaims that it is the LORD who remits all iniquities and heals all diseases, and Isaiah 43:25 says that God wipes out transgressions and does not remember sins. These words, rather than being passages that directly prophesied the healing of the paralyzed man, are the Old Testament background showing that the remission of sins and healing are the authority that belongs to God. Jesus, by raising the paralyzed man and making him walk, showed that He is the Son of Man, who has power on earth to remit sins. The name “*the Son of Man*” that Jesus used is canonically connected with the Son of Man in Daniel 7:13–14, who received everlasting dominion and a kingdom.

The remission of sins that Jesus gives is not a consolation in words only. The paralyzed man’s rising and walking is a sign that calls to mind the promise of salvation in Isaiah 35:5–6, that when God comes to save, the lame will walk, and the healing ministry of Jesus actually reveals the direction of that promise. He received baptism from John and actually took on the sins of mankind. And He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, died, and rose again. Therefore Jesus is the God of salvation, who remits sins.

4. He came to call sinners to repentance (Luke 5:27–32)

“After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he left all, rose up, and followed Him. Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, ‘Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’” (Luke 5:27–32).

Jesus saw Levi sitting at the tax office and called him, saying, *“Follow Me.”* Levi left everything, rose up, and followed the Lord, and gave a great feast for Jesus in his own house. Many tax collectors and others also sat down together.

The Pharisees and the scribes complained that Jesus ate together with sinners. Jesus answered that those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. The person who considers himself righteous does not know his need of the Savior. The person who admits his own sin seeks and relies on Jesus, who removed all sins once and for all.

Jesus did not come to approve the sins of sinners. He came to call sinners to repentance and to save them from sin. Ezekiel 33:11 says that God takes pleasure in the wicked turning and living, and Isaiah 55:7 urges the wicked to forsake his way and return to the LORD. The two passages, rather than being words that directly prophesied the calling of Levi, show the will of God, who desires that sinners turn and live, and Jesus displayed that will by calling Levi. The person who receives the calling of the Lord must not remain in his former place as he was, but must rise up and follow the Lord, like Levi.

5. While the bridegroom is with them, it is the time to rejoice (Luke 5:33–35)

“Then they said to Him, ‘Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?’ And He said to them, ‘Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days.’” (Luke 5:33–35).

People asked why the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but the disciples of Jesus eat and drink. Jesus compared Himself to the bridegroom at a wedding feast. Isaiah 62:5 and Hosea 2:19–20 describe the covenant relationship between God and His people in the figure of the bridegroom and the bride. These, though not a direct quotation or an explicit declaration of fulfillment in Luke chapter 5, form the Old Testament background of the word in which Jesus called Himself the bridegroom. While the bridegroom is with them, it is fitting for the guests of the wedding house to rejoice.

But He also said that the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away. This word makes us look toward Jesus’ being seized, suffering, and dying. Seen in the later unfolding of the Gospel of Luke and the prospect of the whole New Testament, Jesus overcame death and rose again, and He will come again and hold the eternal wedding feast with His people. The joy of the disciples did not lie in taking religious ceremonies lightly, but in the fact that the Savior was with them.

6. New wine must be put into new wineskins (Luke 5:36–39)

“Then He spoke a parable to them: ‘No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the

new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.'" (Luke 5:36–39).

A piece of a new garment does not match an old one, and new wine cannot be put into old wineskins. Jeremiah 31:31–34 prophesied the new covenant, which remits sins and writes the law of God on the heart. Ezekiel 36:25–27 prophesied the salvation that makes clean with water and gives a new heart and the Spirit. These passages, though not words directly quoted in the parable of the new garment and the new wine, form the Old Testament background of the newness Jesus brings. The gospel Jesus gives is not an ornament added a little onto an old religious life. A sinner cannot fit the gospel to his own way while holding on to his own righteousness and old thoughts.

New wine must be put into new wineskins. This parable, though not a declaration of fulfillment that directly quotes the new covenant, shows the direction in which the salvation of the new covenant begins through Jesus—remitting sins, making the heart new, and giving the Spirit. A person must admit his own sin and receive into his heart the remission of sins Jesus accomplished. The Lord makes sins clean and makes us believe with a new heart. But if one insists that the old is good, it is hard for him to receive the new gospel.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit that Luke chapter 5 shows

In Luke chapter 5, Jesus appears as the Lord, who meets sinners, calls them, and makes them clean. Peter confessed before the Lord that he was a sinner, the leper received cleansing, and the paralyzed man received the remission of sins and the

healing of his sickness. Levi received the calling in the place of a sinner and followed Jesus.

At the center of all these events is the authority of Jesus to remit sins. That authority does not end as a mere declaration. Jesus received baptism from John and took on our sins, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead and completed salvation.

The sinner must admit his own sin, like Peter. And he must come to Jesus, as the leper sought cleansing and as the friends of the paralyzed man came to the Lord. He must not try to become righteous by his own works, but must receive by faith the remission of sins Jesus accomplished with the water and the Spirit.

Conclusion

Luke chapter 5 shows that Jesus is the Savior, who does not cast sinners away. The Lord said, “*Do not be afraid,*” to Peter, who had confessed that he was a sinner, and He touched the unclean leper and made him clean. To the paralyzed man He proclaimed the remission of sins and raised him up.

Jesus called Levi the tax collector and ate together with sinners. He did not come to call the righteous, but came to call sinners to repentance. The person who thinks he is well does not seek a physician, but the person who admits his own sin has an absolute need of Jesus.

New wine must be put into new wineskins. We must not judge the gospel by our old self-righteousness and religious habits. We must believe and receive, just as it is, the word concerning the new salvation that the Lord accomplished through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. ☒

Questions and Answers on Luke Chapter 5

[Question] 1. What important events does Luke chapter 5 record?

Luke chapter 5 records the events in which Jesus displayed the power of His word, made the sick and sinners clean, and called them as disciples to live a new life. The important events are as follows.

First, Jesus got into the boat of Simon Peter by the Lake of Gennesaret and taught the multitude. He told Simon, who had caught nothing all night, to launch out into the deep and let down the net, and when Simon obeyed, relying on the word of Jesus rather than his own experience, so many fish were caught that the two boats began to sink. Seeing this, Simon fell down at the knees of Jesus and confessed that he was a sinner. Jesus called Simon and James and John as workers of the gospel who save people.

“And so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.’ So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him” (Luke 5:10–11).

Second, Jesus healed and made clean a man who was full of leprosy. People regarded the leper as unclean and shrank from coming near him, but Jesus touched him and told him to be cleansed. The event in which the leprosy immediately departed shows that Jesus is the One who can make clean even the

defilement of sin, which no one can solve. Even in the midst of the many people coming to Him, Jesus withdrew to a deserted place and prayed.

Third, people brought a paralyzed man on a bed, but when they could not come near Jesus because of the crowd, they stripped off the tiling of the roof and let the sick man down before Jesus. Jesus saw their faith and spoke first to the paralyzed man.

“When He saw their faith, He said to him, ‘Man, your sins are forgiven you.’” (Luke 5:20).

The scribes and the Pharisees blamed Him in their hearts, saying that only God can remit sins. Then Jesus raised the paralyzed man and made him walk, and so showed that He has power on earth to remit sins. The center of this event does not lie only in the miracle of healing the sickness of the body. It lies in revealing that Jesus is the God who remits sins and saves sinners.

Fourth, Jesus saw Levi the tax collector sitting at the tax office and called him, saying, *“Follow Me.”* Levi left everything and followed Jesus, and gave a great feast for Jesus in his own house. When the Pharisees and the scribes complained that Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus spoke as follows.

“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’” (Luke 5:31–32).

Jesus did not come to approve those who consider themselves righteous, but came to deliver from sin those who admit that they are sinners and seek salvation.

Fifth, Jesus received a question about fasting and compared Himself to the bridegroom. He said that while the bridegroom is with them, the guests of the wedding house rejoice, but in the days when the bridegroom is taken away from them, they will

fast. Then, through the parables of the piece of a new garment and the new wine, He taught that the new gospel of salvation Jesus gives cannot be contained in old religious forms and human righteousness.

“But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved” (Luke 5:38).

The events of Luke chapter 5 are not separate miracle stories. Jesus called failed fishermen as disciples, made the leper clean, remitted the sins of the paralyzed man, and sought out the despised tax collectors and sinners. Through this He showed that He is the One who calls sinners, saves them, and gives them a new life.

This salvation was completed when Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on the sin of the world, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and rose again from the dead. Therefore we too must admit that we are sinners, like Peter, and respond to the calling of Jesus by faith, like Levi. The person who believes the salvation Jesus accomplished and has received the remission of sins must not remain in his former thoughts and life, but must live a new life following the word of God, like a new wineskin that holds new wine.

[Question] 2. Luke 5:1–3, where did Jesus teach the multitude?

Jesus taught the multitude that had gathered to hear the word of God by the Lake of Gennesaret. At first He stood by the lake, but as the multitude pressed about Him and came closer, He got into Simon’s boat, one of the two boats at the water’s edge. And after asking Simon to put out a little from the land, He sat down in the boat and taught the multitude.

“So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat” (Luke 5:1–3).

Therefore the exact place where Jesus taught the multitude was on Simon’s boat by the Lake of Gennesaret. Since He had the boat put out a little from the land, Jesus used the boat as the place from which to preach the word, and the multitude heard that word from the shore.

In this scene the different situations of the multitude and the fishermen also appear. The multitude gathered close to Jesus to hear the word of God, but the fishermen, including Simon, having caught nothing all night, had gone from the boats and were washing their nets. Their boat was the tool of their livelihood, and it was the place of failure where they had toiled all night and gained nothing. But Jesus got into that very boat and preached the word of God.

Jesus’ use of Simon’s boat prepares the event that follows. When He had stopped speaking, Jesus commanded Simon to launch out into the deep and let down the net, and Simon obeyed, relying on the word of Jesus rather than his own experience and circumstances. So Simon’s boat became the place where the multitude was taught, and at the same time the place where Simon heard the word of Jesus and obeyed it by faith.

In this way, Jesus did not preach the word only in special buildings or splendid places. He made even the boat where an ordinary fisherman worked a place where the word of God was preached. We also must not merely lose heart when our circumstances are hard and the work we have toiled at seems to

have failed. When Jesus comes into our lives and speaks, we must hear that word and receive it by faith. Wherever the word of Jesus is received, our workplace, our home, and our daily life can also become a place of faith where the Lord works.

[Question] 3. Luke 5:4–5, when Jesus commanded him to launch out into the deep and let down the nets for a catch, what attitude did Simon show?

Though it was hard for Simon to understand the command of Jesus by his own experience and circumstances, he showed the attitude of obeying, relying on the word of Jesus rather than his own judgment.

“When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, ‘Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.’ But Simon answered and said to Him, ‘Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.’” (Luke 5:4–5).

Simon was a fisherman who had made catching fish his occupation. He knew from experience the good times and places for catching fish, and he had already toiled all night together with his companions. But that day they had not caught a single fish. His body was weary, and the nets had already been washed, so going out again in the boat and letting down the net was not a command easy to accept.

Simon did not hide these circumstances of his. He said, *“we have toiled all night and caught nothing.”* In these words the fatigue of the night’s toil and the experience of failure are contained just as they are. But Simon did not make his own experience the final judgment. He immediately answered, *“nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.”*

Simon's faith did not appear because he had no thoughts or experience of his own. Though by his own experience there seemed to be no possibility, it appeared in that he set the word of Jesus above his own judgment and acted on it just as it was. He did not obey after first confirming the result of fish being caught; he believed the word and let down the net when no result was visible. The obedience of faith is not something done after understanding every circumstance, but following first because one believes the One who has spoken.

At this time Simon called Jesus "*Master.*" But after seeing the great catch of fish through obeying the word, he fell down at Jesus' knees, called Him "*Lord,*" and confessed that he was a sinner. At first he received the word of Jesus as teaching and obeyed, but as he experienced the power of that word, he came to realize that Jesus is not a mere teacher but the Lord, who knows his sin and his life.

Simon's attitude shows how we must receive the word of God. Our experience and judgment are important, but they cannot come before the word of God. Especially in the matter of salvation, we must not rely on our own efforts or feelings. We must believe the word that Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on our sins, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead and completed salvation.

In our own eyes, our sins may seem too great, or our shortcomings too many, for us to be saved. But just as Simon let down the net relying on the word of Jesus rather than his experience of failure, we too must believe the word of the salvation Jesus accomplished rather than our own thoughts. Faith is not an attitude of vaguely expecting a good result, but receiving the word as true and obeying it because Jesus has spoken it.

[Question] 4. Luke 5:8, after obeying the command of Jesus and catching many fish, what did Simon Peter confess to Jesus?

Simon Peter fell down at the knees of Jesus, called Jesus “*Lord*,” and confessed that he was a sinner unworthy to be with the Lord.

“When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!’” (Luke 5:8).

Peter had fished all night and gained nothing. But when he let down the net again, relying on the word of Jesus, so many fish were caught that the two boats began to sink. He did not regard this as mere unexpected luck or an amazing catch. He saw the power of the word of Jesus, working beyond his own experience and ability.

Earlier Peter had called Jesus “*Master*,” but after the great catch of fish he called Him “*Lord*.” The man who had seen Jesus only as a teacher who gives excellent instruction came to acknowledge Him as the Lord, who accomplishes all things by His word. When the power of Jesus was plainly revealed, Peter at the same time came to see his own true self.

He did not boast of the fish that were caught, nor did he put forward his own obedience to the word. Rather, he fell down at the knees of Jesus. This is the attitude of one who humbled himself before the holiness and power of Jesus. The words “*I am a sinful man*” were not the result of comparing himself with other people, but the confession of one who realized and admitted his own sin and lack before the Lord.

Peter’s saying “*Depart from me*” was not because he disliked Jesus or actually wanted Him to leave. It was because he was so afraid and ashamed that he thought the holy Lord and

a sinner like himself could not be together. The greater the power of Jesus appeared, the more plainly his own helplessness and sinfulness were also exposed.

But Jesus did not leave Peter as he had asked. Rather, He told him not to be afraid, and said that from now on He would make him one who catches men. Jesus did not cast away Peter the sinner, but saved him and called him as a worker of the gospel. Peter and his companions, after bringing their boats to land, left everything and followed Jesus.

This scene shows the change that takes place when a sinner meets Jesus. First, before the word of God he comes to admit that he is a sinner. But it must not end at realizing his own sin. He must also believe the grace of Jesus, who came to save him from sin. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on the sins of mankind, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead, and so He has perfectly saved the sinner.

Therefore true faith does not hide one's sin or claim to be righteous of oneself. At the same time, it does not stay at looking only at one's sin and asking Jesus to depart. We must admit that we are sinners, believe the salvation Jesus accomplished, receive the remission of sins, and then follow the calling of the Lord. Jesus saves sinners and makes them the people of God, and also uses them as workers who deliver the gospel of salvation to others.

[Question] 5. Luke 5:10–11, when Jesus said to Simon that he would catch men, with what attitude did Simon and James and John respond?

Simon and James and John, after bringing their boats to land,

left everything and followed Jesus. Hearing the calling of Jesus, they did not hesitate or present conditions, but obeyed at once.

“And so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.’ So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him” (Luke 5:10–11).

Jesus first told Simon, who had realized he was a sinner and was afraid, not to be afraid. And He said that he, who had lived until now catching fish, would from now on become one who catches men. This was not a mere exhortation, but the calling and promise of Jesus, who was setting Simon’s life anew and would use him as a worker of the gospel.

Simon and James and John, even after seeing the great catch, did not have their hearts stolen by the fish or the boats. The fish they had not been able to gain through a whole night of toil now filled two boats, so it could have been a great economic gain for them. But when they realized who Jesus is, they counted Jesus, who had given them those things, more precious than the things they had received.

The passage records that they first *“brought their boats to land”* and left everything. They did not abandon the boats and nets carelessly; they brought the boats safely to land and then followed Jesus. This was not an irresponsible impulse, but a clear and decisive response to the calling of Jesus.

Also, the words *“forsook all”* show that the object they had counted most important in their lives had changed. For them the boat and the nets were the means of their livelihood, and the fish were the fruit of their toil. But after experiencing the power and grace of Jesus, they put Jesus and His calling before their own livelihood and possessions. They did not say they would follow Jesus while remaining in their former life as they were; they

changed the direction of their lives.

They did not follow Jesus simply because they wanted to see more amazing miracles. It was because they had experienced the power of His word while obeying the word of Jesus, and had received the grace of Him who did not cast away sinners but called them as workers who save people. At that time they did not understand all of the saving work of Jesus, but they believed in Jesus, who had called them, and began to walk with Him.

Jesus had already received baptism from John the Baptist and taken on the sins of mankind; received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead and saved sinners. The disciples, as witnesses who saw this work of salvation, came to preach the gospel to people. Therefore, to catch men does not mean to gather people to one's own side or to rule over them, but to deliver the salvation of Jesus to people who are in sin and death, so that they gain life.

This does not mean that every believer must leave his occupation like these disciples. They were people who received the special calling of Jesus and would be established as apostles. But every believer must put Jesus before his own greed and the gain of the world. If we believe that Jesus has saved us from sin and called us to serve the gospel, we too must obey the word in the place given to each of us and live a life that delivers the gospel of salvation to others.

[Question] 6. Luke 5:12–13, what did Jesus do for the man who implored Him to heal his leprosy?

Jesus did not turn away from the leper's plea. He put out His hand and touched him, said that He was willing for him to become clean, and commanded him to be cleansed. Then the

leprosy immediately departed from the man.

“And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately the leprosy left him” (Luke 5:12–13).

This man was not in a light condition; the leprosy had spread over his whole body. Unable to heal his sickness by his own strength, he saw Jesus and fell on his face before Him. He did not doubt whether Jesus had the power to heal the sickness. By saying, *“Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean,”* he believed the power of Jesus and entrusted his own state to the will of the Lord.

Jesus responded to him in three ways.

First, He put out His hand and touched him. In those days a leper was regarded as unclean and had to live apart from other people. People shrank from contact with him, fearing the disease might spread or they themselves might become unclean. But Jesus did not avoid him or only speak from afar; He touched him directly. This was the act of receiving with compassion a man who had been cast out and isolated.

Second, He said, *“I am willing.”* The leper believed that Jesus could make him clean if He was willing. Jesus made it plain that He also wanted him to become clean. He not only had the power; He also had the compassion and the will to make the sick man clean.

Third, He commanded, *“be cleansed.”* In the word of Jesus there was the authority that drives out leprosy. Without long treatment or a complicated process, the moment He spoke, the leprosy departed. By this Jesus showed that He is the One who can make clean with His word even a disease that cannot be

solved by human strength.

This event is first of all an event in which a man who actually suffered from leprosy was completely healed by the power of Jesus. At the same time, just as the leper could not remove his own disease, it shows the fact that a sinner cannot remove the sin of his heart by his own efforts or good deeds. The sinner must admit his own sin and believe the salvation of Jesus.

Jesus did not say in words only that He would make sinners clean. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist He took on all the sins of mankind in His own body, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead and completed salvation. Just as the leper's disease departed at once at the word of Jesus, the person who believes the salvation Jesus accomplished receives cleansing from all sins.

Therefore we must not give up coming to Jesus because of our sins and shortcomings. As the leper fell down before Jesus and implored Him, we must admit that we cannot solve our sin by our own strength, and believe the power and grace of Jesus, who makes sinners clean. Jesus does not keep sinners at a distance or cast them away; He makes clean from sin the person who believes the word of the salvation He accomplished.

[Question] 7. Luke 5:14, what did Jesus command the man after healing his leprosy?

Jesus commanded the man whose leprosy had been made clean to tell no one about it, to go and show himself to the priest, and to make the offering Moses commanded for his cleansing, as a testimony to them.

“And He charged him to tell no one, ‘But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing,

as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded.’” (Luke 5:14).

The command of Jesus consists of four parts.

First, He told him to tell no one. Jesus did not tell him to announce to people first that his disease was healed, or to spread the news of the miracle far and wide. The passage does not state the specific reason Jesus commanded so. We can understand it, however, as His keeping people’s attention from being drawn only to the amazing miracle rather than to the word of God and salvation, and as His having the man first follow the procedure appointed in the Law.

Second, He told him to go to the priest and show himself. According to the Law of the Old Testament, a person with leprosy had to live separated from the community, and after the disease was healed he had to show his body to the priest and receive confirmation that he had become clean. Jesus did not let the man ignore the procedure of the Law just because he had become clean.

“This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine him; and indeed, if the leprosy is healed in the leper” (Leviticus 14:2–3).

The priest was not the one who healed the disease, but the one who confirmed whether the leprosy was healed. Jesus had already healed the leper and made him clean, and the priest had to examine his body and officially confirm that fact. The person who received this confirmation could come out of the life of isolation as an unclean person and return to the community.

Third, He told him to make the offering Moses commanded for his cleansing. In Leviticus chapter 14 are recorded the ceremony of cleansing and the offerings that the person cleansed of leprosy had to present. That offering was not a price paid to have the leprosy healed. He had already been made clean by the

word of Jesus. The offering was the way of confirming and displaying, according to the regulations of the Law, the grace of having been made clean.

Fourth, He told him to testify to the priests. For a man whose whole body had been full of leprosy to stand before the priest with a completely clean body and to present the offering Moses commanded became clear evidence that Jesus had actually made him clean. Not only his words, but his cleansed body and the confirmation procedure according to the Law testified of the power of Jesus.

This command also shows what the obedience of a person who has received grace is like. The leper was not healed because he went to the priest or presented the offering. He first received cleansing by the word of Jesus, and then, as one who had received that grace, he had to obey the command of Jesus. Obedience is not a price paid to obtain salvation, but the response of faith to grace already received.

It is the same with the remission of sins. A person does not wash away his sins by his own works or by presenting religious offerings. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on the sins of mankind, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead and completed salvation. The sinner receives the remission of sins by believing this word of salvation.

Therefore the evidence of having received the remission of sins does not lie in a vague feeling or a special experience. It lies in believing the fact that Jesus took on our sins, was judged, and completed salvation just as the word of the Scriptures says. And the person who has been saved must not boast of his own works, but must live a life that testifies of the grace Jesus has bestowed according to the word and obeys it.

[Question] 8. Luke 5:18–24, why did Jesus remit the sins of the paralyzed man?

The direct occasion the passage presents is that Jesus saw the faith of the people who brought the paralyzed man, and the purpose of the event was to show people that the Son of Man has power on earth to remit sins, by raising the paralyzed man and making him walk.

“Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. When He saw their faith, He said to him, ‘Man, your sins are forgiven you.’ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, ‘Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, ‘Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the man who was paralyzed, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’” (Luke 5:18–24).

The paralyzed man could not come to Jesus by his own strength. People carried him on a bed, but because of the crowd they could not even enter the house. Yet they did not give up; they went up on the roof, stripped off the tiling, and let the sick man down with his bed before Jesus. Their faith did not stay as a thought in the heart, but appeared as action that crossed over the obstacles and came to Jesus.

Jesus saw *“their faith.”* This means that the faith of the people who brought the paralyzed man to Jesus was plainly

revealed. The passage does not explain the paralyzed man separately from that faith. Therefore we must not stretch this to mean that a person is saved by another's faith alone, apart from his own will. The center of this scene lies in the fact that they believed the power of Jesus, who could heal the paralyzed man, and came to Him together.

They would have expected the body of the paralyzed man to be healed. But Jesus first said, "*Man, your sins are forgiven you.*" Jesus did not look only at the man's bodily suffering, but dealt first with the more fundamental problem of sin, which must be solved before God. This does not mean that every disease arises because of a specific personal sin. Jesus revealed that the remission of sins is a more fundamental matter of salvation than the healing of the body.

The scribes and the Pharisees thought that only God can remit sins. That judgment itself was right. But they did not acknowledge that Jesus, who was before them, is the Son of God, who has the authority to remit sins. Jesus knew the reasoning in their hearts, and commanded the paralyzed man to rise, take up his bed, and go to his house.

The remission of sins cannot be seen directly with human eyes, but the paralyzed man's rising and walking could be seen by everyone. Through the visible healing, Jesus proved that the invisible declaration of the remission of sins was also true. That the paralyzed man heard the word and immediately rose was a sign showing that Jesus has not only the power to heal disease but also the authority to remit sins.

Jesus could remit sins because He is not One who merely declares sins to be gone. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and personally took on all the sins of mankind, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead and completed salvation. Therefore the remission of sins

that Jesus gives is not a declaration that overlooks sin or passes it over without cost, but is grounded in the salvation He accomplished by personally taking on sin and being judged.

Just as the paralyzed man could not rise and go to Jesus by his own strength, the sinner cannot escape from sin by his own works. But Jesus gives the remission of sins to the person who admits his own helplessness and comes to Him by faith. We must not rely on our own efforts or feelings, but believe the word that Jesus completely solved our sins with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

[Question] 9. Luke 5:24, what does the name “the Son of Man,” which Jesus used of Himself, mean?

“The Son of Man” is the name Jesus used to refer to Himself, and it means ‘a son of man,’ that is, one who was born as a true human being. This name shows that Jesus truly came to this earth clothed in a human body, and at the same time shows that He is the Messiah, who receives the everlasting dominion and kingdom Daniel prophesied.

“But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the man who was paralyzed, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’” (Luke 5:24).

Jesus did not say only “I,” but called Himself “the Son of Man.” It is because Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth clothed in a human body to save sinners. Jesus was not a man in outward appearance only; He was true man, who actually went through hunger and weariness and pain and death. Therefore in the name “the Son of Man” appears the humbling of Jesus, who became like men and entered into the weakness and suffering of man.

But “the Son of Man” does not mean that Jesus is merely an ordinary human being. In this name are also contained the authority and kingship of the Messiah prophesied in Daniel chapter 7.

“I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13–14).

The “*One like the Son of Man*” whom Daniel saw comes with the clouds of heaven and receives from God everlasting dominion and glory and a kingdom. All peoples, nations, and languages serve Him, and His kingdom is never destroyed. Therefore, by calling Himself the Son of Man, Jesus showed that He is the Messiah whom Daniel prophesied and the King of the everlasting kingdom of God.

In Luke 5:24 it is especially emphasized that the Son of Man has power on earth to remit sins. The scribes and the Pharisees thought that no one can remit sins but God. That thought was right, but they did not know that Jesus, who was before them clothed in a human body, is the Son of God, who has the authority to remit sins.

Jesus proved before their eyes that He has the authority to remit sins, by raising the paralyzed man and making him walk. Therefore “*the Son of Man*” in this verse refers to Jesus, who outwardly was in the form of a man, but who actually exercises the authority of the remission of sins that belongs to God alone. Jesus is true man and at the same time true God.

Jesus the Son of Man did not display only the authority of a

King; He also took on suffering and death for sinners.

“Saying, ‘The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.’” (Luke 9:22).

Jesus, clothed in a human body, received baptism from John the Baptist and took on the sins of mankind. And bearing those sins He hung on the Cross and was judged, and He rose again from the dead and overcame the power of sin and death. Therefore in the name *“the Son of Man”* are contained together the figure of the Servant, who humbled Himself to seek and save sinners, and the figure of the King, who completes salvation and will reign over the everlasting kingdom.

The ministry of the Son of Man shown in the Gospel of Luke can be summed up in three points.

- The Son of Man is the One who has power on earth to remit sins.
- The Son of Man is the One who seeks and saves lost sinners, takes on their sins, suffers and dies, and rises again.
- The Son of Man is the King, who will come again in glory to reign over the everlasting kingdom and to judge.

Therefore we must not know Jesus only as an excellent man or a teacher who heals diseases. Jesus came clothed in a human body like ours, but He is the Son of God, who remits sins, gives eternal life, and reigns over the everlasting kingdom. When we believe the salvation that Jesus the Son of Man accomplished with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, we receive the remission of sins and become the people who belong to His everlasting kingdom.

[Question] 10. Luke 5:27–28, explain the event in which Jesus called Levi the tax collector as His disciple.

As Jesus was passing by, He saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office and called him, saying, *“Follow Me.”* When Levi heard that word, he left everything, rose up from his place, and followed Jesus.

“After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he left all, rose up, and followed Him” (Luke 5:27–28).

This event shows first the fact that Jesus looked at Levi and called him. It was not that Levi first came to Jesus and asked to be made a disciple. He was sitting at the tax office doing his work as usual, but Jesus saw him and said first, *“Follow Me.”* Levi’s new life began from the initiating call of Jesus.

Levi was a tax collector, despised by the people of that day as a sinner. Tax collectors collected taxes from their own people under the rule of Rome, and since there were cases where they collected more than what was appointed and took the profit for themselves, they were treated as sinners who had betrayed their nation. Levi also stood before people as an openly recognized sinner. But Jesus sought out that very man and called him as His disciple. This event shows the grace that saves the person who admits he is a complete sinner and makes him a complete righteous person.

Jesus did not call as disciples only the religious leaders whom people respected. He also saw Levi the tax collector, treated by people as a sinner, and called him as a disciple. Jesus did not turn away from Levi because of his past and his occupation, and He bestowed on him also the grace of following Jesus and living a new life.

Levi's response was immediate and clear. The passage records that he "*left all, rose up, and followed Him.*" Hearing the word of Jesus, he did not calculate for a long time or present conditions. He rose up from the tax office seat where he had been sitting and followed Jesus. His action, changed from 'sitting' to 'rising up and following,' shows that the master and the direction of his life had changed.

That Levi left everything does not mean simply that he put down a few things. It means that he left behind the occupation and income he had relied on as a tax collector and his former life, and received Jesus as the most important One in his life. The fishermen could return to their boats and nets if needed, but once a tax collector left the tax office, it would have been hard for him to return easily to that position. Levi's response carried that much of a clear decision.

The parallel text in the Gospel of Matthew records the man sitting at the tax office as "*Matthew,*" and the Gospel of Mark records him as "*Levi the son of Alphaeus.*" Therefore the Levi of Luke and Mark can be understood as the same person as Matthew, who recorded the Gospel of Matthew. The tax collector despised by people received the calling of Jesus and became a disciple, and later came to be used as the recorder of a Gospel that testifies of Jesus Christ.

After following Jesus, Levi gave a great feast in his own house and invited other tax collectors and people. He did not stay at following Jesus alone; he made it possible for the people he had known to meet Jesus as well. This shows that the joy and thanksgiving of the person who received the calling of Jesus led on to the work of guiding other souls to Jesus.

Jesus did not come to praise those who consider themselves righteous, but came to call and save those who admit that they are sinners. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and

took on the sins of Levi and all mankind, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead and saved sinners.

We too must not think that we cannot receive the calling of Jesus because of our past or our present state, like Levi. Jesus does not turn away from sinners; He saves them and calls them to a new life. But if we have received the calling, we must not remain as we are in our former sins and self-centered life either. We must believe the salvation Jesus accomplished and, like Levi, rise up by faith and live a life that follows Jesus.

[Question] 11. Luke 5:36, what does the parable Jesus spoke, of tearing a piece from a new garment and putting it on an old one, mean?

The parable of tearing a piece from a new garment and putting it on an old garment means that the new gospel of salvation Jesus gives cannot be attached in part onto one's existing self-righteousness, religious forms, and old sin-centered life. The gospel of Jesus is not a teaching that mends an old life a little; it is the complete word of salvation that makes the sinner new.

“Then He spoke a parable to them: ‘No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old’” (Luke 5:36).

The direct background in which Jesus spoke this parable was the question about fasting. The disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fasted often, but the disciples of Jesus ate and drank. When people made an issue of the difference, Jesus compared Himself to the bridegroom and said that the time

when the bridegroom is with them and the time when the bridegroom is taken away from them are different.

People thought that the disciples of Jesus should also fast in keeping with the way they had been keeping it. But Jesus said that with His coming, the new time of salvation had begun. The life of the disciples who were with Jesus could not be fitted as it was into the religious customs of that day. Just as a piece cut out of a new garment does not match an old garment, the gospel and new life Jesus gives cannot be joined to a faith that relies only on outward religious forms.

The new garment represents the new and complete salvation Jesus gives and the new life of the person who has received that salvation. The old garment represents the thought of becoming righteous by one's own works, the self-centered life before receiving the remission of sins, and the faith that puts human tradition and form before the grace of the gospel. Jesus did not come as a small patch to cover the torn places of an old garment. He did not come to improve the life of the sinner a little or to supplement an insufficient religious life, but to save the sinner completely and make him a new person.

If one tears a new garment to patch an old one, he first damages the whole new garment. Moreover, the new piece and the old garment do not match, and in the end the state of the garment becomes worse. This means that we must not tear out only the part of the gospel we need and use it to maintain our old thoughts and life. If we use the word of Jesus to prop up human righteousness and greed, the meaning of the gospel is distorted and the true life of faith is not built either.

Yet this parable does not teach that the Old Testament itself is a useless old garment. Jesus did not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament, but to fulfill them. What is at issue is the old faith of the person who believes he can

become righteous of himself by the works of the Law and religious forms, without relying on the word of God.

The gospel of Jesus is not a supplementary means to fill up what is lacking in man's good deeds. Because man cannot wash away his sins by his own works, Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on all the sins of mankind. And He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead and completed salvation. Human righteousness or merit cannot be added to this salvation.

The person who believes the salvation Jesus accomplished receives the remission of sins and becomes a new person. Even after being saved, he does not live only for his own greed exactly as in the past, but believes Jesus who saved him as his Master and lives following His word. This new life is not a price paid to obtain salvation, but the response of faith that the person already saved offers in thanksgiving for grace.

Therefore we must not receive Jesus merely as One who fixes up a few problems of our old life. We must not try to attach only one piece of the gospel while holding on to our self-righteousness and old thoughts, but must wholly believe the salvation Jesus completed with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. And as those who have become new, we must follow Jesus and live a new life that serves the gospel and souls.

[Question] 12. Luke 5:37, why did Jesus say not to put new wine into old wineskins?

The reason Jesus said not to put new wine into old wineskins is that the new wine bursts the old wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. To preserve new wine safely, new wineskins are needed that can receive it and stretch together with it.

“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved” (Luke 5:37–38).

In those days wine was kept in skins made from the hide of animals. A new wineskin was soft and elastic, so even when the new wine fermented and expanded, it could stretch together with it. But an old wineskin had hardened and lost its elasticity, so when the new wine expanded, it could fail to bear that force and burst. Then the wine would be spilled and the wineskin also could no longer be used.

In this parable, the new wine represents the gospel Jesus gives and the new life and joy gained through that gospel. Jesus is not One who came to improve sinners a little or to make them do more religious works. He came to save sinners from all sins, to make them the children of God, and to make them live a new life.

The old wineskins represent the heart that relies on its own works and righteousness, the faith that puts human tradition and religious forms before the gospel, and the self-centered way of life before receiving salvation. If one tries to receive the gospel while holding on to such old thoughts as they are, he cannot fully believe the salvation of Jesus. If he mixes the gospel with his own efforts and receives it as only a part of salvation, or uses the gospel as a means of maintaining his old life, the meaning of the gospel is damaged and the life of faith is not built up rightly either.

The new wineskin means the new heart and faith that receive the gospel of Jesus just as the word says. It is the person who lays down his own righteousness and merit, believes entirely the salvation Jesus accomplished, and intends to live anew according to that word. The new wineskin does not simply mean

a new religious form, a modern style of worship, or a newly founded denomination. More than a person's outward age or form, what matters is the state of the heart and faith that receive the gospel. Moreover, the person who has received the remission of sins must remain in a born-again church that clearly testifies of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and receive the word and its guidance. The joy of new life is preserved and grows more when one is united with a church that believes the same gospel.

The gospel of Jesus is not completed by adding man's works and merit. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on all the sins of mankind, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead and completed salvation. The sinner receives the remission of sins by believing this word of salvation and becomes a new person.

If a person holds on to his own righteousness and religious works and tries to put only a part of the gospel of Jesus in among them, it is like putting new wine into old wineskins. Such a person cannot believe the word that Jesus has washed away sins completely, and keeps trying to solve the problem of sin by his own works. Conversely, we must not use the grace of the gospel to justify our own greed and old life either. Either way, it is wrongly mixing the gospel with the thoughts of the old man.

The word that new wine must be put into new wineskins also shows that the life of the saved person must be made new in keeping with the gospel. The person who has received the remission of sins does not live a good life in order to be saved again. In thanksgiving for the salvation already received, he must turn from the life that was only for himself, believe Jesus as his Master, and live a life that serves the gospel and other souls.

Therefore we must not try to force the gospel of Jesus into

our old thoughts. We must lay down our self-righteousness and stubbornness, believe entirely the salvation Jesus accomplished, and have a new heart that receives the word of God. Then the gospel is preserved in us without being distorted, and we can enjoy by faith the new life and joy that the gospel gives. ☒

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The salvation the Lord has given is so great and deep

< Luke 5:1-11 >

“So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, ‘Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.’ But Simon answered and said to Him, ‘Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.’ And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!’ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.’ So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.”

The Lord, who comes to a life in hardship

Our Lord spoke the word in Luke chapter 5. If we look at Luke chapter 5, Jesus stood by the Lake of Gennesaret and saw the fishermen who had gone from their boats and were washing their nets. And Jesus got into that boat and taught the word to the multitude.

Here we see Peter meeting the Lord and coming to follow Him. In truth, when our Lord works on human lives, it is not when a person is solid and riding high. When a person has put forth all the strength he has to live and yet little comes of it, and his life has fallen into great hardship, we can see that our Lord comes to us human beings and speaks.

The Lord, who made us, knows all about us

When the Lord speaks to us, He speaks with this word of the Scriptures, and in truth our Lord knows everything about us. What kind of stock we are and what kind of person we are—He knows even the very deepest things. Because He is God, who made man, there is nothing He does not know about man.

These days genetic engineering has advanced, and they say that when a newborn baby is born, they analyze its genes. They say that if you analyze the genes as soon as a child is born, you can know what diseases the child will contract as it grows up, when it will die if there is no special accident, and whether it will be a healthy child. As for the physical life of a person, they say you can predict it to some degree by examining the genes.

Our Lord has nothing He does not know about us. First, He knows our weakness. He knows that our souls are born with sin from birth, and He knows that we are those who commit sin all

our lives. Our Lord is the One who made us, so He knows everything about us.

When a human life meets with distress, it comes to seek God, and God goes to such lives and speaks. At that time we can know what kind of beings we ourselves are. Just as the Apostle Peter fell down before the Lord, saying, “*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!*” (Luke 5:8), when a person stands before the Lord, he comes to know his own lack, and discovers himself as one who cannot come near the Lord. When we stand before the Lord, even hidden sins are all exposed, and we are revealed in a form that can conceal nothing.

Because the Lord knows everything about us, we can know that when He meets us, He knows how sinful our lives are, and also that He is the God who solves all those problems. Before the Lord we are lacking, but because the Lord knows everything about us, He has solved all our sins. Jesus took over all our sins with the baptism He received from John, and by dying on the Cross, shedding His blood, and rising again, He solved that whole problem of sin, and He blesses us as workers who do righteous work before God.

How thankful it is that the Lord knows everything about us. And at this hour we cannot help confessing, and cannot help giving thanks, that the grace by which the Lord met us, solved all the problems of our sin, saved us from sin, and made us workers of God, is so great and marvelous.

The two changes that take place when we meet the Lord

The word recorded here, seen in fleshly terms, looks like a story with nothing special about it. But within it there is a deep

meaning. Before they met Jesus, the disciples of Jesus went out in the early evening to catch fish and let down their nets. They toiled all night, and when they drew up the nets at dawn, they were empty nets without a single fish caught.

As for a net, once you use it, a great deal of slime clings to it, so you must haul it up again, load it on the boat, come out to land, spread it out on a gravelly place, and wash it. You must wash off the slime, dry it thoroughly in the sun, shake it out, and mend the net once more. When the disciples, who had toiled all night in vain and were completely drained, were washing their nets like that, Jesus got into that boat, spoke the word, and told them to launch out into the deep and let down the net.

Simon Peter answered: *“Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net”* (Luke 5:5). When he let down the net like that, so very many fish were caught. And after that, Peter fell down before the Lord, saying that he was a sinner and asking Him to depart from him.

When we meet the Lord, two changes take place. First, there is a change of heart in which we realize that we are sinners who have committed great sin before God. And the other change is the change of discovering that, to remove the sin of such a great sinner who cannot stand before God, the Lord came to this earth, took over that sin by receiving baptism from John, and by dying on the Cross, shedding His blood, and rising again, saved us from all sins.

Peter said before the Lord that he was a sinner and asked Him to depart, but the Lord rather said to Peter, *“Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men”* (Luke 5:10). When Peter came before Him, the Lord knew what kind of sinner he was, and He solved that problem of sin, which kept him from standing before God and from doing righteous work. The Lord became Peter’s God and Savior, and made Peter a worker who does the work of

righteousness.

The grace God has bestowed on us is so great. We were people of the stock of sin, who could not come near the Lord, but our Lord did not refuse such people as us; He came to us. The Lord took over and bore all our sins by receiving baptism from John, and by dying on the Cross, shedding His blood, and rising again, He washed all our sins clean and saved us. We come to know how great and deep the love of God is—that the Lord met us, solved all the problems of our sin, made us righteous, and made us able to do the work of righteousness.

Peter's saying that he was a sinner was, of course, a matter of the time before he met the Lord. It was before he knew the fact that the Lord came to this earth, took over and bore our sins for us by receiving baptism from John, died on the Cross and rose again, and washed all our sins clean. Though Peter was like that, the Lord said, I will make you a fisher who catches men. Because the Lord made human life, He knows everything about human life, He can solve every problem of human life, and He has actually solved it.

When a person stands before Jesus Christ, there is no one who can stand before God without believing the word of salvation, by which Jesus Christ removed our sins with the water and the blood. Alone, a person may be called holy and honest and right in this world, but when he stands before the Lord, there is no one who can be whole. What we can say before the Lord is only this: I am lacking and weak and nothing at all. I am one bound for hell. But the Lord loved me, came to this earth, and saved me. By holding in our hearts, by faith, that salvation the Lord has given, we obtain salvation through faith.

Therefore we can stand before God, we can follow our Lord, and we can do the precious works the Lord has entrusted to us. Before we met the Lord we were wretched sinners who could

only go to hell, but the Lord came to us and met us and removed our sins, and by that we received salvation. Our Lord washed our sins clean and made us instruments of the righteousness of God. He has made us saints without sin, workers who can do the right work of proclaiming the Lord's love and salvation to other people as well.

Let us wash and mend the nets and work anew

It says that the disciples of Jesus washed their nets; a fisherman must wash his nets every time he works. He must wash the nets and sew up the torn places again. Work on the sea is like farming; it is not that you can just set the nets anywhere at any time and only gather them in. You must wash the nets, and if no fish were caught you must wash them all the more carefully, and you must mend and fit out the nets again.

I too have done a great deal of work all this while, making books in many languages of many countries. But I overdid it so much that my body crossed the limit of its capacity. When a person works, there are times when he becomes overloaded, and if he does more work than his own capacity, his body hits its limit and he falls ill. Watching the workers too, with so much to do and their strength falling short, I think that we must divide the work and each work as much as he can bear. It is the same as how one can work well anew only after washing the nets and mending them again.

When he let down the net relying on the word

When the Lord told him to launch out into the deep and let

down the net, Peter, while saying that they had striven all night and caught nothing, let down the net relying on the word. Fish are not really found in very deep places, apart from special kinds. Except when catching fish that move along the currents of the water, fish usually gather toward the land. It was contrary to a fisherman's common sense, but Peter obeyed, saying he would try because the Lord had said so. When he did, so many fish were caught that he could not haul them up alone. He called all the companions nearby and hauled them up together, and the fish were caught until the net was tearing.

Then Peter knew that this was no ordinary person. He knew that He was One who transcended common sense and knew everything even about this sea—not an ordinary man, but perhaps the Messiah, perhaps the Son of God. So the first thing Peter said on meeting the Lord was that he was a sinner and that the Lord should depart from him. Because he knew that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior, he knelt down before Him.

A salvation so great and deep

We must know who it is who saved us, who it is we believe in, and we must know how deep the grace of salvation is that the Lord has given us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Someone may say, you have received salvation, so why do you keep talking only about that? But because this grace and love—that the Lord met us, removed all our sins, and made us instruments of righteousness—because this salvation of God is so deep and so great, we cannot help speaking of it.

Until we die, until our breath gives out, you and I have received a grace so great that we can only live speaking of how God saved us, praising God, giving thanks, giving glory, and

offering our hands and feet and mouths and whole bodies wholly to the Lord as servants of God. Even the mere thought that a man died in another man's place to save him brings tears and thanksgiving. So the Christians of these days are moved to tears just thinking that Jesus died in our place. But thought and thanksgiving of that degree can exist even in human society.

If a man was bound to die among enemy soldiers, and someone saved him and was taken captive and died in his place, he could remember that person all his life and be thankful. But the gratitude for the Lord's saving us is not of that degree. He has given you and me a salvation and a love that are endlessly deep. That the Lord washed away our sins, made us the people of God, and made us righteous—could that be a matter of the degree of a man dying in another man's place? Could it be something possible in this world?

Even in this world, if there is someone who died for his own people, they set up a statue of him, and when that day comes around they commemorate him and try not to forget that grace. How much more can you and I, who have received the remission of sins, never forget the grace of the Lord. We can never forget it, and we can only be thankful forever. Because we know that the salvation the Lord has given us is so deep and great, we can give thanks.

I thank the Lord for making one like me a worker of God. Now I have no strength in my body, and I struggle even with small things. In the old days staying up several nights was nothing, but these days if I push myself for just a few days my body cannot bear it. Yet one thing I am thankful for is that, lacking though I am, the Lord has made me a worker and clothed me with the great salvation.

And what we must not forget is this: how God saved you and me, and how great the grace He has given is. We must not forget

it. It is so great and precious. How can a person become a person without sin? To become a person without sin is something that does not hold in ordinary human society, something impossible.

But what is impossible with men is all possible with God. God put on a human body and came to this earth, took over all our sins by receiving baptism from John, removed all that sin by dying on the Cross, shedding His blood, and rose again from the dead for us. Because God did that for us, we became righteous through faith. Our becoming people without sin came about because He saved us with the special love of God and with a salvation so great and marvelous and deep.

This is exactly what we must always think of in our hearts and be thankful for. We must think of how He made lacking people like us sinless and made us righteous, give thanks to God from the heart, believe and follow Him, and always look at our own selves and have the posture of heart that gives thanks to God, who saved us.

We must mature and grow up in faith

We are nothing at all, but when we believed just as the Lord said, the net was full of fish. We were lives of nothing but disappointment, but when we met the Lord and believed the word of the Lord, what happened? Did we not receive many blessings before God? You and I are people who have received very many blessings.

And yet, if even after receiving salvation our heart grumbles as if there were nothing to be thankful for, asking what we have received, then we have not yet become even a little child. Does not even a little child smile brightly when it meets its parents, and play cutely as a sign of thanks? It knows its parents are

precious, and it cries when its parents are gone. If there is no thankful heart at all even after receiving salvation, such a heart is like a newborn that has not yet become even a proper little child.

A baby in an incubator in the newborn nursery hardly smells its parents' scent, so it does not know its parents well. But unless it is in an incubator, when you hold it and nurse it, the baby knows the scent of its parents. Its eyes cannot see yet, but because of that scent it turns its head and responds. We too must mature in faith, and our faith must grow. For faith to grow, we must not miss the times of gathering, and must hear the word again and again.

God has made you righteous and given you amazing blessings. He has given tremendously great grace. There is no blessing greater than this. He has given a great blessing that has nothing on this earth to compare with it. We give thanks before our Lord, who has given that blessing. ☒

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus put out His hand and made him clean

< Luke 5:12-16 >

“And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately the leprosy left him. And He charged him to tell no one, ‘But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded.’ However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.”

Everyone, in today’s word there appear a man whose disease had spread over his whole body and Jesus, who put out His hand to him. We will first look at how this man came to the Lord and what change took place in his body through the word of Jesus. And we will also confirm together how the Lord, who actually made the sick man clean, removed our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The man full of leprosy fell down before Jesus

When Jesus was in a certain city, a man full of leprosy came to the Lord. Luke does not explain his name or his past life, but gathers our eyes on the fact that he saw Jesus, fell on his face, and implored, *“Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean”* (Luke 5:12). The disease had spread over his whole body and he could not heal it by his own strength, yet he came to Jesus without hiding his condition, and he believed that the Lord had the authority to make him clean.

We too, when we examine our hearts and deeds before the word of God, come to know the fact that we cannot erase the record of our sins by our own strength. Even if we put forward the good we have lived and the labors we have done in the church, the sins already committed do not disappear. Therefore the person under sin and judgment must admit his state just as the word says, and must hear what salvation Jesus, who actually removed the sin of the world, accomplished.

When we look at this sick man’s condition in connection with the state of the sinner, we must keep within the bounds the word makes plain. Luke does not explain the cause of this man’s disease, so we do not rashly conclude that a disease is the result of a specific sin an individual committed. When we help the sick receive the treatment and care they need, while preaching with the gospel the problem of sin that every person must have solved before God, we can serve together the suffering of the body and the salvation of the soul.

Jesus put out His hand and touched him

Jesus put out His hand and touched the man who had fallen

down before Him, and said, *“I am willing; be cleansed”* (Luke 5:13). In the Lord’s touch there was the compassion that did not turn away from his suffering, and in the Lord’s word there was the authority of God that makes the disease depart. When Jesus spoke, the leprosy immediately departed, and the man became clean exactly as the Lord willed.

The result—that the disease which had spread over his whole body departed at once—shows that Jesus has both the will to make clean and the power to fulfill that will. The ground on which the sick man became clean lay in the Lord’s putting out His hand and speaking. In the same way, the salvation God gives is also received when we believe in our hearts the work by which Jesus took charge of the sin of the world and actually removed it.

The figure of Jesus putting out His hand to the sick man also teaches us the attitude with which we today should treat our suffering neighbors. The family and the church must listen to the sick person’s situation, prepare the way for him to get to the hospital and the help he needs for daily life, and pray together. In such care we come to proclaim that Jesus, who healed the body, is the true God, who saves the soul from sin and judgment.

Jesus made us clean with the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Jesus, who made the leper’s body clean, is fundamentally God, and the Son of God, who came clothed in the body of a man to save us. The sinless Lord received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, in order to take over all the sins of mankind onto His own body. When Jesus received baptism, saying, *“for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all*

righteousness” (Matthew 3:15), God transferred all the sins of the world onto the body of His Son.

Here also lies the reason John the Baptist testified the next day, pointing to Jesus, “*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29). In the sin of the world that passed over to Jesus are contained the sin handed down from Adam and the sins all people commit throughout their lives. The Lord took charge of the sins He had taken on with His baptism and carried them all the way to the Cross, and there He was judged in our place, shed His precious blood, and actually died.

Jesus, who paid the whole price of sin, rose again from the dead on the third day after He was buried. The Lord fulfilled all the righteousness of God and completed the eternal atonement with His baptism, the judgment of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection. Because God transferred sin onto His Son and judged it, whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of all sins.

God gives the believer the Holy Spirit as a gift and makes him His own child. The believer, clothed in the righteousness the Lord accomplished, becomes a righteous person without sin before God, believes the verdict of God, and lives depending on the Father. When the word exposes his wrongdoing, he admits that the word of God is right and corrects his thoughts and actions, and walks following the will of the Lord from then on.

The man who was made clean showed the evidence according to the word of the Lord

Jesus told the man who had become clean to go to the priest, show his body, and present the offering Moses commanded, as a testimony. The Lord first made his disease clean, and then he had

to go to the priest with the result accomplished in his body. The priest had to confirm whether the disease had actually departed, and his cleansed body testified of the work the Lord had done.

The order of salvation is just as clear. Jesus completed the eternal atonement with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, and we believe in our hearts this salvation God accomplished. The saved person gives thanks to the Lord, who made him clean, learns the word, and testifies from the Scriptures how Jesus removed his sins.

The true servant of God leads this testimony to point to Jesus Christ. He teaches that with the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist the sin of the world was transferred to the Lord, and that He received the judgment of that sin on the Cross and rose again. The one who preaches the word leads us to believe this gospel and be saved, but the Savior who took the sins on His own body and was judged in our place is Jesus alone.

We who have heard this word help others also hear the same gospel accurately. We hand on gospel books, prepare places where the word can be heard, and explain step by step, so that a person hearing for the first time can understand how the baptism of Jesus and the Cross are connected. Through the words and service of the saved like this, the salvation the Lord accomplished is testified to other souls as well.

The multitude gathered to hear the word, and Jesus prayed

When the news about the man who had been made clean spread, great multitudes gathered to hear the word of Jesus and to be healed of their diseases. They came after hearing the report of the Lord's power, but Jesus also taught the gathered people

the word of God. The people who came carrying the sufferings of the body received the Lord's help and came to hear even the word their souls needed to hear.

Today too, people seek God in sickness, in family problems, and in the hardships of making a living. The church of God must listen to their situations and look for ways to help them in practice, while proclaiming the problem of sin and eternal judgment that every person must have solved. It is a thing to be thankful for when the body's disease is healed and hard circumstances are eased, but the flesh one day meets death, so we need the salvation of living forever in the kingdom of God.

When many people gathered, Jesus withdrew to a deserted place and prayed. The Lord relied on God the Father while carrying out the ministry of healing the sick and teaching the word. We who have become the children of God also ask for wisdom to bear the work entrusted to us and for the way to preach the gospel, and together with the church we pray for the sick members and for the souls who are hearing the word.

Jesus, who put out His hand to the man full of leprosy and actually made him clean, has also removed all the sins of you and me with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. To the person who believes this salvation in his heart, God gives the Holy Spirit and makes him His own child. I ask you to believe the Lord, who made us clean, and, while caring for suffering neighbors, to deliver the gospel of life to their souls. ☒

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The Son of Man has power on earth to remit sins

< Luke 5:17-26 >

“Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them. Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. When He saw their faith, He said to him, ‘Man, your sins are forgiven you.’ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, ‘Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, ‘Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the man who was paralyzed, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, ‘We have seen strange things today!’”

Everyone, the people who brought the paralyzed man before Jesus hoped that the Lord would heal him. But Jesus declared the remission of sins first, before raising the sick man's body. Following this word and the sign that followed it, we will look at why the Son of Man is the true God, who has the authority to remit sins.

People laid the paralyzed man before Jesus

In the house where Jesus was teaching, there sat Pharisees and teachers of the law who had come from every town of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. Then people brought a paralyzed man on a bed, but because of the great crowd they could not find a way to bring him into the house. They did not turn back as they were; they went up on the roof, stripped off the tiling, and let the sick man down with his bed before Jesus.

Luke does not disclose the names of these people or their relationship to the sick man, but he clearly recorded their purpose. All their labor was concentrated on laying the sick man down before Jesus, and because they believed that Jesus had the authority to heal him, they did not draw back even before a blocked way. The word that Jesus saw their faith shows how precious is the work of helping one soul hear the word of the Lord.

Around us also there are people who find it hard to come and hear the word alone, because their bodies are weak or their livelihood is hard. The believer helps such a person with transportation and a seat so that he can come to church, hands gospel books to family and neighbors, and reads the Bible together with them. The purpose of such labor lies in leading that person before the Lord, so that he may directly hear the salvation Jesus accomplished and believe it in his heart.

Jesus declared the remission of sins to the paralyzed man

When the paralyzed man was let down before Jesus, the Lord said, “*Man, your sins are forgiven you*” (Luke 5:20). To people’s eyes the sick man’s immovable body was seen first, but Jesus brought to light the problem of sin and judgment that every person must have solved before God. Even if health and circumstances improve, if sin remains in the heart as it is, no one can escape the judgment of God; therefore we need the salvation in which sin is actually removed.

The Lord’s declaring the remission of sins first was His making plain that every person needs eternal salvation. Luke does not explain the cause of the paralysis as that man’s specific sin, so we do not conclude that every disease is a direct punishment for an individual’s offense. While providing the sick with the treatment and care they need, we must know that such a person is also a soul with sin to be solved before God, and preach the gospel to him.

The scribes and the Pharisees who heard the declaration of Jesus reasoned in their hearts, “*Who can forgive sins but God alone?*” (Luke 5:21). The statement that the authority to remit sins belongs to God was right, but they failed to recognize that Jesus, who was speaking with that very authority, is the true God. Jesus knew even the thoughts they had not spoken aloud, and by asking why they were reasoning so, He revealed His divine authority once again.

Jesus, who is fundamentally God, came as true man to take charge of our sins in His body and be judged in our place. So the Lord, who called Himself the Son of Man, exercised the authority to remit sins on earth. However much Bible knowledge and church career one has, if he does not know this Jesus he

cannot arrive at salvation; therefore we must hear from the word and believe who the Lord is and how He removed our sins.

Jesus raised the sick man and showed His authority

Jesus asked the scribes and the Pharisees, “*Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk’?*” (Luke 5:23). That sins have been remitted is hard to confirm at once with human eyes, but the paralyzed man’s rising could be seen by everyone on the spot. By accomplishing before their eyes the thing that could be seen, the Lord made them know that the authority to remit sins, which cannot be seen, was also His.

When Jesus commanded the sick man to rise, take up his bed, and go to his house, he immediately rose up before them all. The man who had been carried by others took up what he had been lying on and walked, giving glory to God. The word of Jesus brought an actual change to the sick man’s body, and the people who saw it were also amazed and glorified God, saying that they had seen strange things that day.

The sign of raising the paralyzed man showed that the declaration of Jesus was not empty words, and that the Son of Man has the authority of God to remit sins. That day the people saw with their eyes the sick man who had risen, and today we confirm the same authority through the word that Jesus actually removed sin with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. Now we must look at how the Lord, with that authority, completed our eternal salvation.

Jesus, who has the authority to remit sins, completed salvation

Jesus, who declared the remission of sins to the paralyzed man, is fundamentally God, and the Son of God, who came clothed in the body of a man to save us. The sinless Lord, when He turned thirty, received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, and through this baptism God transferred all the sins of the world onto the body of Jesus. By taking charge of our sins, the Lord began the saving work that fulfills all the righteousness of God.

Jesus took charge of the sins He had taken on with His baptism and carried them all the way to the Cross. There He was judged in the place of us sinners, shed His precious blood, and by actually dying He paid the whole price of sin. Because the sin of the world had first been transferred to Jesus through His baptism, the death of the Cross became the judgment of redemption that bore all those sins.

The Lord, who rose again from the dead on the third day after He was buried, overcame the power of sin and death. Jesus fulfilled all the righteousness of God and eternal atonement with His baptism, the judgment of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection, and completed our salvation. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of all sins and becomes a righteous person without sin before God.

God gives the believer the Holy Spirit as a gift and makes him His own child. The saved person accepts the verdict of God on the ground of the range of sins Jesus took charge of, the judgment of the Cross, and the resurrection. When the word exposes his wrongdoing, he admits that the word of God is right and corrects his words and actions, and lives believing in and

depending on the Father, who saved him.

The true servant of God leads people before Jesus

The people who carried the paralyzed man laid him down before Jesus. In the same way, the true servant of God does not hold people captive under his own authority, but leads them to believe the salvation Jesus accomplished with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The one who preaches the word can lead us with the gospel to receive the remission of sins, but he is not a savior who bears our sins on his own body and is judged in our place like Jesus.

The person who takes the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist out of salvation, and teaches that a man must live as a sinner all his life and must wash his sins daily with repeated prayers of repentance, is one who preaches the religious doctrines of the world. The true servant of God preaches as one completed gospel the baptism by which the sin of the world was transferred to Jesus, the Cross on which that sin was judged, and the Lord's resurrection. We must examine whether the gospel a person preaches agrees with the Scriptures, rather than his fame or forceful manner of speech.

We who have believed this gospel and been saved also help our family and neighbors concretely, so that they come before Jesus. We help the sick with transportation and daily needs, receive the questions of those hearing the word for the first time, and explain from the Bible how the baptism of Jesus and the Cross are connected. Even if someone does not understand at once, we read the word together again, and serve at his side so that he can believe the completed salvation with his own heart.

The Son of Man has power on earth to remit sins. Jesus, who

declared the remission of sins to the paralyzed man and raised him up, has also actually removed the sins of you and me with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. I ask you to believe this gospel in your hearts, become the children of God, and lead other souls still under sin and judgment to come before Jesus. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The sinless Jesus, who saved complete sinners

< Luke 5:27-32 >

“After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he left all, rose up, and followed Him. Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, ‘Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’”

To be able to praise freely is the grace of God

I give thanks that we can gather like this for a prayer meeting, sing praises, and preach the word into a microphone. And I am deeply moved. I never quite knew before how great a freedom this is. In a land under communist rule, if people gather like this they are taken away. I give thanks before the Lord, who this time saved three of our brothers in that land, and they are always on my heart. I believe that as God raises them up as workers, churches will be established and souls will be saved, and that as we pray and take up the challenge by faith, the gospel of the

water and the Spirit will be preached through that whole land, and its people also will receive the remission of sins and rise up.

I want you to know that your being able to sing praises freely like this is the grace of God. If you go to a communist country, a foreigner cannot freely do the work of preaching the gospel. Because he would be taken away, he must stay in hiding, and he cannot even dress as he pleases. In any case, I give thanks before the Lord, and I want God to keep them, to give you faith, and to bless you in every part.

Jesus came to call sinners

Jesus came to call sinners. In old times and now alike, people point their fingers at the person whose sin has been exposed. In our country too, there was a time when it came to light that a former president had amassed an astronomical amount of money unjustly while in office, and he was pointed at by the whole nation. People said that if what was exposed, what he himself confessed, was that much, the reality must have been more.

And yet Jesus says, *“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance”* (Luke 5:32). He is saying that He came to call sinners, to make them believe in God, and to save them. In truth, anyone can turn out like that man. In the heart of man there is originally a thieving mind, and it is only because he has not sat in such a seat—if he sits in such a position, he can do exactly the same, as much as anyone.

Is there any guarantee that you would not do so? Perhaps you would do even more. I am the same. If I sat in such a seat, I would try to put into my own bank account not only the wealth of this country but all the wealth on this earth, all the wealth in the whole universe. God knew I would do so, and He caused me

to receive the remission of sins early and brought me to repentance.

People who do not commit sin merely do not commit it because the environment has not been laid for it. Once the environment is laid, they commit sin. Only the person who does not commit sin even when the environment is laid would be a truly righteous person; the person who does not commit sin because the environment is not laid is not a person who does not sin, but still a person who sins. That is why Jesus said, I have not come to call the righteous, but to call sinners to repentance.

The Lord, who called Levi the tax collector

We can see that Jesus called people of many occupations. Fishermen, a physician, a tax collector, merchants, the sick—He called people of many kinds. In today's word He called a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office.

This man also, when Jesus called him, left everything and followed Jesus, and after being called he invited Jesus and the disciples and held a great feast in his own house. The Pharisees murmured. If that Jesus were a real prophet, they said, He would know what kind of thief that man is. Levi the tax collector was no ordinary thief. Seeing that Jesus knew it and still said, I have not come to call the righteous but to call sinners, this Levi too was clearly an exposed sinner.

He was an exposed sinner in people's eyes, and a sinner in Jesus' eyes as well. Everyone, do you know who receives the remission of sins? A complete sinner can become a complete righteous person. It is the sinner who receives the remission of sins. The person who says he is not a sinner finds it hard to receive the remission of sins. So the person who says he is not a

sinner must first become a sinner before God.

That is why our God leaves all the evil people on this earth, to make sinners of those who say they are not sinners. He leaves all the people who grate on the eyes. Before those who pretend to be righteous and pretend to be holy, He places a few people like thorns in the eye, so that they cannot bear it without losing their temper. He has placed such people to expose to sinners how great their own sin is and to teach them.

When our God drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, though even the driving out must have pained His heart, He cursed the ground outside the Garden of Eden, saying, the ground shall bring forth thorns and thistles because of you. Wherever they went they suffered because of the thorns and thistles, but that very thing taught them how good a place the Garden of Eden had been. If a human life has no hardship, we do not seek God. That is why God gave us hardships so that we would seek God. And He allowed evil circumstances to teach us how great sinners we are in our own selves.

So we must know the fact that we ourselves are complete sinners. Those who have received the remission of sins must also know that they were complete sinners and became complete righteous people through believing in our Lord. The person who has not yet received the remission of sins must first know that he is a complete sinner. Only then can he receive blessing from God.

Jesus, who came to save complete sinners

The Pharisees sneered at Jesus and the disciples. Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners, they said. More vicious than the sinners they spoke of were the tax collectors.

When I went and stayed in a communist country, in the apartments where the tax office workers lived, hot water—which came out nowhere else—came out twice a day, and the water was clearer than what the high authorities used. What power would that be? It is the power of money. I could feel keenly that the power of money exerts a tremendous force under communism and democracy alike.

The tax collectors of Jesus' day were great thieves and traitors to their nation. At the time this Scripture was recorded, the nation of Israel was a subject state of Rome. It was as our country was when it was ruled under Japanese occupation. The tax collectors collected taxes from the people and paid them up to Rome. Rome, fearing a revolt, did not tell them to collect so much, but the tax collectors, trading on the name of the Roman emperor and threatening people, collected far more, paid up only a little, and filled their own bellies with all the rest. So to the people of Israel, a tax collector was a person more vicious than a sinner, a bad person, and the very word tax collector was a term of abuse.

And yet Jesus called this tax collector Levi. He said, follow Me. And so this man left everything and followed Jesus. Levi the tax collector also knew what kind of person he himself was, and he knew that Jesus had received him even though He knew all about him. That is why he held the feast. Jesus came to this earth to save the truly complete sinners, people as sinful as tax collectors, wretched people.

A small sinner cannot receive the remission of sins. We were complete sinners, and through the salvation of Jesus we became complete righteous people. So in the kingdom of God there are only people who were complete sinners and became complete righteous people. There is no such thing as a little sinner or a little righteous person. A person half remitted and half not, a

sinner who is only a little bit a sinner—there is no such person in the kingdom of God.

Whom did Jesus come to call?

Even if you and I have not committed great sins in deed, in our hearts those elements of sin are still contained. Let us think once about what sins our flesh can commit. In the Gospel of Mark it says, “*For 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). Our flesh knows and does all of these. With the thought of the flesh it thinks evil thoughts, with the temper of the flesh it tries to kill people, and adultery and lewdness are also committed with the flesh. These twelve kinds of sin a person commits not with the spirit but with the flesh. The heart also sins, but the heart harbors it for a moment and forgets. The flesh, however, is demanding these twelve sins at all times.

Even the person who has received the remission of sins is like that in his flesh. It is exactly the same. Because the flesh is so, we can confess that we are complete sinners. It is only that we do not commit them because the environment is not laid; the flesh of man wants sin. So before God we cannot say, in terms of the flesh, that we are righteous. It is by believing the perfect remission of sins our Lord gave that we can say, in the spirit, that we are righteous.

Where is there perfect love? Where is there a truly decent person? People act decent. If we look at history, in the Middle Ages, when Roman Catholicism held worldly power and swept the whole world, it seized those who did not obey and killed

them cruelly. Then, when their power weakened, those same people lowered their posture, dressed well, gave to charity, showed love, and took on all the good works. People act good because they are weak. When a person's own power grows strong, his true colors come out. Man is fundamentally evil.

I am not telling you to live wickedly. I am telling you to know that you are fundamentally evil before God. And admit it before God, and receive the perfect salvation God gives. Then you become a child of God, become righteous, and receive blessing forever.

That is why we must know whom Jesus came to this earth to call, and why, of all people, He called Levi, who sat at the tax office. How well-behaved were the Pharisees of Israel in those days, and how well they kept their religious life! Then why did Jesus not call the Pharisees? The ones He called were people like Peter, who was unlearned; John, whose temper was so fiery that he got the nickname son of thunder; and the tax collector, a thief above thieves. Why did He call only such openly lacking people and bestow on them the grace of the remission of sins?

There is a saying that a nobleman will not do the dog paddle even if he falls into the water. Even if it means drowning, he will not do it, because of his dignity. That is how people act good precisely because they are evil. The truly good person does good without acting good. Jesus called the people who were openly evil in those days.

A complete sinner becomes a complete righteous person

Jesus did not come to this earth to call people who live nicely like the Pharisees. Jesus knows man. He knows that man is

entirely a whole lump of sin, and how lacking we are. That is why He said, I have not come to call the righteous, but I have come to call sinners. What does He call sinners to do? He came to call them to repentance. Do not put on a show of not sinning and of being good; you are a sinner bound for hell, so turn back, believe in Me, and receive the remission of all sins; I have come to save you from your sins—that is what the Lord was saying. To call sinners to repentance is to make them turn back and believe in Jesus, so that they receive the remission of sins and He saves them.

In that land under communist rule I once met a brother and had this conversation. This man was educated and had lived a very good and upright life. He heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit and believed it, as far as believing goes; but when asked to give his testimony of salvation, out of pride he would talk only about other things. So I preached the word that a complete sinner becomes a complete righteous person. I asked him: Brother, are you, as Mark chapter 7 says, a person with murder and theft and adultery in your heart, or not? His face flushed red, and he said, I am, and with his own mouth he acknowledged before God that he was such a person. And after that his face changed completely and faith was planted in his heart. He came to believe that the Lord had made a complete sinner into a complete righteous person.

Jesus has already removed all the sins of all people. Then why do not all people receive the remission of sins? It is because they do not acknowledge and confess before God that they are complete sinners. That is why they fail to receive the grace.

It is the same with those who have received the remission of sins. If one does not acknowledge that he was a complete sinner and has become a complete righteous person, it always trips him up. He comes to judge the other person, saying, that man

received the remission of sins, so why does he behave so badly? It is because his own righteousness remains that he sees the other person that way. If he acknowledges that he was a complete sinner and believes that he has become a complete righteous person, then even when the other person looks lacking, he can only say, I praise the Lord, who saved someone like him.

That does not mean, however, that you should live like a complete sinner. You must not tear off one side of the words and misunderstand. Because we were complete sinners before God, people who were completely bound for hell, our Lord took pity on us and came to save us, and by believing in the Lord we received the remission of sins. It is not that we had some righteousness or goodness of our own, and therefore believe in Jesus and go to heaven.

Rather, it is the people whose lack has been more exposed in this world—Jesus came to save such people. He did not come to save the person who says, I am a clean person, a person without spot or blemish. Jesus said plainly: I have not come to call the righteous, but to call sinners to repentance.

In the old days, as I read this word countless times, since Jesus said He came to call sinners, I thought I would be a sinner until the day I die. Always before Jesus I prayed, Lord, this sinner has come, making it my boast, and spoke of it as my boast. But when I looked at the word closely, that was not it. He did not call sinners in order to leave them as sinners; He called complete sinners in order to make them complete righteous people—He called us to give us that blessing. We must know the meaning of this word plainly and surely.

There are many who believe in Jesus and yet believe wrongly, according to their own thoughts. All people are complete sinners. We were complete sinners, and by believing the salvation of our Lord we became complete righteous people. And there are still

many people, even now, who are to become righteous.

They say people grade themselves generously. When they first enter university, their dreams are big and they say they will become president; as the years go up, it becomes prime minister, then company president, and at last they say they would be glad just to become an office worker. At first a person gives himself many points, and the more he comes to know himself, the lower the score keeps falling. If you live out a life, in childhood you give yourself nearly full marks, and as you age the score drops; and the sooner a person awakens to himself, the more sharply the score plunges, so that the person who knows himself rightly gives himself zero, or a score below it. It was because we knew ourselves so poorly that we gave ourselves generous marks.

Our God speaks plainly. I have not come to call the righteous, He says, but to call sinners. We were fundamentally whole sinners. Because we were those who could only go to hell and could only be cursed by God, God took pity on us, and our Lord came to this earth to save complete sinners. And He received baptism from John at the Jordan and took over and bore all our sins, and carrying those sins He died on the Cross, shedding His blood, and rose again from the dead, and so solved the whole problem of our sins and saved us completely.

So we must know ourselves plainly. We must believe the fact that in the flesh we are complete sinners, and that by believing in our Lord with the heart we have become complete righteous people. Let all of us acknowledge before God that we were evil, and give thanks for His saving us. We praise our Lord, who saved complete sinners. ☒

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

New wine into new wineskins

< Luke 5:36-39 >

“Then He spoke a parable to them: ‘No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, “The old is better.”’”

The person who has received the remission of sins can live entirely for the Lord

Today we have read the word of the Gospel of Luke. Throughout this whole revival week I have preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Usually during a revival week I mix in talk about daily living as well, but this week there were many newcomers, so I could not. So this evening I intend to speak once about the life we live.

Everyone, have you received the remission of sins? Do you not have a single sin? There is no sin. Our Lord has saved us. Jesus received baptism from John and took over all our sins, and bearing those sins He died on the Cross, shedding His blood, and rose again from the dead; giving His own flesh and blood, He saved us. Therefore we can stand boldly before the Lord. We

praise and give thanks to the Lord, who has made us blessed.

I met the Lord and received the remission of sins. I rejoiced greatly over that one thing of having no sin. But there were many parts where the filth of the flesh kept rising up. I agonized much over how I could live a life entirely for the Lord, like the Apostle Paul. Having no sin is truly a thing to be thankful for, and now there is an earnest heart that my life, too, should be lived not for the flesh but for the Lord.

When I look quietly at myself, I do live for the Lord, as far as living goes. Because of the Lord I suffer various persecutions, hear unfair words, sometimes lose sleep; He gives me such a heart that if I do not live for the Lord even for a day, life has no savor, and He allows such things. But I have the desire to serve not mixed with the flesh, but truly, from the heart, by faith, living for the Lord alone.

If I had received salvation and become one who has nothing to do with sin, and yet, living on, being lacking and weak, I were bound again by sin and became a sinner again—how could I serve the Lord? Like that, one cannot serve. Our Lord has made me whole. Then, rather than looking back at myself, it is fitting to serve the Lord and look after souls, to think only of the Lord's work rather than of matters about myself, to preach the gospel and do entirely the work that pleases the Lord.

Since our Lord has saved me, there is in truth nothing to worry about for my own self. Worrying about making a living, or any worry of going to hell again—there is no such worry at all. From the time the Lord saved me, He took over all such worries. So without such worries I can live entirely for the Lord. The whole of the heart, purely for the Lord alone—with such a heart and faith and center as the Lord would approve, we ought to serve the Lord.

The true Master, who saved us, is God

Our Lord, who saved us, is our God. Who is our Master? It is Jesus Christ, who saved us from all sins. Who is the true God to us? It is our Lord, who saved you and me from sin. The One we are really to serve on this earth is our Lord.

Our Lord alone is the One truly to be served, and to serve the Lord alone with the faith of the heart is the right realization. What is there for the saints who have received the remission of sins to serve on this earth, what is the rewarding work, what is the fitting thing to do? The righteous Lord, who saved us wholly from all sins, removed all our cares and worries and anxieties, gave us blessing and wisdom to serve what is right, and entrusted the gospel to us—I believe that to serve Him alone is the most right thing, and I believe that it is fitting.

“No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one”

In the word we read today it says, *“No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old” (Luke 5:36).*

It is the word that if we have received salvation in the spirit, by faith, and yet live our lives in the old way of living, that is truly wrong. After receiving salvation, the way of living is different. If we have truly received the remission of sins, if the judgment of sin has wholly ended, there is now nothing to worry about for ourselves, nothing to strain and strive over because of ourselves.

If we have received salvation, our life must change into a life

that serves the Lord, serves the gospel the Lord entrusted, and serves what is right. If it does not change like that, it is a tremendous delusion and a wrong. To receive salvation by faith and yet live the old life is not fitting for a born-again saint.

Before being born again, we all lived only for the flesh. We lived only for ourselves, and lived straining to achieve our own greed, following it. But after receiving salvation, a life lived only for oneself is not fitting. It is because the Lord has done everything for us. For us who are born again, the fitting life is to serve the Lord, serve the gospel, serve souls, and, through the church, pray for the salvation of souls and live the life of righteousness.

To serve the Lord is to serve oneself

The Lord gave us life, gave His own flesh and blood, saved us wholly, and made it so that there is no judgment for us. It is because the Lord suffered all our judgment on the Cross. And for the born-again righteous the future is guaranteed. In the present also the Lord helps and blesses. As He said, “*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matthew 6:33), when we live for righteousness, the Lord helps and blesses all the rest of our life.

The Lord does everything for us—and if, even so, a person lives only for his own self, the Lord withdraws His hand. I am for you, so you be for this gospel I have entrusted to you. I will do your work, so you do My work. I am not on this earth now with hands and feet, so give Me your hands and mouth and heart and thoughts and wisdom and body and time. Then I will make you blessed. Our Lord says so. The Lord loves the righteous and surely blesses them. He wants to be involved in and to help every

matter, and He leads us in the right way and gives blessing.

There is no one who became righteous and received the church's guidance and was not blessed. There is no one who has not tasted the Lord's help. We keep tasting it and receive more grace. But if, while the Lord helps like that, a person lives only for himself, the Lord says: Then I will stop helping you. Try making yourself blessed. And the saint who is truly for Me—that saint I will bless. Our Lord does so.

Therefore, after we are born again, to serve the Lord is precisely to serve our own selves. We must know that the life of serving the Lord is fitting, believe it, and act by faith. Do you want to live a blessed life? Be for the Lord. Be for the gospel. That we serve the Lord and are for the Lord, and the Lord is for us—that is the fellowship between the Lord and us, and the right life of the saint.

Though we are lacking, we are now children of God.

Then what about church life? If a born-again righteous person goes to a place with an unregenerate pastor and congregation and tries to unite and rub along and live together with them, they cannot unite. He only brings disgrace on himself for nothing, and even the precious thing he received before the Lord ends up turning to dung. If you go to a filthy place, filth rubs off on you.

The righteous must gather in a church of the righteous and preserve their faith to the end. The righteous person must not go to a chapel where unregenerate people gather and sit together with them, thinking, I will just yield a little and bear it, I will just take a little loss—sitting there thinking, I just will not pray, while

people weep and wail in prayers of repentance asking to be forgiven the sins they committed that day.

This week also many have been born again. And people keep being born again. Those who have been born again must come to a born-again church. The piece of new cloth must be attached to the new garment. The righteous must come to the church that is a city of righteousness—where the pastor is born again, the evangelist and the pastor’s wife and all the saints are born-again people gathered—praising and thanking God, testifying and rejoicing, serving the Lord and serving the gospel, praying for souls, for brothers and sisters, for the servants of God, and for all the Lord’s work—and unite their hearts and stick fast there and live. Only then can they equally receive, through that church, the blessings God intends to give.

The Scriptures call the born-again person a new garment, a new thing. It says, “*old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new*” (2 Corinthians 5:17). However we lived in the old days, whatever our family line may be, regardless of all that, those who know and believe the salvation the Lord has given have become new. Not old things. They have become new creations.

I like new neckties. I do not buy clothes often, but passing by, if even a cheap necktie catches my heart, I buy one, and I want to wear a tie that suits spring in spring and a light tie in summer. When I put on a new necktie, it feels so good. Only those who have worn one know that feeling. Everyone, from the time we were born again, we are new. Our old man has died. Having become new, we want to do new work.

The righteous, all the saints who have received the remission of sins, want to do something new. Not the work they used to do soaked in old habits, but new things. With such hearts our Lord works. So we want to meet a new church, a new pastor, new

brothers and sisters—to fellowship and talk and serve together. It is because we have become new.

But not even knowing that he has become new, undervaluing himself so much that he goes back to the places he used to attend and tries to mix there—that is because he does not know his own self. After being born again and receiving the remission of sins, one comes to dislike going to the church he attended before being born again. Out of habit he may try to take the old road, but when we come to know it, we have become new. The old man has already died, and that old fellowship is not true fellowship.

Just as the word says, if you join the new and the old, they do not join. The sinner and the righteous never join together. However great your patience, though you endure and endure, they do not join. They are water and oil. One thinks, if I just bear with it a little—but God has made us new; will we join with the old? Before an hour of meeting has passed, they collide. By constitution they do not match. We must know that.

If, even after being born again, not knowing he has become new, a person goes and sits in a chapel that has not received the remission of sins, and while people pray loudly, Lord, I am a sinner, he sits there thinking, but I am not a sinner—he becomes proud. And in the end even what he has crumbles away. Finally he becomes just the same, saying, Lord, I am a sinner, wash away my sins—and he falls back into being a sinner. Because he rejects what the Lord has done and does not believe in his heart what the Lord has said, he becomes a sinner again. There are many such people. And from then on he even hates meeting the righteous.

Human righteousness must be thrown away. One's own love, one's own patience, one's own excellence, human righteousness—all such things must be thrown away. They have

all died and all been judged. The person who has become new must fill himself with what is new. He must hear the new word and fill his heart with it by faith. He must fill it with the things of the kingdom of heaven, the things of the Spirit.

I serve the Lord. I serve not because I am something, but because the Lord has made me able to serve the righteous Lord alone, and so I serve the Lord alone by faith. God has given me this blessing. I do not want to serve the things of this world, the things that rot. In even the smallest thing I want to serve the Lord, I want to work for the Lord, I want to work for what is right, I want to work for what will remain forever and ever.

The Lord is my Lord, and there is no one more precious than the Lord in this world. Neither my wife nor my children can be more precious than the Lord. Because the Lord loves me, I cannot but love the Lord. I believe that the Lord takes responsibility for and blesses all the things related to me. All I have to do on this earth is to receive the remission of sins, serve the Lord, and live for Him alone. Now the life I live is not lived for myself; it is lived for the Lord.

My ability falls short, I have many weak parts, and I cannot do great things well; but what is clear is that it is right to live for the Lord. I believe it is right to serve the Lord alone. Do you believe it too? When I look at my own self, there is so much lacking that at times I wonder whether this really is serving the Lord, and there are many times when I intensely dislike what I see of myself. But I gather up my heart again. Though I cannot do great things on this earth, the faith of my heart believes that living for the Lord alone, for You, Lord, is fitting, and I live by faith in the part God allows.

It is right that all the saints who have received the remission of sins live truly for what is right, for the Lord. After being born again, while one is still a little child, he may be for himself, and

that can happen. The church understands, shows love, and prays for him. But when faith has grown some, one does not live for himself. The mature person does not live for himself.

If even after being born again one keeps being only for himself, thinking only of what he will eat and what he will drink and what he will wear on this earth, he is still very much a little child. I am not saying this at those who hold jobs and livelihoods. To work one's livelihood truly diligently, by faith, serving the Lord and caring well for one's family—I believe that too is serving the Lord.

The Lord says to us: Pray a little for the soul beside you, and labor a little in union with the church. What right thing is it for you to live only for yourself? Is that not all without substance, a thing to be burned in the fire? It is so that I may have you do right work and give you a reward, and have you live like a human being on this earth, that I tell you to unite. Our Lord says so.

How merciful the Lord is! He bears and waits, supplies, and again bears and waits and blesses. He is saying, let the righteous live like the righteous, and come to His kingdom. Live like His children. What would He gain from us? All things under heaven are God's—is it not so? It is because He desires His own children to do well and live rightly, and to bless His own children. If we serve the Lord as Mary poured the fragrant oil on Jesus' head, then, as He said that wherever the gospel is preached what this woman did would also be told, He remembers it, and He intends to make us live richly on this earth as well.

We have now become the children of God. God the Father calls us His children. He is telling His own children to live like children, the righteous like the righteous, the blessed like the blessed, with love and faith. God takes responsibility for it all. However lacking our deeds, whatever is done by faith is all right, all acknowledged before God, and blessed in reality. But what is

not done by faith has nothing to do with blessing; it is only one straining alone. We need the faith that first knows and believes what is right and how it is right to live.

After being born again, no one has gone wrong following the Lord. But among those who believed in Jesus and followed without being born again, many are ruined—ruined greatly—and very many go to hell. Among those who were born again and followed the word and will of the Lord, there is not one person who has been ruined. The Lord never leaves the one who follows Him to be ruined. It is because our Lord is almighty.

“New wine must be put into new wineskins”

The word says, *“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved”* (Luke 5:37–38).

The saint who has received salvation has a new joy. It is the new joy given by the Lord, who saved me. Not an old joy but a new joy. New wine must be put into new wineskins. The righteous who have the new joy must come to the righteous church of God. If you put new wine into an old wineskin, the old wineskin bursts, and the new wine is thrown away and the wineskin also becomes useless. The righteous must remain in a church where the pastor and the workers and the saints who clearly testify of the remission of sins are clearly born again.

Only then is the new joy preserved long, and blessing upon blessing, grace upon grace, comes all the more abundantly. All the blessings of that church turn into one's own blessings. The person who has received the remission of sins must come to a church that has received the remission of sins. This is the word

of God. Why does He tell us to come? He tells us to come because God has things to say and blessings to give.

To have received the remission of sins becomes the foundation and the qualification for receiving every blessing. When the person with that qualification is within a born-again church, not only is being born again a blessing, but he receives blessing in all his life, in all his thoughts, in his faith, in his heart, in his deeds, in everything. Those who have tasted this stay within the church by faith without fail. How much the Lord actually looks after us, helps us, and blesses us! If the Lord did not bless, you and I could not meet and talk like this, and I could not stand before you in a healthy body.

First it is faith, and second it is faith

Just as it says, “*The just shall live by faith*” (Romans 1:17), the righteous live by faith. We receive blessing by faith, obey by faith, and act by faith. First it is faith, second it is faith, and third it is faith. From the days of Abraham until now it is faith, and this faith goes on forever.

Dear beloved saints, have you received the remission of sins? I believe the word the Lord spoke, that new wine must be put into new wineskins. I believe this is right. After being born again, within a born-again church, we keep on tasting the new joy forever. Those who have become new wine, who have become new, must also renew both the guidance of their lives and the design of their lives. Our Lord fills us entirely with what is new.

Do you live by faith? Do you act by faith? Do you speak by faith, pray by faith, and look to God by faith? When we pray and obey by faith and live by faith, the Lord leads the way of the one who believes. If we do not live by faith, there is only weariness

and distress and grumbling and complaint. If we do it by faith, we see the glory of God and receive blessing. This word is a tremendously blessed word. Our Lord speaks it so that the born-again person will not slip into a wrong road. Never again should there be any going and clinging to an old garment, or living inside an old wineskin.

“And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, ‘The old is better’” (Luke 5:39). The person who has not been born again does not seek the new wine, the new joy, because he does not know it. Because he has not tasted the new, he hates coming to a born-again church. But the person who has become new wants to come to the church of God. The desire to come arises. Though circumstances are hard and the body is weary, because the Holy Spirit within says, let us go, the desire to go arises.

They say that with the wine of this earth the old is good, but what is really good is the new wine of the kingdom of heaven. Once you taste what is of heaven, you no longer look again for the old things of this earth. Let us serve the Lord. Serving the Lord is the most right thing in the life of the born again. And ask the Lord for help. The Lord helps you.

Our Lord loves us, and after we are born again He does not cast us away; He is with us to the end of the world, and He is the One who helps and blesses and protects us forever. The Lord is the Lord, who takes responsibility for us. I praise and give thanks for the love of our Lord, who saved so many souls this week also. ☒

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CHAPTER

6

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Luke Chapter 6

seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Introduction

In Luke chapter 5, Jesus called sinners and displayed His authority to remit sins. In Luke chapter 6 He makes plain that He is the Lord of the Sabbath, and shows that saving life is the will of God. He then chooses the twelve apostles and teaches His disciples the way to live as the people of the kingdom of God.

Jesus proclaimed blessing to the poor and the hungry and those who weep. Conversely, He spoke woe to those who hold on only to present riches and satisfaction and the praise of men. He also told them to love their enemies, to be merciful, and not to condemn others rashly.

These words do not mean that a person must buy the remission of sins with good deeds. Jesus is first of all the Lord, who saves sinners with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The saved person must believe that grace and live following the word of the Lord. It is like a good tree bearing good fruit, and like the person who hears the word and does it building his house on the rock.

1. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath (Luke 6:1–5)

“Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that

He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands. And some of the Pharisees said to them, 'Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?' But Jesus answering them said, 'Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?' And He said to them, 'The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.'" (Luke 6:1–5).

The Pharisees condemned the disciples for plucking and eating the heads of grain on the Sabbath. Jesus spoke of the event in which David and those with him ate the showbread when they were hungry. David's case is recorded in 1 Samuel 21:3–6, and the regulation of the showbread appears in Leviticus 24:5–9. The regulation of Leviticus itself does not permit the ceremony to be taken lightly, but Jesus, citing David's case, corrected the attitude that turns the Sabbath rule into a tool of condemnation while ignoring people's actual need. The word God has given must not be used as a tool to starve and condemn people.

Jesus declared that He Himself is the Lord of the Sabbath. Genesis 2:2–3 and Exodus 20:8–11 show that the One who established the Sabbath is God. These passages are not words that directly prophesied the declaration of Jesus, but they form the background of the sovereignty of God, who instituted the Sabbath. Since the One who established the Sabbath is God, this word shows that Jesus is the Son of God, who holds the meaning and the authority of the Sabbath.

True rest is in Jesus. However much a sinner toils to remove his sins by his own works, he cannot gain rest in his heart. Because Jesus took on sin with the baptism He received from John and accomplished salvation with the Cross and the

resurrection, the person who believes that gospel escapes from the condemnation of sin and gains rest.

2. On the Sabbath He saved life and restored it (Luke 6:6–11)

“Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered. So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him. But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, ‘Arise and stand here.’ And he arose and stood. Then Jesus said to them, ‘I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?’ And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus” (Luke 6:6–11).

The scribes and the Pharisees set their hearts on finding grounds to accuse Jesus rather than on the suffering of the man with the withered hand. Jesus asked which is right on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy.

Jesus told the man with the withered hand to stretch out his hand, and when he followed the word, his hand was restored. Deuteronomy 5:15 makes the Sabbath a day to remember the salvation by which God brought them out of the bondage of Egypt. This is not a passage that directly prophesied the healing of the man with the withered hand, but it is the canonical background that lets us understand the Sabbath as a day of salvation and restoration. Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, did not add bondage to man, but saved life and restored it.

But the religious leaders did not rejoice when they saw this.

Rather, they were filled with rage and discussed what they might do to Jesus. When one holds on to religious form and loses compassion and life, he comes to oppose the will of God. Hosea 6:6 makes plain that God desires mercy rather than sacrifice. In the parallel text of Matthew 12:7, Jesus directly quoted this word and rebuked the attitude that condemns the guiltless.

3. He prayed and chose the twelve apostles (Luke 6:12–19)

“Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor. And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all” (Luke 6:12–19).

Before choosing the twelve apostles, Jesus continued all night in prayer to God. The choosing of the apostles was not a matter of human popularity or qualifications. Jesus chose twelve from among His disciples and established them as apostles who would testify of the gospel. The twelve pillars of Exodus 24:4 represent the twelve tribes of Israel. The choosing of the twelve apostles, rather than being a direct fulfillment of that passage, can be understood as the canonical counterpart in which Jesus establishes the people of God anew.

Many people gathered to hear the word of Jesus and to be healed of their diseases. Those tormented with unclean spirits were also healed. The power that went out from Jesus restored suffering people.

The apostles were those who would afterward testify of the baptism of Jesus and the Cross and the resurrection. Having seen and heard the saving ministry of the Lord, they were sent to preach the gospel of the remission of sins to Judea and to the Gentiles.

4. He spoke of the blessed and of those under woe (Luke 6:20–26)

“Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: ‘Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man’s sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full, For you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, For you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets’” (Luke 6:20–26).

Jesus spoke blessing to the poor and the hungry and those who weep. The poor of whom the Gospel of Luke speaks include those who are actually poor in the flesh. But the poverty of the flesh in itself does not remove sin. Even the person who is poor in the flesh must seek God in his heart and believe the salvation of Jesus Christ to receive the kingdom of God and its consolation. These passages, though not direct quotations or explicit

declarations of fulfillment of the beatitudes, show the Old Testament background of the reversal of salvation, in which God raises the lowly and turns sorrow into joy. 1 Samuel 2:5–8 sings of the hungry being filled and the poor being lifted up. Isaiah 61:1–2 prophesies the good news to be delivered to the poor, and Psalm 126:5–6 shows the hope of those who sow in tears reaping in joy.

Blessed also is the person who is hated and cast out for the sake of the Son of Man. It is because there is a reward in heaven for the person who counts Jesus and His gospel more precious than the praise of men. Isaiah 66:5, rather than being the direct prophecy of this word, shows the kindred hope of the Old Testament that those hated because of the name of God will at last see the glory of God.

Conversely, for the person who is satisfied with present riches and fullness and laughter alone, and does not seek God and refuses the gospel, there is the final judgment. Nor is winning the praise of all men a proof of the truth. More important than the circumstances of the world is whether the heart is turned toward God, and whether one believes the salvation of Jesus Christ.

5. We must love our enemies and show mercy (Luke 6:27–38)

“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what

credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:27–38).

Jesus told His disciples to love their enemies and to do good to those who hate them. He told them to bless those who curse them and to pray for those who insult them. Love does not stop at treating well only those who love us. Exodus 23:4–5 says to care for the animal of one’s enemy, and Proverbs 25:21–22 teaches to feed one’s enemy if he is hungry. These passages show the Old Testament direction of doing good to enemies, and Jesus teaches by extending the neighbor-love of Leviticus 19:18 clearly to the love of enemies.

The ground of this word is in the character of God. Exodus 34:6 is not the direct prophecy of this command, but the background showing the merciful character of God that the disciples must imitate. God is kind even to the unthankful and evil. Jesus also came clothed in the body of a man to save sinners who had become enemies of God. He took on their sins with the baptism He received from John and died in their place on the Cross, and so displayed His love.

The person who has received mercy and the remission of sins from God must not rashly judge and condemn others. He must first remember the compassion he has received, forgive, and share. This is not buying salvation with acts of love, but displaying in life the love of God he has first received.

6. We must first see the plank in our own eye (Luke 6:39–42)

“And He spoke a parable to them: ‘Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher. And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother’s eye.’” (Luke 6:39–42).

The blind cannot lead the blind in the right way. Neither can the person who does not see the plank in his own eye deal rightly with the small speck of his brother. Before trying to correct another, one must first see his own state before the word of God.

The attitude that does not see its own sin and condemns only others is hypocrisy. One must first know the fact that he was a sinner and received the remission of sins by the grace of the Lord. Only then can he help his brother, not with proud condemnation but with a compassionate heart.

7. A good tree bears fruit from what is stored in the heart (Luke 6:43–45)

“For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For

men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (Luke 6:43–45).

A tree can be known by its fruit. Good fruit comes from a good tree, and bad fruit from a bad tree. Psalm 1:3 and Jeremiah 17:7–8 compare the person who relies on God to a tree planted by the waters, bearing fruit. These, rather than passages that directly prophesied the parable of Luke, are the common image of wisdom literature explaining the relation of faith and fruit. A person’s words and actions also reveal what he is storing in his heart.

To bear good fruit, the heart must be made new before merely correcting the outward appearance. The person who believes the remission of sins Jesus accomplished and has received the Holy Spirit must store the word of God in his heart. Proverbs 4:23 is not a direct fulfillment passage, but provides the wisdom background that the heart and the fruit of life are connected. Then the fruits of faith and love and obedience appear in his life.

The fruit does not pay the price of salvation. The fruit shows what kind of tree it is. In the same way, the life of faith is not a boast for obtaining salvation, but shows the fact that the salvation received from the Lord is in the heart.

8. The faith that does the word builds the house on the rock (Luke 6:46–49)

“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the

rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.” (Luke 6:46–49).

It is not enough only to call Jesus “*Lord, Lord*” with the mouth. If one hears the word of the Lord and does not do it, that faith is not revealed in his life. Deuteronomy 5:1, though not the direct prophecy of this parable, shows the background of covenant obedience: the word must be heard, learned, and done. Jesus compared the person who hears His words and does them to a man who built his house on the rock.

To build a house on the rock, one must dig deep. After knowing the gospel clearly and believing it with the heart, one must follow that word in actual life. Just as the foundation is exposed when the flood beats against the house, trials and hardships reveal what a person believes. The firm foundation stone of Isaiah 28:16 and the false wall that collapses in the storm in Ezekiel 13:13–14 are not direct fulfillment passages of this parable, but provide the common Old Testament images of the true foundation and of the base exposed in the day of judgment.

Doing the word does not add anything to the salvation of Jesus. Jesus accomplished salvation perfectly with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The person who truly believes that salvation does not take the word of the Lord lightly, but wants to live following the word he has heard.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit that Luke chapter 6 shows

In Luke chapter 6, Jesus, as the Lord of the Sabbath, saves

life and restores it. He gives true rest to the person pressed down under the toil of sin and judgment. This rest is not something a person gains by the works of the Law, but the grace of salvation received when he believes the remission of sins Jesus accomplished.

The saved person must rely on God with a poor heart, love his enemies, and show mercy. He must first see the plank in his own eye and treat others with compassion. He must store the word of God in his heart to bear good fruit, and put into practice in his life the word he has heard.

Jesus loved us first when we were enemies. He received baptism from John and took on our sins, received the judgment on the Cross, and rose from the dead and gave us new life. The sinner must receive this salvation by faith. And the saved person must display to others the love and mercy he has received.

Conclusion

Luke chapter 6 contrasts the Pharisees, who condemned people with religious forms, and Jesus, who saved life and restored it. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, and the Son of God, who gives true rest to sinners.

The Lord told His disciples to seek the kingdom of God rather than the riches and praise of the world. He told them to love their enemies, to be merciful like the Father, and first to see the plank in their own eye. A good tree bears good fruit, and the person who hears the word and does it builds his house on the rock.

We must not turn these words into human merit for obtaining salvation. The rock of salvation is Jesus Christ and the gospel of the water and the Spirit He accomplished. We must believe that gospel in our hearts, and bear the fruits of love and mercy and obedience following the word of the Lord. ☒

Questions and Answers on Luke Chapter 6

[Question] 1. What does Luke chapter 6 contain?

Luke chapter 6 records the events in which Jesus revealed that He is the Lord of the Sabbath and chose the twelve apostles, and His teaching on the faith and life the people of the kingdom of God must have. The important contents are as follows.

First, through two Sabbath controversies Jesus revealed that He is the Lord of the Sabbath. When the disciples plucked and ate the heads of grain on the Sabbath, the Pharisees blamed their action. Jesus spoke of the event in which David ate the showbread, and proclaimed that He Himself is the Lord of the Sabbath.

“And He said to them, ‘The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.’” (Luke 6:5).

On another Sabbath He healed a man with a withered right hand in the synagogue. The scribes and the Pharisees looked for grounds to accuse Jesus, but Jesus said that it is right to do good and to save life on the Sabbath, and restored the man’s hand. Through this He showed that the Sabbath is not a day for condemning and oppressing people, but a day on which God gives life and true rest.

Second, after praying all night to God, Jesus chose twelve from among His disciples and called them apostles. Jesus prayed first before an important decision, and the twelve apostles who were chosen went about with Jesus and came to testify of His word and His saving ministry. Then many people gathered to hear

the word and to be healed of their diseases, and Jesus healed them.

Third, Jesus proclaimed blessings and woes to His disciples. He said that those who are poor and hungry and weeping and persecuted are blessed, because they look toward the kingdom of God and the consolation and reward they will receive. Conversely, He warned that woe is to those who are satisfied with being rich and full and laughing and being praised by men.

This word does not mean that everyone who is materially poor is automatically saved and everyone who is wealthy is condemned. It shows the different states of the person who knows his own lack and relies on God, and the person who relies only on the possessions and satisfaction of the world. The blessing of the kingdom of God cannot be judged by present circumstances alone; it depends on faith that believes in Jesus and His word.

Fourth, Jesus taught them to love their enemies, to do good to those who hate them, to bless those who curse them, and to pray for those who insult them.

“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you” (Luke 6:27–28).

Jesus said that even sinners can love only those who treat them well. The people of the kingdom of God must imitate the mercy of God the Father, who is kind even to the unthankful and the evil. This does not mean approving evil as good or leaving injustice alone; it means not being ruled by the heart that hates the enemy and takes revenge, but treating him with good.

Fifth, Jesus said to examine one's own faults first before criticizing and condemning others. One must not try to remove the speck in a brother's eye while failing to see the plank in one's own eye. Right discernment is necessary, but proud condemnation that does not look back at oneself must be avoided.

Remembering the compassion received from God, we must show forgiveness and mercy to others as well.

Sixth, with the parable of the tree and its fruit, Jesus taught the relation between a person's heart and his actions. A good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit. A person's words and actions are the fruit of what has been stored in his heart appearing outwardly. Therefore, before correcting only outward actions, the heart must be made new with the word of God and the gospel.

Seventh, Jesus compared the person who hears the word and does it, and the person who hears and does not do it, to a house on the rock and a house built without a foundation.

“Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great” (Luke 6:47–49).

The person who hears the word of Jesus and does it by faith does not collapse even when the hardships and trials of life strike. But the faith of the person who only hears the word and lives by his own thoughts collapses before trials, like a house without a foundation. True faith does not stop at calling Jesus Lord with the mouth, but receives His word into the heart and follows it in life.

None of the teachings of Luke chapter 6 are moral commands that can be achieved by human effort alone. A sinner cannot love his enemies or bear good fruit by his nature alone. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on the sins of mankind,

received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead and saved sinners.

The person who believes this gospel of salvation and receives the remission of sins becomes a person of the kingdom of God, and his heart is made new. He does not love his enemies and do good in order to obtain salvation, but lives following the word in thanksgiving for the love and compassion of God he has already received. Luke chapter 6 teaches that if a person believes in Jesus as Lord, that faith must appear as love and mercy, good fruit, and obedience to the word.

[Question] 2. Luke 6:1–2, why did the Pharisees blame the disciples of Jesus on the Sabbath?

The Pharisees saw the disciples of Jesus plucking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them on the Sabbath. They interpreted plucking the heads as harvesting and rubbing them in the hands as threshing, and blamed the disciples because they thought they had done labor forbidden on the Sabbath.

“Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands. And some of the Pharisees said to them, ‘Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?’” (Luke 6:1–2).

The disciples’ picking and eating heads of grain from another’s field was not in itself stealing. The Law of Moses permitted a hungry person passing through his neighbor’s grainfield to pluck the heads with his hand. Only putting a sickle to it for the purpose of harvesting was forbidden.

“When you come into your neighbor’s standing grain, you

may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain" (Deuteronomy 23:25).

Therefore what the Pharisees made an issue of was not the ownership of the heads of grain, but the fact that the day was the Sabbath. In the Law there was the commandment to do no work on the Sabbath. To keep this commandment minutely, the Pharisees divided what counted as labor into many categories. They judged that even the disciples' plucking enough heads to eat and rubbing them in their hands amounted to harvesting and threshing.

But the disciples did not work to harvest the grain of the field and store it up or gain profit. Passing along the way, they were hungry and plucked a few heads with their hands and ate. The Pharisees put the Sabbath rules they had laid down ahead of the disciples' hunger and the merciful intent the Law permitted.

Jesus spoke of the event in which David and his men, when they were hungry, ate the showbread that no one but the priests could eat. This shows that the commandment of God is not meant to harm a person's life or to condemn the hungry. Then Jesus proclaimed that He Himself is the Lord of the Sabbath. This means that Jesus has the authority to determine the true meaning and right use of the Sabbath.

The problem of the Pharisees was not that they counted the Sabbath commandment important in itself. The problem was that they put their own interpretation and tradition ahead of the will of God, and condemned hungry people by that standard. They tried to keep the outward form of the commandment, but missed the compassion of God and the intent of life contained in that commandment.

This event teaches that the word of God and human tradition must be distinguished. Obeying the word of God is important, but one must not raise the detailed rules people have made to the

same authority as the word of God and rashly condemn others by them. Nor may one despise the word of God while speaking of freedom and grace. As Jesus showed, we must follow both the purpose of the word and the compassion of God.

The Sabbath was the day on which God gave rest to His people. Ultimate true rest is gained when one is saved from sin. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on our sins, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead and saved sinners. The person who believes this salvation ceases the toil of trying to become righteous by his own works and gains true rest within the salvation Jesus completed.

Therefore we must not consider ourselves righteous or condemn others on the ground of keeping outward rules, like the Pharisees. We must believe in Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, gain rest within the salvation He accomplished, and follow the intent of life and compassion contained in the word of God.

[Question] 3. Luke 6:3–5, with what event of the Scriptures did Jesus answer the Pharisees, who claimed that the disciples had broken the Sabbath?

Jesus answered with the event in which David and those with him, when they were hungry, went into the house of God and ate the showbread that no one but the priests could eat. Then He proclaimed that He Himself is the Lord of the Sabbath.

“But Jesus answering them said, ‘Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?’ And He said to them, ‘The

Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.’” (Luke 6:3–5).

The event Jesus spoke of is recorded in 1 Samuel chapter 21. When David was fleeing from King Saul, he asked Ahimelech the priest at Nob for something to eat. Since there was no common bread there, the priest gave David the showbread that had been taken from before the LORD.

“So the priest gave him holy bread; for there was no bread there but the showbread which had been taken from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread in its place on the day when it was taken away” (1 Samuel 21:6).

The showbread was the holy bread that had been set before God in the sanctuary, and according to the Law, Aaron and his sons the priests were to eat it in a holy place. So David and his men were not, in principle, priests who could eat the showbread. But when they were placed in the urgent situation of being hungry with nothing to eat, the priest gave them the showbread.

Jesus asked the Pharisees, *“Have you not even read this?”* They prided themselves on knowing the Scriptures well and keeping the Law thoroughly, but they had not rightly grasped the will of God shown in the event of David recorded in the Scriptures. They did not look at the disciples’ situation of picking a few heads of grain out of hunger, but applied only the Sabbath rules they had set, and condemned them.

Jesus’ speaking of the event of David does not mean that one may break the commandment of God at will. It means that one must not apply only the outward rules while turning away from the intent of life and compassion of God contained in the Law. Even the holy showbread offered to God was used to preserve the lives of the hungry David and his men. In the same way, the Sabbath was not a day meant to starve or condemn people.

The Pharisees blamed the hungry disciples in the name of keeping the Sabbath. But Jesus did not simply say that human

need always comes before the Law itself. He taught that within the will of God, who gave the Law, there is the purpose of saving life and having compassion on the hungry, and that the detailed rules people have made must not cover that will.

After speaking of the event of David, Jesus declared, “*The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.*” Since the One who instituted the Sabbath is God, the declaration that He is the Lord of the Sabbath shows that Jesus is the One who has the authority to make plain the true meaning and right application of the Sabbath. Not the tradition of the Pharisees but the word of Jesus is the final standard that judges the Sabbath.

Just as David and his men received the showbread in their hunger and preserved their lives, the sinner carries the problem of sin and death that he cannot solve by his own efforts. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on our sins, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead and saved sinners. The person who believes this salvation escapes from the toil of trying to become righteous by his own works and gains true rest.

Therefore we must not use the word of God as our own standard to condemn others. We must not hold only the outward form of the word, but know the intent of life and compassion of God, who gave that word. And we must believe the salvation accomplished by Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, and live by faith, saving and showing compassion to others within that grace.

[Question] 4. Luke 6:5, who did Jesus say is the Lord of the Sabbath to the Pharisees, who claimed that the disciples had broken the Sabbath?

Jesus said to the Pharisees, “*The Son of Man is also Lord of*

the Sabbath.” Since the Son of Man here is the name Jesus used of Himself, the Lord of the Sabbath is Jesus Himself.

“And He said to them, ‘The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.’” (Luke 6:5).

The Pharisees saw the disciples plucking heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them on the Sabbath, and blamed them for doing what should not be done on the Sabbath. They judged the disciples by the Sabbath rules they had interpreted and laid down. But Jesus, after speaking of the event in which David and his men ate the showbread that only the priests could eat when they were hungry, declared that He Himself is the Lord of the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is the day God appointed. Therefore, the statement that He is the Lord of the Sabbath means that Jesus is the One who has the authority to make plain the true meaning and right application of the Sabbath. The final standard for judging the Sabbath is not the tradition of the Pharisees or human interpretation, but the word of Jesus, who instituted the Sabbath.

The parallel text of the Gospel of Mark records the word of Jesus in more detail.

“And He said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.’” (Mark 2:27–28).

God gave the Sabbath not to oppress or condemn people with religious rules, but to have them cease their work and enjoy rest in God. But the Pharisees divided the Sabbath rules so minutely that they condemned as sin even a hungry person’s picking heads of grain. As a result, the Sabbath, which was to give rest to people, became instead a heavy burden that oppressed them.

The fact that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath shows that He is not a mere teacher of the Law or a prophet. Jesus is the Son of Man, who came clothed in a human body, and yet the Son of

God, who has the divine authority to rule over the Sabbath God established. Therefore Jesus could say what is good and right on the Sabbath, and could heal the sick and save life on it.

This word does not mean that a person may change or ignore the commandment of God at will for his own convenience. Rather, it means that human tradition must not cover the word of God, and that tradition must not be used to condemn others. Through the word of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, we must know the intent of life and compassion of God contained in the commandment.

If the Sabbath was the day to cease the toil of the flesh and rest, Jesus is the One who gives the true spiritual rest of escaping from sin and judgment. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on our sins, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead and completed salvation.

The person who believes this salvation ceases the toil of trying to become righteous by his own works and religious efforts, and gains rest within the salvation Jesus accomplished. Therefore we must not consider ourselves righteous by relying on human rules or condemn others, but believe in Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, and enjoy the remission of sins and the true rest He gives.

[Question] 5. Luke 6:7, what kind of people were the scribes?

The scribes were experts in the Law, who recorded the word of God, copied and preserved the manuscripts of the Scriptures, and studied and interpreted the Law of Moses and taught it to the people. In Jewish society, where religion and daily life were

closely joined, they also held considerable influence in judging religious and legal questions.

The representative scribe of the Old Testament age is Ezra.

“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10).

This word shows that the right posture of a scribe does not end at studying the word of God. He had first to do the word himself, and to teach that word rightly to the people. So the office of scribe was not wrong in itself. They were people entrusted with the precious responsibility of preserving and teaching the word of God.

In the New Testament age, many scribes worked together with the Pharisees. But scribe and Pharisee are not exactly the same title. The Pharisees were a religious group that tried to keep the Law and the traditions of the Jews strictly, while the scribes were those who professionally studied, interpreted, and taught the Law. Since many scribes followed the position of the Pharisees, the two groups often appear together in the Gospels.

The scribes of Luke 6:7 did not use their knowledge and position rightly.

“So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him” (Luke 6:7).

They did not come to the synagogue to learn the word of Jesus. They watched whether Jesus would heal the sick on the Sabbath, trying to find grounds to accuse Him. They counted their own interpretation of the Sabbath and their religious authority more important than the suffering of the man with the withered right hand and the compassion of God that would heal him. They prided themselves on knowing the word of God well, yet failed to recognize Jesus, the Lord of that word, who gives life.

Yet we must not conclude that all scribes were equally evil. In the Gospel of Mark there also appears a scribe who answered the word of Jesus wisely and was told that he was not far from the kingdom of God. The problem lay not in the office of scribe, but in the heart with which one treated the word of God.

We also must not make Bible knowledge a tool for asserting our own rightness or judging others. The word of God leads us to Jesus. Jesus received baptism from John and took on our sins, received the judgment of sin on the Cross, and rose from the dead and saved us. Therefore we must not stop at knowing the word, but believe in our hearts the salvation of Jesus testified in the word, and obey that word.

[Question] 6. Luke 6:13–16, who were the twelve men Jesus chose and named apostles?

After praying all night to God on the mountain, Jesus specially chose twelve from among His many disciples and called them apostles.

“And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor” (Luke 6:13–16).

The twelve apostles Jesus chose are as follows.

1. Simon, whom He also named Peter
2. Andrew, Simon’s brother
3. James
4. John

5. Philip
6. Bartholomew
7. Matthew
8. Thomas
9. James the son of Alphaeus
10. Simon called the Zealot
11. Judas the son of James
12. Judas Iscariot, who would betray Jesus

In this list there are people with the same names, so they must be distinguished. There are two Simons: Simon who was also called Peter, and Simon called the Zealot. There are two named James: James who was called together with John, and James the son of Alphaeus. There are also two named Judas: Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot.

“*Disciple*” means one who learns from and follows a teacher, and “*apostle*” means one who has received a special commission and is sent. Jesus chose twelve from among His many disciples and entrusted them with proclaiming the kingdom of God and testifying of the gospel. They learned close at hand the words of Jesus and the works He did, and were established as witnesses who would preach the gospel of salvation—that Jesus received baptism from John and took on the sins of mankind, died on the Cross, and rose again.

The origins and characters of the twelve differed from one another. There were fishermen, there was Matthew, who had been a tax collector, and there was Simon, called the Zealot. Jesus did not choose as apostles only people with outstanding position or learning in the world. He raised up various people to receive the Lord’s calling, learn the Lord’s word, and preach the gospel.

Yet among the twelve there was also Judas Iscariot, who would betray Jesus. The fact that Judas Iscariot is in the list of

the twelve apostles shows that outwardly following Jesus and receiving an office does not by itself guarantee true faith. What matters is not the outward status of having been near Jesus, but believing in the heart the salvation Jesus accomplished and following His word to the end.

We also must not boast of our own conditions or abilities, but believe the salvation Jesus accomplished. And the person who has received that gospel must, like the apostles, follow the will of the Lord who called him, and live proclaiming the salvation of Jesus to others.

[Question] 7. Luke 6:21, why did Jesus say that those who hunger are blessed?

Jesus said that those who hunger now are blessed because God will give them true fullness in the days to come.

“Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: ‘Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh’” (Luke 6:20–21).

In this word, “*you who hunger now*” and those who shall be filled contrast the present and the future. It is the promise that even if a person goes through lack and suffering in this world now, if he relies on God and waits for His kingdom, Jesus will give him perfect satisfaction and eternal life in the days to come. Therefore the blessing Jesus spoke of is not merely the blessing of having more to eat and better circumstances in this world. It points to the eternal fullness to be enjoyed in the kingdom of God.

But this does not mean that anyone automatically receives blessing just because he is hungry or poor. A person may be

materially poor and yet not seek God, and a person may be wealthy and yet realize his own lack and rely on God. What matters here is the heart that realizes that its soul is under sin and death and earnestly seeks the righteousness and salvation of God. The parallel word in the Gospel of Matthew shows this meaning still more clearly.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

The person who hungers for righteousness knows that he cannot satisfy his soul with his own works or the things of the world. So he earnestly seeks the word of God, the remission of sins, and eternal life. Conversely, *“you who are full”* in Luke 6:25 refers to the person who thinks he lacks nothing even without God and is satisfied with the material things and pleasures of the world. The difference between the hungry and the full lies not only in how much one owns, but in whether one needs God or stays in self-satisfaction.

Jesus can fill the hungry because Jesus Himself is the bread of life.

“And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst’” (John 6:35).

Jesus received baptism from John and took on our sins, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead, and so gave us the remission of sins and eternal life. Therefore the hunger of the soul is not solved by the wealth or pleasures of the world, but is solved when one believes the salvation Jesus accomplished.

Nor does this word mean that the hunger and poverty of real life are to be despised. Jesus fed the hungry multitude, and He had His disciples also care for those in hardship while preaching the gospel. It means, however, that we must not regard present

fullness as the final goal of life, but first believe in Jesus, who gives life to the soul, and look toward the eternal fullness of the kingdom of God.

[Question] 8. Luke 6:22–23, what heart did Jesus tell those persecuted for following the Son of Man to have?

Jesus said that when they are persecuted for following the Son of Man, they should not be afraid or ashamed, but rather rejoice and leap for joy.

“Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man’s sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets” (Luke 6:22–23).

Here the words *“For the Son of Man’s sake”* are important. This does not refer to being blamed for one’s own faults or rude behavior. It refers to being hated and rejected because one believes in Jesus and follows His word and gospel. Jesus said that even when people exclude the believer, revile him, and cast out his name as evil, God knows his faith, and therefore he is blessed.

The first reason one can rejoice under persecution is that the approval of God is greater than the evaluation of the world. People may judge the one who preaches the gospel to be wrong, but God acknowledges as His own people those who believe in and follow Jesus and His gospel. So the saint must not lose his faith just because he has lost people’s recognition and praise.

The second reason is that the reward in heaven is great. This reward does not mean buying salvation by the act of enduring

persecution. Salvation is received by believing the grace Jesus accomplished—receiving baptism from John and taking on our sins, being judged on the Cross, and rising again from the dead. It means that God remembers and repays what the person already saved by that grace has done in keeping the gospel and being faithful.

The third reason is that the prophets of God also walked the same road. The prophets of old were hated and rejected for rightly delivering the word of God. So persecution received because of the gospel is not proof of being forsaken by God; it shows the fact that one is following the word of God like the prophets who went before.

The joy Jesus spoke of does not mean regarding suffering as nothing or forcing a smile. Persecution is actually painful and frightening. But it means not losing heart, with the faith that the promise of the kingdom of God is more certain than the present suffering. The apostles also, after being beaten for the name of Jesus, rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name, and did not stop preaching the gospel.

Furthermore, Jesus did not tell them to take revenge on or curse those who persecute them.

“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you” (Luke 6:27–28).

So the posture of the person who follows the Son of Man is clear. He must not go looking for persecution or provoke people, and when he suffers persecution he must not be seized by fear, resentment, and revenge. He must firmly believe the salvation Jesus accomplished, rejoice looking toward the kingdom of God and the reward in heaven, and love even the persecutor and pray for him.

[Question] 9. Luke 6:24, why did Jesus say that woe is to the rich?

Jesus did not say that woe is to the rich because of the mere fact of having much wealth. He warned that woe is to the person who relies on wealth rather than God and tries to gain all his consolation and satisfaction from the riches of this world.

“‘But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation’” (Luke 6:24).

The words ‘you have received your consolation’ mean that they had made wealth and the pleasures of the world the whole of their life. They were satisfied with eating well and living comfortably in this world, and had no interest in their sin, the judgment after death, the kingdom of God, and eternal life. Because they considered that they lacked nothing even without seeking God, they felt no need of the grace of salvation Jesus bestows.

In Luke chapter 6 the poor and the rich are contrasted with each other. The poor cannot set all their hope on this world, so they look toward the kingdom of God; but the rich easily forget the need of God, relying on what they now have. So the center of this word lies not in the amount of one’s property, but in where the heart sets its hope.

The parable of the foolish rich man that Jesus told shows the same fact. That rich man stored up much grain and said to his soul, take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him:

“But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ ‘So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.’” (Luke 12:20–21).

The rich man’s fault did not lie in his plentiful harvest. The

problem was that he thought he could keep even his life as his own possession, and that he stored up wealth only for himself and was not rich toward God. Wealth can supply the needs of the body, but it cannot remove sin or save from death and judgment.

Nor does this mean that a Christian must not own wealth. The Scriptures do not simply tell the rich to throw away their wealth; they teach them not to trust in wealth, and to use it for good works and sharing.

“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share” (1 Timothy 6:17–18).

Jesus spoke woe to the rich not because He hated them, but to warn them not to lose eternal life by holding on to wealth that will pass away. True riches lie not in the size of one’s property but in believing the salvation Jesus accomplished. Jesus received baptism from John and took on our sins, was judged on the Cross, and rose again from the dead, and so gave us the remission of sins and eternal life.

Therefore we must not put wealth before God, but receive it as what God has entrusted to us, giving thanks and using it rightly. Rather than storing it up only for ourselves, we must care for those in hardship and serve the gospel, and set our hope not on uncertain riches but on God, who has given us eternal life.

[Question] 10. Luke 6:26, why did Jesus say that woe is to the one praised by all men?

Jesus said that woe is to the person who changes or hides the word of God to win people’s praise, and lives fitting himself to

people's wishes.

“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26).

Jesus did not say that all praise in itself is wrong. It is not wrong to receive a good evaluation for living honestly and doing good. The Scriptures also say that a leader of the church must have a good testimony among those outside, and teach us to live peaceably with all men if possible. So deliberately quarreling with people or earning a bad reputation is not the attitude of good faith.

The heart of this word lies in *“all men”* and *“false prophets.”* The false prophets delivered only what people wanted to hear. They did not rebuke sin or urge repentance; they hid the judgment of God and the right gospel and spoke only of peace and blessing. Because they approved people's wrongs as they were and spoke to suit their desires, they were welcomed and praised by many. But for those who had forsaken the word of God and won the hearts of men, the judgment of God was waiting.

Conversely, the true prophets counted delivering the word of God as it is more important than winning popularity with people. Because they rebuked idolatry and sin and cried out for people to return to God, they were hated and persecuted. Jesus also gave life and spoke the truth, yet was rejected by the scribes and the Pharisees. That is why in verses 22–23 He said that the one hated and insulted for the Son of Man's sake is blessed, and in verse 26 that woe is to the one praised by all men.

If we make people's praise the standard of our life, we come to fear public opinion more than the word of God. Fearing that people will dislike it, we fail to call sin sin, and we omit important parts of the gospel or change them into pleasant words. In the end we go the way not of a servant of God but of a false

prophet, who satisfies people's desires. Paul also confessed as follows.

“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10).

Nor does this mean that one must be hated by everyone to be a true believer. We must not regard being blamed for our own pride, rough words, and rude behavior as persecution received because of the gospel. The saint must plan good things before all men and strive to make peace. But he must not compromise the word of God and the gospel to gain people's recognition.

Jesus received baptism from John and took on our sins, received the judgment of sin on the Cross, and rose again from the dead and completed salvation. This gospel is not a word that can be changed or partly hidden according to people's tastes. Whether the hearer likes it or not, it is the salvation of God that brings a person to life from sin and death, so it must be delivered whole.

Therefore we must first consider whether God is pleased, rather than seeking people's praise. If we receive a good evaluation for good conduct, we should humbly give thanks, but not make it our own glory. And even if we lose people's praise, we must not forsake the word of God, but keep the truth with love and gentleness.

[Question] 11. Luke 6:27–36, what kind of love is the love Jesus spoke of in verses 27–36?

The love Jesus spoke of is not a reciprocal love bestowed only on those who love us. It is the love that does good even to the enemy who hates, curses, and insults us, and shows mercy

hoping for nothing in return.

“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:27–36).

The love shown in this word is a love that acts first. It does not wait until good feelings arise toward the enemy; without hating him or taking revenge, it rather does good to him, blesses him, and prays for him. Love is not a mere emotion but the choice of faith that intends to do what benefits the other person.

This love also does not calculate the return. Loving only those who treat us well, and giving only to those who can pay back, is something even the people of the world can do. But Jesus said to do good hoping for nothing. Not withdrawing love according to the other’s response, but first treating him as we wish to be treated—this is the love Jesus spoke of.

This love does not mean approving wrong as right or leaving evil as it is. Nor is it a word telling us to keep allowing another’s

violence and injustice, or not to protect ourselves and our families in danger. When necessary, one may state the wrong clearly and seek proper protection and help. But even in that process, one must not repay evil out of personal vengeance or wish for the other's destruction, but seek that he turn and be saved.

The ground on which Jesus commanded love for enemies is that God the Father is kind even to the unthankful and the evil. God did not love us only after we loved Him. When we were sinners and enemies of God, He first opened the way of salvation.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:8–10).

Jesus received baptism from John and took on the sins of us who were enemies, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead, and so reconciled us to God. This is the love of God bestowed even on enemies.

Therefore the love of enemies is not an act that pays the price of becoming a child of God. It is the person who has believed the salvation Jesus accomplished and received the love of God living in imitation of the Father's mercy. When we remember the love we received from God, we can pray for our enemy, do good to him, and desire his salvation, instead of hating him and taking revenge.

[Question] 12. Luke 6:41–42, whom did Jesus rebuke through the parable of the plank and the speck?

Jesus rebuked the hypocrite, who sees well the small fault of his brother but judges and condemns others without realizing his own much greater wrong.

“And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother’s eye” (Luke 6:41–42).

Here the “*speck*” refers to the small fault found in a brother, and the “*plank*” to the far greater wrong that one has not yet realized or does not admit in himself. If a person is sensitive to another’s small fault while closing his eyes to the pride and greed and hypocrisy within himself, he cannot rightly help his brother. For one who cannot see himself to step forward to fix another’s eye is like the blind leading the blind, spoken of just before.

This word was not aimed only at particular scribes or Pharisees. It is a warning given to the disciples who heard the word of Jesus and to all people. Whoever judges and condemns his brother without looking back at his own wrong must receive the rebuke of this parable. Paul also said, *“Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things” (Romans 2:1).*

Yet Jesus did not say that we should never discern or correct a brother’s fault at all. Jesus said, *“and then you will see clearly”*

to remove the speck from your brother's eye. The problem is not the act of helping a brother itself, but the attitude of condemning a brother while regarding oneself as righteous, without seeing one's own wrong. One must first realize his own sin and lack before the word of God, throw away pride and self-righteousness, and admit that he too is a person who needs the grace of God. Only then can he help his brother with love, not with a condemning heart.

We must not use the word of God as a tool for finding out the faults of others. When we hear the word, we must first examine ourselves in its light. The word that makes us realize our sins at the same time makes us believe in Jesus, who received baptism from John the Baptist to take on all those sins, was judged on the Cross, and rose again from the dead. The person who believes this grace of salvation cannot put forward his own righteousness, and even when he sees a brother's fault, he does not rashly condemn him but treats him with the compassion he himself has received.

Therefore the parable of the plank and the speck is a word that rebukes the hypocrite, who points out and condemns the small faults of others while not looking back at his own great wrong. We must first discover the plank in our own eye and turn back before the word of God. Only then can we see our brother clearly and help him correct his fault with humility and love.

[Question] 13. Luke 6:43–45, what do the tree and the fruit that Jesus spoke of in the parable mean?

The tree Jesus used as a figure means a person and the fundamental state of his heart, and the fruit means the words and actions and the outcome of life that come out of that heart. Just

as the kind of tree determines the fruit, what is stored in a person's heart determines the words he speaks and the things he does.

“For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (Luke 6:43–45).

The good tree refers to the person who has believed and received in his heart the word of God and the salvation He accomplished. The bad tree refers to the person who does not realize the sin and evil within himself and lives following his own thoughts and greed. The good fruit is the good words and actions that come from a heart that believes God—a life that serves the gospel and loves its neighbor; and the bad fruit is the falsehood and hatred and pride and condemnation that come from an evil heart.

Jesus said that the tree can be known by its fruit. A person's heart cannot be seen directly with the eyes, but by looking at the words and actions he repeats, one can know what is stored in his heart. In particular, verse 45 teaches that the words that come out of the mouth are not separated from the heart. If thanksgiving and faith and love are stored in the heart, such words come out; and if hatred and greed and self-righteousness are stored in the heart, they are at last revealed in words and actions.

This parable also carries the meaning that a person cannot become good merely by imitating a few good actions outwardly. Just as a thornbush cannot bear figs however hard it strives, and a bramble cannot yield grapes, the root is not changed by decorating one's deeds while leaving the heart full of sin as it is.

Rather than hiding bad fruits one by one, the tree itself must first be made new. One does not become a good tree by bearing good fruit; one bears good fruit because he has become a good tree.

For a person to become a good tree, he must first admit before God that he was born with sin and is a being that cannot bear good fruit by himself. And he must believe in Jesus, who received baptism from John the Baptist to take on all our sins, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from the dead. The person who receives this word of salvation into his heart and is born again comes to bear good fruit, believing and following the word of God.

Becoming a good tree does not mean that one never again says or does anything imperfect. Lack remains even in the born-again person, but he does not excuse or hide his fault; he admits it before the word of God. He believes that Jesus took on even those sins of his, turns back, and intends to live following the word and to serve the gospel. Such faith and life are the good fruit borne on a good tree.

Therefore the tree means a person's heart and spiritual root, and the fruit means the words and actions and life that appear from that heart. Rather than trying to fix only the outward appearance, we must first admit our sin and believe the salvation Jesus accomplished, and become good trees. And by storing the word of God in our hearts and acting by faith, we must bear the good fruit in which God delights. ☒

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

True Christian faith

< Luke 6:20-26 >

“Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: ‘Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man’s sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full, For you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, For you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.’”

The word spoken under the threat of death

Luke chapter 6 is a long passage, and I intend to share the word from verse 20 to verse 26. When our Lord said in verse 20, *“Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: ‘Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh’”* (Luke 6:20–21), it was when the Lord was in a position to be killed by people.

When the Lord was passing through the grainfields with His disciples on the Sabbath, the disciples plucked the heads of grain,

rubbed them in their hands, and ate. Then people picked a quarrel, asking how they could fail to keep the Sabbath. And when the Lord healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, they picked a quarrel again: eating plucked grain was wrong enough, but how much worse to work on the Sabbath—could He not heal on another day? Yet the Lord said, which is better on the Sabbath, to save life or to do evil, and boldly healed him.

Because of that, the people were filled with rage and discussed with one another concretely how they would deal with Jesus. At that time the Lord went to the mountain to pray, and prayed all night, and when day came He called His disciples, established the twelve disciples, and called them apostles. Looking at these words, it seems that when the Lord, clothed in a human body, came to this earth and carried out the ministry of saving mankind from sin, He both suffered threats to His bodily life and knew well how the work had to be done. Knowing that people were discussing how to deal with Him, He prayed all that night and then established the twelve disciples. And looking at the disciples, He spoke this word.

The kingdom of the Lord is not this present world but the world to come

His saying that those who hunger now are blessed and those who weep are blessed is because the kingdom of God belongs to just such people. Looking at these words, we can see that the Lord is not concerned only with this present age; He speaks like this concerning the world that comes again—that is, He intends now to save the people of this world from sin, make them the people of God, and in the kingdom of the Lord fill them, make

them laugh, and bless them. The kingdom of the Lord is not this present world but the world to come.

We human beings lean heavily toward the present world. It is because we have human bodies and cannot ignore reality. To lean means to count only the present important, and not to think of being saved from sin, going to the kingdom of the Lord, and living with eternal life in the next world. We must not be like that.

The word the Lord spoke is so plain, yet you and I who hear this word are not placed in such circumstances, so as we read it we tend to think, well, I suppose so. But if bodily danger came upon you and me and death stood before us; if we were persecuted and afflicted so that we simply could not live, and suffered so many unjust things that tears came; and if therefore the promise of the Lord's kingdom grew dear and we longed to go quickly to that kingdom—then this word would come home to us very keenly.

Because the Lord healed the sick and was not bound by the Sabbath regulations, the religious people such as the Pharisees and the scribes were plotting how to deal with the Lord. The Lord, knowing that, gathered His disciples and spoke this word. If we read this word knowing that urgent situation, we come to know why the Lord speaks with His concern not on this present world but on the world to come, and it becomes truly vivid, and we come to receive it as a truly blessed word and a blessed promise.

It seems the Lord worked at home until He was thirty. And at thirty He received baptism from John, took over all the sins of mankind, and began in earnest the work of saving mankind from sin. His ministry was three years. He died on the Cross at thirty-three and rose from the dead and saved us, so during those three years death followed Him at all times. People were always trying

to seize and kill Jesus. So the words the Lord spoke were not words spoken at leisure. The words of the four Gospels look very long to us, but they are the words the Lord spoke in three years, so we can see that He spoke an enormous amount of words and did many works.

Woe to those drunk with the present world

So the Lord said that the disciples, and the poor of this world, those who weep because of their circumstances and have no hope, those who hunger from lack of food, are blessed. But to those who are not so—those who laugh in this present world and are full and warm, whose hearts are rich spiritually and carnally, who are rich in the flesh as well, and who stand against the righteousness of God—He said there is woe. From verse 24 to verse 26 He says woe, woe, woe—three times in a row.

To what kind of people is there woe? He said woe to the rich, to those who are full now, to those who laugh now. Then one could say: is it a sin to be full while living in this world, a sin to laugh, a sin to be rich? That is not what He is speaking about. It is that this world into which a person is born and lives is not all there is. Man is born with sin and can only be judged because of sin, and there is a next world, the kingdom of the Lord. That is why those who are truly poor, those who can only weep because they are persecuted, those who have nothing and have been robbed of everything and hunger—such people are blessed. Why is that? It is because such people hear the word of God well.

It is so in real life too. People whose stomachs are full do not listen well to the word. The rich of this present life, those who are warm and full and healthy, do not listen well. But however rich in the world someone may be, those who cannot be satisfied

with the things of the world, those who truly agonize over their own sins and want the problem of their sins solved—into such people the word of God enters well, and they also believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins. That is why.

Religious people bent on this world, with no relation to the Lord

The Lord said, woe to you when all men speak well of you. He said this because false people are always drunk with the present and receive praise. With whom in mind did the Lord speak? He spoke with the false prophets, the false religionists, the Jewish religious leaders of that day in mind.

False people are full. They are full in the flesh and full in heart. They receive praise from many people. And false people laugh. They have little to weep over. Their faces are always glossy with oil and free of care. If things go well in this present world, that is enough for them. If they build a great chapel, win recognition from the neighborhood, from the people of their country, from many people of the world, that is everything. They do think that when they die they will go to the kingdom of God, but they have no assurance of going and no faith. Spiritually seen, false people work to receive praise from people. How much they work to be praised! To be praised by people they run programs feeding the homeless at the church level, and open schools for the elderly, teaching songs and doing this and that for their health. Then how the people of the world praise such a church! At that point the pastor of that church is regarded as a local notable. They do everything to receive praise.

False prophets do not do anything that would bring

persecution on themselves. They do nothing that would lose them points, and for fear of missing their stipend they will not speak a word of God however right it is. It is not that they cannot; they will not. Instead they receive recognition from everyone. They ride good cars; they are rich and their churches are rich; they pursue only what prospers in the present. But the Lord is not so. Those who seek the kingdom of the Lord, those who seek the Lord and the truth, those who seek the gospel of the water and the Spirit—they are blessed. But those who are not so have not blessing but woe. It is because they live drunk only with the present, and even their ministry is done drunk with the present.

The Christianity of the whole world has leaned toward the present world. Saying the church must be the salt of the world and the light of the world, they launch good works, and even lend out the chapel as a neighborhood meeting place. Once someone came to our church too and asked to borrow the church for a neighborhood residents' meeting. I refused in a word. Why hold a residents' meeting at a church? In a chapel, worship should be offered. The person looked at me strangely, saying other churches these days all lend theirs—why not this church?—and left; and whether word spread, no one has ever come to say such a thing again. It is precisely because such things are what win praise from people.

In what direction do so many pastors of the whole world do their ministry? The pursuit of the present. The Scriptures say, *"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers"* (3 John 1:2). The first thing the Apostle John said to the saints was, just as your soul prospers. He desires that the soul prosper, and then that other things also go well and that they be in health. But the pastors who pursue the present say only that if you believe in Jesus you receive blessing in both soul and body. The sick are healed, the poor

become rich, those without rice get rice, and the ignorant become wise—that kind of talk. Of course it is not all wrong. But that is a ministry that pursues only the present. Ministry must be done for this work: inviting people who are not born again so that they may be born again, so that people who do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit may come to know this gospel. Only then is the Lord pleased.

What is the work the Lord came to this earth and did for us? He worked to remove your sins and mine, to make us the children of God, and to have us enter the kingdom of God and live enjoying eternal life. The remission of sins is received in this present life, but going to the kingdom of God and enjoying eternal life and all those things are matters of the world to come. They are things that will take place in the next world, absolutely not things that happen only in this present world. And yet people misunderstand the things the Lord did and turn them into things of this present world only.

True reformation begins from the gospel of the water and the Spirit

In 1907, they say, the fire of the Holy Spirit rose greatly in a church in Pyongyang, and revival meetings were held on a large scale to commemorate the hundredth year. They hold meetings commemorating it, saying, let us be filled with the Spirit, repent of sins, become ethically upright people, people who evangelize well. And people say that Christianity must not go on like this, that it must be reformed, that it must change.

If we would change it, we must change from a this-worldly faith to a next-worldly faith. We must know well to whom the Lord said there is blessing and to whom He said there would be

woe, and reform accordingly. If those who believe in Jesus pursue faith and blessing only in the present, what kind of Christian faith is that? What you and I receive before God as reward and recompense is entirely a matter of the world to come. There are indeed blessings in the present too, but they are temporary blessings given so that we may serve the gospel and preach the gospel. The blessings of the body, of circumstances, of health are all given so that we may serve the gospel; they are not permanent. Do your health and mine last forever?

People said there must be a reformation, and they carried out the Reformation. But did they carry out a true reformation? Did they carry out the reformation knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit? They carried it out without knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit in the least. Martin Luther carried out the Reformation because the religious leaders of that day, on the pretext of building a great cathedral, collected offerings from people. Because they collected money by even putting up notices saying that if people paid a lot of money, their ancestors who had gone to hell could go to purgatory. Because that was wrong, he stated in ninety-five theses what the clergy were doing wrong in practice; he was not saying that the fundamental doctrine itself was wrong. Therefore it was a reform of the system, not a reformation for gaining true faith.

Now too, people say countless times that Christianity must not go on like this, that it has degenerated into a religion that gives pain rather than becoming a light, and must be reformed. But if one would truly reform Christian faith, he must strive to know the gospel of the water and the Spirit. He must strive to know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive it, believe it, and open the word of the Scriptures to confirm whether it is really so. And if it is right, receive it; if it is wrong, reject it. But people, while saying there must be a reformation, have no

interest in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

There are those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and these books are spread, and Christians all over the world receive them. The lay believers like them very much, but among Christian leaders there are many who reject them. Not all are so—there are also many pastors who receive them—but the majority reject them. Why is that? Because their faith is a this-worldly faith. Because it is a faith that seeks to prosper only in this world, even when they meet the truth they have no eyes to see the truth, no ears to hear it, and no heart for it. That must be changed. One must know his own sin, know how the Lord has saved us with the love of God, know and believe that what is in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is really the love of God and true salvation, and return to the Lord. Believing in Jesus and becoming rich and healthy and respected and recognized by the people of the world—that faith is not Christian faith.

When Jesus came to this earth, He was persecuted by the false prophets and the Jewish religious leaders, and they tried to seize and kill Him. In this age too, when those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaim the righteousness of God, there are many people who persecute and oppose them. And yet those same people keep saying that Christianity must somehow change. If the Christianity of the whole world would change, if the Christianity of our country would change, it must know and receive the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is absolute. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins in the present and gains eternal life in the world to come, and everything he suffers in this world for the Lord's gospel—persecution and weeping and hunger—is all repaid. The Lord is the Lord, who came to save us from sin and to have us live happily forever in His kingdom.

Not religion but faith

We must have true Christian faith. In Luke 6:20 and 26, the words *“Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: ‘Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God’”* and *“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets”* are entirely about the world to come. If it were about this present world, would the Lord not have had to say, blessed are the poor, for if you believe in Me you will become rich?

The age we live in is the same. Nations conduct tests with nuclear weapons and threaten one another, and when one nation has nuclear arms, the neighboring nations all say they must have them too, and the world becomes unstable. We are preaching the gospel in the midst of such an unstable situation. And yet what the Christian leaders are doing, at most, is work that receives praise from people—a this-worldly ministry. They cry out a positive faith: if you believe in Jesus you are righteous even with sin; we go to heaven; Satan the Devil, be gone.

That is not faith. It is religion. Religion is what man makes for man. Faith is looking up to and believing what God has done for us. Knowing and receiving what He has done is faith, and religion is what one makes for oneself. So one person serves a great rock as his god, another serves the moon, the stars, the water as his god. That is all man-made religion. The Christians and Christian leaders of the whole world in this age must return into the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If they would reform religion, if they would gain true faith and the true remission of sins, they must return into the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Only then can they receive salvation, gain eternal life, believe according to the Lord’s will, follow the Lord, and live according to the Lord’s will.

Return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit

If one believes without knowing the Lord's intent in what He said, that is destruction; such people will suffer woe. If you would truly return to the Lord, you must have right knowledge of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, know the Lord's intent, receive it, and believe. The Lord did not speak only of the present world. We must know the fact that, to give us the remission of sins in this present life and to give us glory and riches and eternal life in the world to come, He came to this earth, removed our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, saved us from sin, made us the children of God, and is leading us. We must believe it so.

I am speaking not only to you but to the Christians of the whole world. A person living in this world now has no guarantee of the future. Even a healthy person does not know when he will die. Until now many people lived out their full span and departed, but from now on such people will be rare. It is because we are exposed far too much to the dangers of disease and natural disaster and war. Therefore we must repent and return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

We must truly return to our Lord, who gave us the gospel of the water and the Spirit, to our Savior. And we must believe. We must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit in this present life and receive the remission of sins, and obtain the blessing of enjoying eternal life in the world to come. We must preach this gospel, live for this, and meet death doing so. If we would carry out a true reformation, we must return to the Lord, who gave the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and believe—please keep firmly in mind that reformation must be done that way. ☒

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Blessed are you poor

< Luke 6:20-26 >

“Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: ‘Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man’s sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full, For you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, For you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.’”

“Blessed are you poor”

The Lord said that the poor and the hungry are blessed, and that they shall be filled. If a person truly lives his whole life poor and hungry in this world, and yet fails to receive the remission of sins, and out of stubbornness puts forward his own righteousness and cannot receive the blessing God has given, and so goes to hell—if he comes to be judged—he will be pitiable. If he lives badly and only suffers in this world, and then goes to the other world and suffers torment in hell, he will be a truly pitiable person.

Poverty of the flesh and poverty of heart

The Gospel of Matthew says that the poor in spirit are blessed, but here the Gospel of Luke says that the poor are blessed. The point of view differs a little. Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke, was a physician. So while he has the view that sees people through God, he has more of the eye that sees people physically, as a physician. Matthew, who recorded the Gospel of Matthew, was a disciple of Jesus and had been a tax collector. So he spoke of the heart rather than fleshly poverty, while the Gospel of Luke speaks of people who are actually poor in the flesh.

Of course, when one is poor in the flesh the heart also becomes poor, and if, being poor in heart, he meets the Lord and receives blessing, that is good. But if a person is born poor in the flesh, lives badly and only suffers, barely scrapes through life and dies—and then must stand before the judgment seat of God and go to hell and suffer eternal torment—that is truly pitiable.

I sometimes watch scenes of the world here and there on television. There are scenes of the people of India bathing and washing at the Ganges River. Hinduism, the religion of India, believes strongly in karma. Because they believe the doctrine that how one lives in this world determines how one will live in the next world, they try to live really uprightly in this world. And yet they do not live well; they only suffer terribly and die. Watching them beg for a living by the Ganges, waiting only for the day of their death, and still trying to live doing good deeds, one feels truly sorry for them. They think that when a person dies he returns in reincarnation. They think a person who has done many good deeds is born into a good family, and a person who has done much evil is born as a lowly creature like a snake. Such things are not right. Can a person, made in the image of God, be

born as a snake? There is indeed such a thing as a person living again, but it is not that.

There really are many poor people in the world. Even while living in such poverty and hardship, they must truly seek God. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, received baptism from John and took over all our sins, and by dying on the Cross, shedding His blood, and rising again, He removed all our sins and made us the children of God. So I want them, in the world that comes again, in the kingdom of God, to hunger no more, to be filled, and to enjoy eternal life. The Lord saw from that angle and spoke.

In truth, if one has no material things, his heart at least should be poor, but it is not. If one has nothing and is poor, his heart should also be humble, but often he is all the more stubborn and haughty. Sometimes when we try to help people in hard circumstances, they flatly push it away. One could receive what should be received and decline what should not, but it is not so. As it is said, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:3), the heart also must be poor, and if one is poor in body as well, he should meet the Lord quickly. He must meet Him, believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and receive the remission of sins.

There are people who live badly and suffer, with sin in their hearts, and yet, though the Lord came to save them and has saved them with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they do not believe it, but are stubborn and hold other religions. But the faith that removes sin exists only in Christianity. Religion is what man has made, and only in Christianity did God come to this earth to save us. Then one must believe. It is said that if you seek God, He will meet you. There are many who do not even seek, who fall into wrong things, who, without knowing proper doctrine and without faith, hold out to the end and go to hell; I want such people also to know and believe that the Lord came and saved

us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and to be saved. I want them really to be filled, to gain eternal life, and to live a life in which the tears are dried from their eyes and they laugh and rejoice.

Luke says here that people hate the believers, exclude them, revile them, and cast them out as evil. He said that when such days come around, rejoice and leap for joy. He said, “*your reward is great in heaven*” (Luke 6:23). Such things actually happened in the days of the early church, and though it is not so now, they will come to pass in the future. When we believe in the Lord and receive the remission of sins, we are sometimes hated by the people of the world. And yet there is no one as happy as we are. We do not hope only for the blessing of material things. We truly wait for the kingdom of the Lord, and since the Lord, when He comes again, will keep what He promised, it is certain that we are the blessed.

The person who does not seek God is like the beasts that perish

He said that God brings down woe on those who, living in this age without having received the remission of sins, are rich in heart, who never prepare for the problem of their sins, the problem of their souls, the place they will go, and who always laugh and enjoy the pleasure of each day. I truly hope there will be no such people. In this age there is far too much of that. People look for something to laugh at every day, yet do not seek God, do not seek the truth.

People of former days sought the truth. When they went to university, however the grades came out, there were many students who agonized: who am I, what is life? These days there

is none of that at all. Sunk into thoughts of where to work part-time and how to make money, and buried in their phones, few agonize over life. There is even talk of a survey of young people in which they said that even if war broke out in the country they would not go out and fight. It seems they have nothing and yet only their vanity has grown. Without a country we could not even worship like this. A person without a country is pitiable. The country must be well defended.

Looking at the people of the world in the light of this word, there are so many such people that it is truly pitiable. And why are they like that? It is fundamentally because they do not believe in God. Because they do not believe in God, they are already full in heart and in body. But however splendidly the flesh may live, a person's heart can never be full. So at times religious people do good deeds to gain fullness of heart. When one does something to help others, the heart rejoices for a little while. But that joy does not last long, and when he cannot do good deeds it dries up again. It is because man's fundamental conscience resembles the image of God, so that when he follows good his heart rejoices and when he follows evil his heart suffers.

There are so many people on this earth who do not seek God. In America, in Europe, in Asia, those who seek God are not many. Still, here and there, there are people who seek God. The poor in spirit are blessed, and those poor in the flesh are also blessed. Some people seek God because they suffer so much. But the person who does not seek God is truly like the beasts that perish. He claims to get along fine without God—but is getting along fine without God being human? Such a person is like a beast. Does not a beast instinctively rejoice as long as there is food? A person must know God and must know how to fear God. Yet people neither try to know God nor give thanks before God. This is being like the beasts that perish. Worldwide there are so many

such people.

We are preaching this gospel now, and we are preaching it truly well. From now on we should send even more books. When books reach our coworkers and are distributed through them, then even if some emergency arises, they can work within their own countries. I want this gospel of the water and the Spirit to be preached well by any means. There is a heart that does not want to receive consolation in this world, but wants to receive consolation when the kingdom of the Lord comes. As we keep making and uploading electronic books, the people who find and read them keep increasing, and now people who receive the remission of sins after reading the electronic books also appear here and there. Where it is hard to send paper books, if we deliver electronic books, I think people will read them and receive the remission of sins.

Knowing this word our Lord spoke—“*Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled*” (Luke 6:20–21)—try applying it to the people around you. Look around to see whether there are people around you who are really poor, people hungry in heart and thirsty for God and the truth; pray, and give your full strength to spreading the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Those who are not so meet destruction. In a little while the Lord comes.

Satan the Devil entices with the comfort of the present

We must keep delivering this gospel and do this work without ceasing. Satan the Devil will entice us to live full and with things to boast of on this earth, receiving people’s praise.

He will tell us to pursue a life of being recognized on this earth, being filled, eating well and living well. But true evangelists do not count as suffering the suffering they bear for the Lord on this earth. What is there to count as suffering? For the Lord, for rewarding work, we labor this much and countless souls receive the remission of sins.

I want you truly to live for righteousness like that. I want what we do not to be in vain; live by faith, do not live only for your own flesh, and even if the flesh is lacking, live for the gospel, live with the gospel, and unite your hearts in serving the gospel. Yet sometimes when you ask even a person who has long served the gospel, he gives an utterly wrong answer. He cannot discern the spiritual from the carnal. Such people, if things go wrong, end up forming factions. If there is said to be a way for their own flesh alone to live well, they go that way regardless of what becomes of the preaching of the gospel.

It is not only such people; Satan the Devil goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, prodding here and prodding there, setting people whispering, and keeps at it. So he leads people's hearts along: serving the gospel is good, but let us serve it with some leisure, living well. Then people's hearts go that way, and to live like that they pull others in and form a faction. And so they hinder and ruin the preaching of the gospel. At first it never appears as hindering the preaching of the gospel. It goes in the manner of wanting to serve the gospel while also living well in the flesh. But go only a little way, and the serving of the gospel is over and they live only for their own flesh. That is the outcome.

The Holy Spirit holds our hearts, and God holds the church

I know that Satan the Devil whispers and works every day within us, within the churches across the country, within the hearts of the workers and the saints. But however Satan the Devil may do so, though we may sometimes seek a day's pleasure and want to eat something delicious, we cannot give up serving the gospel. If we do not do this, what would we do? What reward is there? If we did not do this work of serving the gospel, not one person would remain under another person. It is because we preach the gospel that we unite and serve according to order like this—among men, is there anyone who could become our cult leader? No one can. We are the children of God and the workers of God. No one can lord it over another, and it would not work if he tried.

Because we serve the gospel, the Holy Spirit is in your hearts and in my heart, holding us, and through the order within the church He has us do these works of serving the gospel, leads us, keeps us, and gives us new strength. It is God who does it. If God did not do it, what could we do? Even two people gathered cannot unite their hearts—how could ten gather and unite their hearts? How could several hundred unite? It is a thing that cannot be unless God does it. It is truly thankful, so very thankful.

And I have this heart: while preaching and serving the gospel much, we must also do much of the work of caring for the workers. Because our brothers and sisters, you who serve the gospel, and the churches across the country are all having such a hard time, the lack of the flesh must be supplied. We should fit out the facilities better and make things convenient, and while doing so, do the work of God still more diligently—that is what I think. It is because there are many things needed in order to serve the gospel.

Let us discern the times and live for the gospel

When we look at the word of God and look at how the world is going, we come to feel so strongly that the word of God is the truth and that the days when this word will be fulfilled are drawing near—have drawn near. When you go about anywhere, pray and rely on God, and go about well by faith, wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Let us quickly deliver this gospel to the whole world. Before long it will all be preached. Watching the world break down so fast, my heart is on one side glad and on another side sorrowful. The world has now broken down a great deal.

When you cook rice, do you not wash the rice and set it in, adjust the water, and when the rice is done, make the side dishes and boil the soup and set the table and eat? This world has already begun eating, and has eaten about half. Now what remains is about the scraping of what is left in the bowl. Seen from God's point of view, the history of the whole world is at such a point. When you finish the meal and put down the spoon, do you not then put away the side dishes into the refrigerator and clear the table? Now is such a time. The history of this earth is at such a time. It changes so fast.

The more such a time it is, the more, lacking as we are, let us hold a settled heart before God—the heart and faith that say, I will live for the gospel, I will live united for the preaching of the gospel—and set our hearts firmly and live. We keep living so, and when the Lord comes, we go. The Lord may call us first, but since we can go, there is no need to worry. Let us discern this age well and live so. And so let us give glory to God, and let us also attain the glory of God. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Woe to you...

< Luke 6:20-26 >

“Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: ‘Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man’s sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full, For you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, For you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.’”

To give the kingdom of God to the poor

Not long ago a world terrorist organization was caught planning to blow up several airplanes at once. It is a truly thankful and fortunate thing. I do not know why they set out to do such war-like things. I long and long for this gospel to be delivered quickly throughout such a world.

Looking at the word from Luke 6:20 to 26: in the Gospel of Matthew the Lord spoke of the beatitudes, but here He speaks concerning those who are poor in the present. As Jesus carried out His ministry, watching the poor of the nation of Israel being

oppressed, having their taxes extorted, and suffering injustice in many things, He said toward such people, *“Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God”* (Luke 6:20). If some sage had said this, it would have been taken as mere words of comfort, nice words.

But when the Lord Himself said this, looking at His disciples, at those who followed Jesus, and at the many poor who did not follow Him, we can know that He said it bearing in mind that He Himself would give them the kingdom of God.

“But woe to you who are rich”

Let us look at verse 24. It says, *“But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation”* (Luke 6:24). And in verse 20 He said that the poor are blessed. I know that when the Lord here spoke of the poor, He was not speaking of the body only. He was speaking of everything, both soul and body; the Lord was saying that to those who, in His sight, are truly poor in soul and body, who cannot set their hope entirely on this earth but set their hope on God and on the kingdom of God, He will give the kingdom of God and bless them.

But to the person who does not set his heart on God, who gives his attention only to material riches on this earth and tries to receive all his consolation on this earth, He did not say there is blessing; He said there is woe. To be rich toward God is a fine thing, but among the people of the world there are those who have no interest in God. There are those whose interest is only in material things, for whom material things are everything.

This time our training center suffered damage from the great rains, but there was no loss of life. It was among the least damaged in that region. Yet when you reckon everything up, the

material loss is enormous. Still, material loss can be repaired; it is when something goes wrong with people that real trouble arises. *“Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled”* (Luke 6:21).

As we live in this world, there are many people whose interest is in the world. To have one’s interest in the world means to have interest only in material things, and to have no interest in God. Such people have already received their consolation. Because their interest is only in material things, many people live pursuing material things in the material world and receiving all their consolation and recompense from those things.

What is the angle from which the Lord sees? Every person living on this earth has already inherited sin in his heart; when he dies it is destruction; and even if he lives on this earth, the span is not long. Life is here a moment and then vanishes—and to those who have interest only in material things and try to receive consolation only from material things, who have no interest in God and the truth, no interest in eternal life and the imperishable true truth, He said there is woe; and to those who are not so He said there is blessing—the kingdom of God is yours.

Many people living in this world tend to want everything simply to go well. They want the home to be sweet and peaceful only, to earn money well in the world, to be healthy, to enjoy much, to live splendidly in the visible world and enjoy riches. There are many who live in that world, with no interest in God, interested only in such a world.

In God’s sight, there really is woe for such people. Man is made in the image of God—how can a person made in the image of God pursue only what is visible and think only of what is sweet? The truth; the washing away of the sins of one’s own heart; the heart that, if this world is not all and there is a good

place in the world to come, wants to go there; the heart that for the sake of what is right will suffer hardship and bear not being well treated in this world—these are what one should have; but instead people pursue only the riches of the world. To such people there is woe.

The kingdom of God really exists; it is the appointed order that a person is born once and dies once; and after a person dies he is judged by God, and there are those who will go to the kingdom of God and those who will enter the hell of destruction. In life on this earth also there is the righteous life and the unrighteous, selfish life, and people pursue the latter. They pursue only what is good for themselves, not caring what becomes of others. It was concerning such people that our Lord spoke this way. Born from God, and yet without interest in God, not thinking of what kind of being he is before God, what problem he must have solved, and what he should live for to live a truly rewarding life—such people, I know, deserve to receive woe from the Lord.

Because it is the word the Lord spoke, it is the truth. What of being poor in heart? Being poor in heart is a deeper poverty than being poor in body. The body can be set floating by even a little money. But the poverty of the heart remains poor however much money there is. One wants to live for what is right, wants to live and depart as a human being living uprightly, wants to go while doing the work of saving others from destruction. I know the Lord spoke like this knowing all such things. It is supremely fitting.

Let us look at verse 25. It says, *“Woe to you who are full, For you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, For you shall mourn and weep”*. This word can be contrasted with verse 21. It says, *“Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh”*. Those

who now, in this world, in the material world only, laugh and are full and warm will in the days to come mourn and weep. Though the Lord gives them every chance to meet Him, they do not believe and do not meet Him. But those who on this earth have much hunger and weeping for the right work of God, for saving the souls of others, will laugh in the days to come and be filled in both soul and body.

Those who now live only for their own belly and their own pleasure in this world will mourn and weep in the days to come. One must know what will become of him and live preparing for the future; the person who is pressed only by the present and chases only the day's pleasure is like the beasts that perish. It is all right for us, wearied in the Lord's work, to take a little rest. What must not be is living with the aim of pursuing only the material world and living well only during this life on earth. To those who pursue such a life, He said, mourning will come. A person's future should be better than his beginning. The path of the righteous is like the rising sun, shining ever brighter. Such is the life of the righteous. We now live on this earth for the gospel, and in the days to come our Lord gives us laughter and fullness, and guarantees and blesses us with a more certain, eternal future.

That man lives forever is the will of God

The person who does not prepare his own future is foolish. How long does a person live? Not preparing the future, living a day or two, one turns fifty, and in a little while falls sick and dies—it is quick. So among the poets of the world there are some who sang that, life being like grass and passing as quickly as the wind, let us enjoy ourselves while we live in this world; and some said it is like a spring night's dream, a single night's dream.

But what did the Lord say? He said, blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled; blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. One must weep for his own soul and hunger for his own soul. What fullness has the person who has not received the remission of sins? However full the storehouse is of grain and gold and treasure, if there is sin in his heart and the sin of wrongs done before God and men remains in his heart, such a person has no satisfaction. Such a person is not rich but poor. He is poorer than a beggar. What joy has he? Even when he laughs, behind the laughter sorrow is full.

We must think of ourselves before God. We were made by God, born into this world, live, and return before God—if a person does not think of himself before God, what does that make him? He is like the beasts that perish. Give a dog its food in the morning and it eats its fill, and even if a few minutes later it is to be sold off to the dog dealer, it does not know it and wags its tail with joy. A beast simply ceases to exist and that is the end, but man is a being that lives forever. He does not cease to be. Either He makes him live happily forever, or He makes him live in torment forever—this is the will of God. It is because man is the crown of creation, made in the image of God.

If you and I were like beasts, He would not have spoken this word. He would have told us to enjoy ourselves to the utmost while we live and then die. But the Lord said, blessed are you who hunger now; blessed are you who weep now. What does this tell us? It tells us that there is a world to come.

Do you know that the kingdom of the Lord comes and that the next world exists for you and me? And do you believe it? I too know it so and believe it so. If we were hoping for what does not actually exist, we would have grasped at a phantom and would be the most pitiable people in this world. But for us there surely is the world to come, the next life. This earth also perishes,

and the Lord makes a new kingdom of God and has us live there, and He has also made hell, and will put into it those who live without being conscious of God in this life. Do not even scientists say that long ago creatures like dinosaurs actually lived on this earth and one day suddenly all died, leaving fossils and bones? This world does not remain as it is forever. He said that the world of old He judged with water, but now He will judge with fire, and the Lord said He gives a new heaven and a new earth. Those who remember and acknowledge the Lord and, before the word of the Lord, believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit to receive the washing of their souls' sins and follow the Lord, He makes live forever in the kingdom of the Lord; and those who are not so, He said, He puts into the fire of hell. That there is woe means precisely that there is judgment.

Knowing that such things really are, we must preach the gospel. Not long ago a university professor in a foreign country read our books and, saying that he believes this gospel, asked very courteously that we make a booklet delivering the word to drug addicts and alcoholics and the sick. Since I must know something about such people, I received materials and am reading them. God will somehow give the knowledge. To such people also the gospel must be delivered. There is so much to do. In places all over the world there will always be threats of terror and war, and in the midst of that, the heart rises in us that we should pray, wait, and preach the gospel all the more.

Those who hunger now, those who weep now, will gain fullness and laughter. But those who now are full and laugh without God will in the days to come beat the ground and mourn and weep. This is the word of God. I know this world will end very quickly. Volcanoes erupt, earthquakes break out everywhere, floods come, wars break out, and if an epidemic mutates and spreads, countless people can die at once. Natural

disaster, disease, and war—these few things can destroy mankind completely. Then a new world comes. It surely comes. Because people live only in this world, they fail to think of that part, but God has spoken and is speaking now. In the Lord's own kingdom He will give His people fullness and happiness and eternal life and everything.

Is Jesus, who spoke this word today, God or not? He is God. The name Jesus means Savior, and the word Christ means the Anointed One. It means He is the One who came to this earth, God clothed in a human body, to carry out the three offices of King and Priest and Prophet. As King, to save His people from their sins, He took over the sins of mankind by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, died hanging on the Cross, and rose from the dead, to deliver the believers, His own people, from all sins. As the High Priest, He came to take charge of that work with His own body and solve it. And as the Prophet, He taught us everything—what kind of God He is, what kind of world He gives us, what He has promised us, and what will happen hereafter. So we must live with faith.

Woe to the one who, though born again, follows only his own flesh

Verse 22 says, *“Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake”*, and verse 26 says, *“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets”*. When people hate you and revile you and cast you out because of Jesus Christ, who came as man, there is blessing. In old times the servants of God and the people of God were all hated like that. When that happens, He said, rejoice in

that day and leap for joy, for your reward is great in heaven. If you live rightly, you receive persecution. But if you live only for your own flesh, you receive no persecution. It is because that is a calculating life well suited to human affairs.

These days there is talk of a politician who, likened to a figure who saved the nation, receives the praise of all for having rescued his party from crisis. But the Lord said, “*Woe to you when all men speak well of you*” (Luke 6:26). To be praised by all men is by no means a good thing. If people who have not received the remission of sins recognize you, it means we are now standing against God. If we live rightly, we can never be recognized by unrighteous people. How could the unrighteous recognize us? If you reckon it quietly, the way the righteous live is right. It is fitting to be hated and despised and persecuted by those who do not follow the righteousness of God. Why would we seek praise and recognition from a person who is not born again?

Remember this word. Even if you are born again, if after being born again you receive recognition from all the people of the world, you come to receive the same woe that those who are not born again receive. It is like the man who received one talent. Those who are born again and yet do not follow the will of God—who seem to follow and yet live only for their own flesh and do not seek the benefit of others—are like that.

A famous pastor in America published a book called *The Purpose Driven Life* and even came to our country and held meetings. What he says is this: more than whether the chapel is large or small, the church must follow the will of God; for that, the minister must first live entirely for the Lord and offer his own possessions to the Lord; yet now the chapels grow larger and the ministers grow sleek, while the ministry does not follow the will of God. That part is a right word. He says he put all the money

he earned from the book before the church. In truth, even a person who is not born again ought to live like that.

Then what purpose did the Lord speak to us? He tells us to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the washing of sins, and become the children of God. And He says: build up the kingdom of God, live the life of righteousness, do the work of saving the souls of others, and though you live on this earth like strangers, live a truly righteous life. If such are the will and the purpose of the Lord, we must live our lives fitted to them. Those who know the will of God must of course live this way. If an unrighteous person praises me, it means I am just like him. Then before God that person scores zero.

The life praised by the Lord

We are living well now, and we are also preaching the gospel well. This time, when we had to fold up the summer retreat because of the great rains, I listened to the workers, and they said it would be dangerous if a landslide came. Hearing them, it made sense—one does not only push forward; when one must step aside, one steps aside—so I said, let us fold this summer's retreat, and folded it cleanly. Instead I settled it in my heart: since our workers and the people of God cannot be recharged with the word and are working through this heat, let us repay them with rewarding work; let us produce more publications. So I threw my whole strength into the work of making books. Not much has appeared yet, but as much as was sown will appear. Such a life is the right one.

If our workers grow too weary serving the Lord, in truth the work does not get done either. One should rest when it is time to rest and work when it is time to work, and we have not managed

that, so from now on I intend to attend to that part. And I think what we are doing now is doing well. If there were any who sat down and had the heart that says, let us just earn money among ourselves and feed ourselves among ourselves, that is absolutely not the will of the Lord. He made us born again and placed us on this earth to deliver the gospel even to others—not so that, once born again, we might eat well and live well among ourselves and then come. Absolutely not.

So I have no desire to receive praise from the people of the world. Even praise is a joy only when heard from a right person. There is a self-respect that is not shaken in heart whatever the people of the world may say. Even in leisure, we play with the righteous and keep company with those who do the work of righteousness. Truly, we must not be praised by all men. We have the heart to be praised by the Lord, to do the works that receive the Lord's praise, and to live for righteousness. ☒

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The child of God does good to, and prays for, even the person who hates him

< Luke 6:27-38 >

“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put

into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”

Everyone, Jesus told the disciples who were listening to His word to love their enemies and to do good even to those who hate them. The Lord said to bless those who curse and to pray for those who insult, and to display the Father’s mercy in the concrete action of sharing what is needed.

Jesus spoke to those who hear: love your enemies

Jesus began His word by saying, *“But I say to you who hear”* (Luke 6:27). The disciple who hears and follows the word of the Lord comes to meet not only people who love him but also people who hate and curse and insult him. At such times the Lord commanded us not to follow the heart that would repay in kind, but to love our enemies and treat them with good.

It is easy for a person to be kind to those who like him and to return help to those who have helped him. He may also lend something to a person able to repay, expecting him to make some return. Jesus said that even sinners love those who love them and do good with repayment in view, and taught that the disciple’s love must go beyond the other’s response and repayment.

To love one’s enemy is to choose the action that fits the will of the Lord even while anger remains. Even when we suffer unjustly, we do not insult with the same words or take revenge with lies, but pray that the person may realize his own wrong and return to the right way. When we admit that the word of God is right rather than our feelings, love toward the enemy begins in actual deeds.

If one tries to keep this command perfectly by his own strength and become righteous, he soon meets his limit. It is because in our hearts there is the sin that clings to the hurt received and wishes the other person to suffer still more. So Jesus, together with the word to love our enemies, made us look to the heavenly Father, who is kind even to the unthankful and the evil.

God showed mercy even to us, who did not know His grace

God gives sunlight and rain and life even when people do not give thanks, and grants opportunity to turn back. We also originally broke the word of God and lived following our own will, and while enjoying what the Creator gave, we did not exalt Him. God took pity on such people as us and sent the Savior, who would deliver us from sin and judgment.

Jesus Christ, who is fundamentally God, came to this earth clothed in the body of a man to save us. The sinless Lord received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, in order to take over all the sins of mankind onto His own body. Through this baptism God transferred to Jesus all the sins of the world that people commit throughout their lives, rebelling against God and hating one another.

Jesus took charge of all the sins He had taken on with His baptism and carried them all the way to the Cross. On the Cross He was judged in the place of us sinners, shed His blood, and by actually dying He paid the whole price of sin. The Lord, who rose again from the dead on the third day after He was buried, overcame the power of sin and death and completed all the righteousness of God and the eternal atonement.

The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God. The child of God engraves on his heart how the Father took pity on him and saved him. The reason he does the needed good even to a person who does not know grace is that the Father's mercy he has first received is great.

Here also lies the meaning of Jesus' word, "*Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful*" (Luke 6:36). The person who has become a child of God through the gospel of the water and the Spirit lives following the character of the Father, who saved him. The life of loving one's enemies and treating them with good is the concrete form in which we show in daily life that we are the children of God.

Love for the enemy appears in good deeds and prayer

Jesus explained love toward the enemy as the action of blessing the one who curses and praying for the one who insults. We tell God honestly the hurt and fear and anger we have received, and ask for wisdom not to be dragged along by the heart that would take revenge. And we pray that the person may hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit, be saved, admit his own wrong, and return to the right way.

The Lord also said to treat others first as we wish to be treated, to give to him who asks, and to lend hoping for nothing in return. If we wish others to hear us out to the end, we must first listen to their words; if we wish to be helped in hardship, we must look around for the person near us who needs help. We can practice love by sharing food with the person who needs a meal, helping

with the transportation of one who must go to the hospital, and delivering the Bible and gospel books to the person who does not know the word.

Wisdom that discerns the other person's actual need is also part of love. Rather than handing over money that will be spent on addiction and gambling, we can look for a way for him to receive treatment and counsel, and directly supply what is needed, such as groceries and transportation. After giving help, we must not boast of it or try to move the person according to our own will, and we must not expose his situation carelessly, but respect him as a soul.

Love does not leave unattended the harm caused by violence and abuse. The person in danger must first be moved to a safe place, enabled to receive treatment, and protected by informing the church and the family and the public authorities. Even in the process of holding the wrongdoer to his rightful responsibility, we do not fabricate false evidence or take revenge on his family; we act according to the facts so that the harm stops and the same thing is not repeated.

The child of God judges mercifully and forgives

Jesus said not to judge, not to condemn, and to forgive. A person easily seizes on one failure and judges the whole person as useless, or concludes that he will never change. The Lord said that the attitude with which we measure others returns to us also within our relationships.

The child of God does not condemn people by rumor and personal feeling, but discerns actions by the word of God and confirmed facts. He listens to the person concerned, states concretely what was wrong, and helps the wrongdoer bear his

responsibility and correct it according to the word. When a wrong is exposed in the believer himself as well, he admits that the word of God is right and corrects his thoughts and words and actions.

Forgiveness between people begins with entrusting the harm received to God and laying down private revenge. Even after forgiving, one must confirm what happened and deal with apology and restitution and measures to prevent recurrence. In that process we do not delight in the other's ruin, but desire that he fulfill his own responsibility and return to the right way.

The attitude that does not rashly condemn a person's character and the work of discerning teaching by the word go together. The person who leaves out the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and teaches man's works as the condition of salvation delivers the religious doctrines of the world. The true servant of God preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit accurately, leads the hearer to believe in Jesus and be saved, and makes plain that the Savior who took the sins on His own body and redeemed them is Jesus Christ alone.

Let us show the Father's mercy to the people we meet today

The word to love our enemies begins in our words and actions today. If someone comes to mind, we can stop the act of repaying with the same words, and first pray that God will lead him rightly. If a relationship has grown distant through misunderstanding, we should contact the person to confirm the facts, and if there is a part where we ourselves did wrong, admit it concretely and apologize.

If the other person has an actual need and we are in

circumstances to help, we can listen to what he needs and help quietly. Toward a person who keeps doing dangerous things, we must not respond alone, but receive the help of the church and the family and the needed authorities to stop the harm. In all this process of helping people and dealing with responsibility, we must examine our hearts before the word, so that anger does not spread into falsehood and violence.

The church helps believers do this word together. When conversation is needed to untangle a conflict, it helps sort out facts and responsibility, protects the one who has been hurt, and exhorts the wrongdoer to correct his conduct according to the word. It also gives time to explain the word to the person who does not yet know the gospel, and keeps serving him so that he believes in his heart the salvation Jesus completed.

With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took charge of even all our sins of rebelling against God and hating and cursing people. He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross in our place and rose from the dead and saved us. I ask that you and I, who have become the children of God by believing this gospel, remember the mercy received from the Father, and live doing good even to the person who hates us, blessing the person who curses us, and praying for the person who insults us. ☒

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

What is stored in the heart comes out of the mouth and is revealed in actions

< Luke 6:43-45 >

“For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

Everyone, Jesus, speaking of the tree and its fruit, taught that a person's heart and words and actions are connected with one another. The words that have come out of the mouth and the things done with the hands show what one has stored in the heart as he has lived. Today, with this word, we will examine our own hearts, and see how Jesus, with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, made the sinner's heart clean and made him a new person.

Jesus said that every tree is known by its own fruit

From a good tree comes good fruit, and from a bad tree comes bad fruit. No one goes to a thornbush to get figs or to a

bramble to pick grapes. It is because a person knows what kind of tree it is by looking at the fruit actually borne on it, rather than by the name tag attached to it.

Through this fact that everyone knows, Jesus taught that a person's heart is revealed in his words and actions. Even a person who usually speaks kindly gets angry when he meets something contrary to his own will, and when his interests are at stake he hides the facts and shifts the responsibility to others. Such situations expose outwardly the greed and judgments that had been stored in the heart.

The manner in which we speak to our family and the way we treat those weaker than ourselves show our hearts still more plainly. One may choose gentle words before people and yet press down his family with rough words at home, and may show a devout appearance at church and yet break promises for his own gain where no one sees. God knows not only the actions revealed outwardly but also the heart that gave birth to those actions.

Therefore, before this word, we must first examine our own words and actions. If we lied, we must examine what we were trying to protect when we hid the facts; if we spoke ill of someone, we must admit why we wanted to lower him. When we admit the state of our own heart in the light of the word, we also come to know why the salvation of Jesus Christ, who actually removed sin, is necessary.

What fills the heart comes out of the mouth

Jesus said, *“For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks”* (Luke 6:45). When thanksgiving is stored in the heart, one speaks of the grace received; but when complaint and envy

are full, words come out that resent and lower others. The words that leave the lips do not end at revealing the heart; they have an actual effect on the person who hears them and on the community.

When a parent repeats belittling words to a child, the child's heart is wounded; and when husband and wife keep dragging out past wrongs to attack each other, it becomes hard to trust each other. When an unconfirmed story is passed around within the church, a person's honor is damaged and the trust between members also collapses. The complaint stored in the heart comes out of the mouth, and those words lead on again to actions that harm the relationship.

By the same principle, words that fit the facts and needed encouragement raise a person up. To the one who has done wrong we can state clearly what was contrary to the word and seek together the way to correct it, and to the one who is discouraged we can deliver the salvation Jesus accomplished and the promises of God. Rather than speaking or sending a message at once while angry, we must confirm the facts and calmly deliver what is needed to solve the problem.

From the believer's lips there also comes the gospel that gives life to other souls. Because there is thanksgiving in his heart for the salvation the Lord accomplished, he explains how God transferred the sin of the world to Jesus and where the Lord received the judgment of that sin. If we examine the words we speak often, we can know whether we have been storing up self-boasting and complaint, or treasuring the word of life and desiring the salvation of other souls.

A person's deeds cannot remove the sin in the heart

A person can correct wrong behavior and learn good habits. The change of quitting drink and gambling, reducing rough words, and doing one's work faithfully stops the harm that was being done to family and neighbors. But living rightly today does not make the sin committed yesterday something that never happened, and the labor of helping others cannot take the place of the judgment of sin to be received before God.

Every person, born a descendant of Adam, lives carrying the propensity of sin that seeks his own gain first and puts his own thoughts before God. Though the outward form of sin differs according to opportunity and circumstances, the fact that sin comes out of the heart and leads to words and actions is the same. So even after correcting a few behaviors, a person cannot erase by himself the record of sin that remains before God.

Worship and offerings and service also cannot become the means of paying the price of sin. These are precious acts by which the saved person serves God and the church with thanksgiving; but for sin to be redeemed, One without sin must take over the sin of the world and bear its judgment in our place. God completed through Jesus Christ the salvation we could not achieve by our deeds.

The person who admits the fact that sin comes out of his own words and actions must hear the word of salvation God has made plain. When he believes in his heart how Jesus took charge of the sin of the world and how He ended the judgment of that sin, the sin of his heart is actually washed away and he gains the new life God gives.

Jesus made us new with the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Jesus Christ is fundamentally God, and the Son of God, who came clothed in the body of a man to save us. The sinless Lord received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, in order to take over all the sins of mankind onto His own body. Through this baptism God transferred onto the body of Jesus the sin handed down from Adam and the sins of the world that all people commit throughout their lives.

Jesus took charge of the sin of the world He had taken on with His baptism and carried it all the way to the Cross. On the Cross He was judged in the place of us sinners and shed His precious blood, and by actually dying He paid the whole price of sin. Then, on the third day after He was buried, He rose again from the dead and overcame the power of sin and death.

The Lord fulfilled all the righteousness of God and eternal atonement with His baptism, the judgment of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection, and completed our salvation. Because God transferred the sin of the world onto His Son and judged it, whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of all sins. God gives the believer the Holy Spirit as a gift and makes him His own child.

God washes the sin of the heart with the gospel and gives the Holy Spirit, and so makes the believer a good tree, a new person. The person clothed in the righteousness of Jesus is a righteous person without sin before God and calls God Father. Now in his heart the word and grace of the Lord who saved him take their place, and the gospel stored in that heart appears as words and service that give life to other souls.

The believer stores the word in his heart and shows it in his life

In the believer's flesh also the old habits and greed remain, so there are times when he wounds people with wrong words or puts his own gain first. At such times he admits that the word of God is right and examines concretely what he has done. If he passed on words without confirming the facts, he acknowledges that responsibility and apologizes to the person concerned; and if he caused material loss, he goes as far as settling how to repay it.

To keep from repeating the same wrong, what one stores in the heart must also change. The believer hears the word in worship and reads the Scriptures, and asks the servant of the church and believers who have gone before about the parts he has not understood. He applies the word he has heard to his own circumstances, deciding concretely with what words he will treat his family, how he will handle his work honestly, and to whom he will deliver the gospel, and puts it into practice.

In this process the Holy Spirit helps the believer remember and follow the word. The word stored in the heart appears in the actions of hearing out the family's words to the end, keeping facts and promises at work, and helping the weak members in the church. The thanksgiving for the salvation received from the Lord also leads on to the service of handing on gospel books, listening to the questions of the person who has come for the first time, and explaining the salvation of Jesus.

What word is stored in our hearts is also connected with whose teaching we hear. The person who leaves out the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and teaches that a man must live as a sinner all his life and wash his sin daily with repeated prayers of repentance is one who delivers the religious doctrines

of the world. The true servant of God preaches Jesus, who took over the sin of the world with His baptism, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and rose again, and leads the hearer to believe this gospel and be saved.

The one who preaches the word leads us with the gospel to reach the remission of sins, but the Savior who bore the sin on His own body and was judged in our place is Jesus Christ alone. We must examine the Jesus and the content of the gospel that a preacher points to, rather than his fame and manner of speech, and receive into our hearts the gospel that agrees with the word of God. I ask that you and I, who have stored the word in our hearts like this, admit and correct our wrongs, do good to family and neighbors, and live delivering the gospel of life to other souls. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

We must build our house on the rock

< Luke 6:46-49 >

“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.”

The life of faith is doing the word the Lord has spoken

These days we are making books to deliver the gospel to the foreigners residing here and to readers of Korean. Please pray for that work. The life of faith, we may say, is believing the word the Lord has spoken and living by doing it just as it is.

In the earlier part of this passage the Lord spoke many words. Saying, *“And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye?” (Luke 6:41)*, He told us, before telling a brother to let us remove the speck in his eye, first to see the plank in our own eye. He also said, *“For a*

good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit” (Luke 6:43). This word means that if we admit that we ourselves are a brood of evildoers, bound for hell and always lacking, and believe that the Lord took charge of all these sins and has removed them all, then, even if there is lack in our lives, when we admit it and believe in and follow the Lord, we can bear truly good fruit.

And the Lord said in conclusion, *“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46)* What good is it, however much we know the word of the Lord? If after receiving the remission of sins we only know it—is receiving the remission of sins all there is? We must live our lives as the Lord desires. That is why He speaks this word.

The one who laid his foundation on the rock

He says, *“Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock” (Luke 6:47–48).* In very old times there was no laying a foundation with cement. When they built a house, they dug deep into the ground, brought a great stone into the hole, packed it down firmly, and set the pillars on it. They set pillars at the four corners, laid the rafters, framed the structure, covered the roof, made the walls, and hung the doors, and so it became a house. Built like this, in any ordinary rain, because they dug deep and set the pillars on the rock, the house does not collapse unless that rock itself is washed away. But if a house was built by just driving pillars into the soil, when a great flood comes it

collapses flat.

What an easy word it is. He is saying that our life of faith is like this. The person who knows and does not do is a disobedient servant. The person who, lacking though he is, does what he knows—who, though he may also do wrong, lives striving to do it—is living the life of faith well, He says.

So for me, preaching the word much and knowing much is important, but I think about what I must do now, and I find my work and do it. This past week, what did you and I live doing? For whom did we work? I spent the week in the work of making books.

Today also we live the life of a disciple

What is it the Lord desires? It is the will of God to preach the gospel to the foreigners who have come into the country, and to the whole world. But how shall we deliver it? Walking along the street, foreign workers pass by talking in their own languages, and we cannot understand a word. How, with what words, could we deliver the gospel to such people? We cannot communicate in language or understand each other's culture, so there is no way. But documents can do it. We can make booklets, and when there is a chance, ask which country someone is from, hand him a book that fits, and tell him: read this, and if you need more, contact the address written here, order, and learn more.

So the first thing we are making now is a combined edition carrying English and Korean together. To deliver the gospel to readers who use Korean, we are translating back into Korean the Paul C. Jong books that have been made in English and distributed throughout the world, and making them into English-Korean combined editions. With this we can deliver to the

people of our country, give them also to English speakers who have come into our country, and then make them in other languages as well. Our books are by no means books that claim to be right only among themselves in some corner. Though they are Christian books, because they are written on the basis of the word of the Scriptures, they are content that people of any denomination can agree with when they come and read.

When the books are read by those who truly seek, they become disciples of Jesus Christ at once. If one reads not only this gospel of the water and the Spirit but also books like the expositions of the four Gospels, he can know how to live, how to live by faith—everything. Because they read not just one book but many, they can be nurtured very closely through the books. A brother from abroad also came and said, make more books. Reading our books, as one reads, the heart gains strength and faith springs up, and the faith that was in me is conveyed to him just as it is. So I said I would make them, and told him first to read all there are.

We are also doing work for the blind. A sister reads the books aloud and records them, and we give the recordings to the library for the blind to distribute. Then the blind can download and listen. The person in charge says that these days there is no one who gives books free like this. Would we give them free because the books are worthless? Because the books are so very valuable, and because this work cannot be settled by taking money, we give them freely. If they seemed worthless, we would not devote our lives. When the first making is done well like this, the work afterward is easy. It is for such work that we live. If a person lives for this, he is making his life of faith as firm as a man who built his house on the rock, and he becomes a person praised and blessed by the Lord. He is not shaken. He does not totter. After being born again, living the life the Lord desires is the life of a disciple.

He delights in the life that puts forward not me but the gospel

What is so important about making one's own name known? When I was making the English books, there were many coworkers who said we should put my photograph in the books. I did not want to put in a photograph. People can be influenced in deciding whether to receive the content or not by whether the author's origin or looks please them. Then it is not good for me to step forward. The Lord said thus, the Lord saved us thus, the Lord blesses us and has prepared heaven for us and now rules and leads us—it is enough to tell such things; as for my own story, it is better to leave it out where possible and step back. So I did not put in a photograph, and perhaps because of that the gospel is spreading widely. If I had put up a photograph, I suspect it would have been cut by half. My name and face would have become widely known, but those who did not care for them would not have read the books well.

In truth, in our own hearts too there is a mind that looks down on a person who looks different from us, a person who came from elsewhere. When I was young I too was teased by the children because my eyes were of an unusual color and my hair was reddish, and a friend of mine with darkish skin was teased as well. As children we called each other such names without even knowing whether they were good words or bad. That is how people judge others by outward appearance. That is why we do not put a person forward, but preach only the gospel. When we preach the gospel, the Lord is so pleased. When one hears the word of the Lord and receives the remission of sins, and follows the word of the Lord and lives the life the Lord desires, He is pleased.

Work in union through the church

If you do the work that pleases the Lord alone by yourself, will He be pleased—or if you do it receiving direction through the church? The latter, of course. It is because the Scriptures say, *“Let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”* (Revelation 2:7). The Holy Spirit is in the man of God, and the Spirit governs his thoughts and has him speak and command among the people within the church of God. There is no need to take it ill. I too, sitting and listening to someone preach, though it is that person speaking, when the Lord’s will appears in it, I receive it, thinking, so that is how the Lord is speaking. Whether the preaching is skillful or not does not matter at all.

But He said, *“But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great”* (Luke 6:49). The stream here is the muddy water that comes down mixed with soil in the rainy season. A house built by just sticking pillars into the soil without rock collapses when the stream comes down and strikes the walls. Our life of faith must not be like this. He is telling us to hear the word of the Lord well and, though we cannot do it perfectly, to live in union through the church as much as the Lord has given us strength.

We must strive daily to do the will of the Lord and live according to His will. How much one knows, how impressive or unimpressive one is—that is not what matters. If we have lived a week, a month, a year as the Lord desires, it is satisfaction. If we live the life the Lord delights in, it is satisfaction. Together with the churches across the country we make books and deliver them to the whole world, take orders for books and hand them out, and people are receiving the remission of sins—how much

this is a work God delights in! Because God is pleased, God also helps the work we do and makes our hearts glad. This is the life God desires.

The self-respect of faith that comes from the precious gospel

Then what is there for us to insist on—knowing much or little, putting forward our own pride? One must have something impressive to put forward pride. There is the saying, in heaven above and earth beneath I alone am honored; the man called Shakyamuni, who claimed that he himself was a god, was the man of the strongest pride. He meant there was no one but himself in heaven and on earth. That is pride. But if one rightly knows Jesus, if one rightly knows the Creator, can he put forward his pride before Him? A human being made by God, a lump of sin who was bound for hell—what pride is there to put forward? People act so because they do not know. Following the Lord, if someone asks whether you have received the remission of sins, there is no cause for wounded pride; rather: yes, thank you for asking; I was thus and so, and the Lord saved me like this; thank you for reminding me once more of my salvation—that is how it should be.

Following the Lord, we sometimes receive interference and direction from those who go before us and from coworkers—what is there in that to wound pride? Even in doing the work of God, one does not work alone. One always works receiving direction. The direction of God comes through the church, through those who go before; God has set up a great purpose for us and says, unite in this and be faithful each in the part entrusted to you. Honestly, even if I were told to go to the countryside and

raise dogs and feed the chickens and clear away the animals' dung, there would be nothing in it to wound my pride. If God has entrusted it to me, it is the work of God—how precious a work, how rewarding a work! I would do it with all my heart. If cleaning a pit of dust clean is the will of God, and everyone else has his own appointed work, and it has been allowed to me, then I clear it. Because this is the work of God, the heart is glad. If it were work done unwillingly because a man ordered it, how wounding to one's pride it would be; but if it is work the honored One assigns, it is joy. If our Lord is the honored One, all His work is honored.

Not long ago, over the building of the training center, officials came and interfered: why did you build it so large? We will recognize what you have spread out so far, but expand no further. As it happened we had meant to stop at about that anyway, so I accepted it, but anger surged up inside. By what authority do you tell me what to do and not do with my own land?—that was the feeling. When my pride is wounded, I explode inside. But that is my own pride, and one thing is clear: it is not that we refrain because men tell us not to. Even if men forbid it, if our Lord desires it done, I do it by any means. That is the true self-respect of faith. If there is a work the Lord delights in, I do it without fail.

If your pride is really wounded, you must look back at yourself once. Am I really a person honored enough to put forward pride before God? I was a sinner, destined for hell; and the Lord came to one with such a destiny, received baptism from John and took over all our sins, died on the Cross shedding His blood, and rose again—with the water and the blood He saved us. And after that He entrusted His own work to us—what is there to wound pride? If someone hardly human ordered me about, my pride might be wounded; but if the honored One

assigns the work, it is joy. Thank You for assigning it—that is how it becomes.

As we live on, we may do wrong out of our lack. What we did meaning well may go wrong. Then we quickly admit it, say we did wrong, and learn as we are taught. Saying something went wrong is not pecking at what has just been done; it is said in order to say that from now on it must not be done this way but that way. We have only to live like that. As the church directs, as those who go before direct, let us work in union at the work of our precious Lord. When we move it into action and do it, it is a joyful thing.

Living like this, when at some point the Lord comes or we go before the Lord, will the Lord not call us faithful? Even before reaching that last day, when we count the Lord's work precious and do it precious, the Holy Spirit within our hearts rejoices, saying, well done, well done. The Holy Spirit's rejoicing is exactly the same as the Lord saying to us, you have done well. When we have done the Lord's work with all our heart, though the body is weary, our hearts become glad. It is because our Master is Jesus Christ. There is no high and low among people, no impressive and unimpressive; those who have received the Lord, when they live the life the Lord delights in, become the most honored vessels. I believe that all of us are such vessels. I give thanks that the Lord has let us live such a precious life, and I want God to give you such faith and to bless you. ☒

◇ About the Next Series

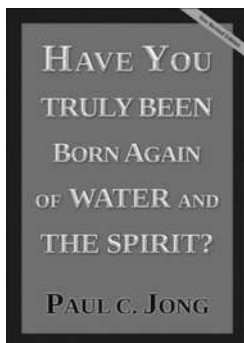
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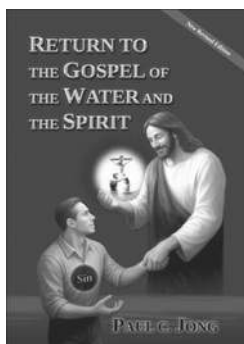
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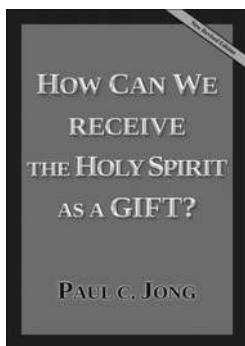


Let's return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Theology and doctrines themselves can't save us. However, many Christians still follow them, and consequently have not been born again yet. This book clearly tells us what mistakes theology and doctrines have made and how we can believe in Jesus in the most accurate and certain way.



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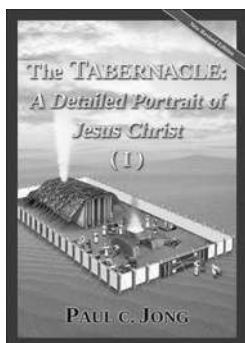


In Christianity, the most significantly discussed issue is salvation from sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However, few people have the exact knowledge of these two topics. Nevertheless, in reality people say that they believe in Jesus Christ while they are ignorant of true redemption and 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]



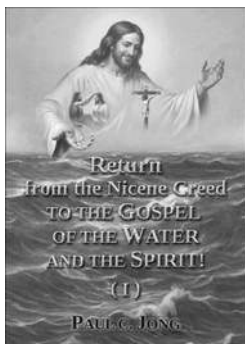
How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

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.

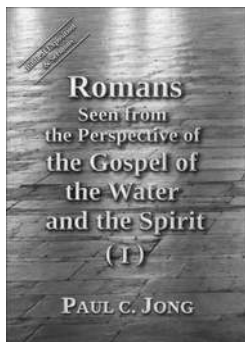
However, in the process of the Nicene Creed's formation, the ministry of Jesus having the sin of the world transferred to Him by being baptized by John was deleted from the creed's contents. As a result, this truth has been passed down in a hidden state within Christianity for about 1,700 years, reaching 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.

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,

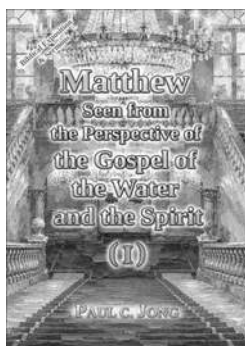
A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of 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)

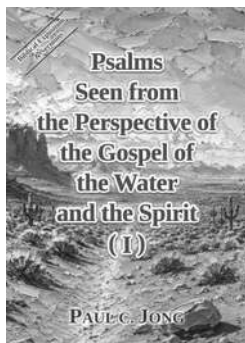


Why does sin still remain in your heart, even after believing in Jesus, reading the Bible for years, and attending church faithfully? Through Matthew chapters 1–4, this book answers clearly from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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.

Psalm seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I)

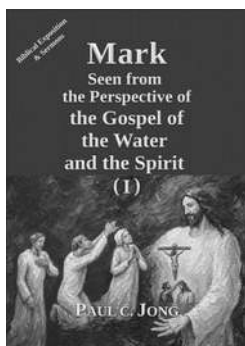


For long ages the Psalms have been the prayer book and the hymnal of the saints. Yet if we read them only as beautiful religious poetry or as an expression of emotion, we easily miss the meaning of these songs of praise. For David's laments and praises ultimately point to Jesus Christ, the Savior who is to come.

This book is a biblical exposition that unfolds the Psalms from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. David's songs are not an outpouring of emotion but the confession of a righteous man who has received the remission of sins, a prophetic praise that looked up to the Christ who is to come. The blessing, righteousness, and peace of the Psalms do not come from human goodness but from the salvation God accomplished in Christ.

Beneath it all flows a single gospel. It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus took our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins on the cross, and rose from the dead to make us righteous. When you open the Psalms with this gospel, the old songs come alive as your own confession, and this book leads you to the blessed place of those clothed in the righteousness of God.

Mark Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

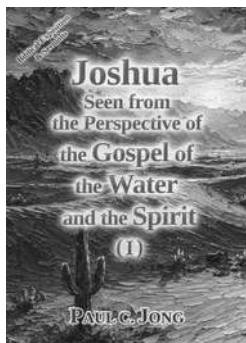


Who do you believe Jesus to be? Through Mark chapters 1–4, this book testifies to the beginning of the gospel, the Lord's authority to remit sins, and the ground of the heart that hears the Word.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed onto Him, bore the punishment for those sins in our place on the Cross, and rose from the dead and gave us eternal life. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins at once and the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Do not read this book merely to add to your knowledge. Examine what kind of ground your own heart is, and lay down your own righteousness and religious stubbornness. Receive the Word of life just as it is and enjoy true rest, and relying on the Lord even in the storms of life, bear the fruit of faith.

Joshua Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)

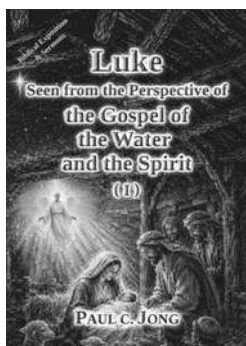


The Book of Joshua is often read as the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan and its victories in war. But the heart of Joshua chapters 1 through 12 is not human courage or strength; it is God's salvation. It shows how God leads sinners across the Jordan into the land of promise and makes them enjoy the remission of sins and true rest.

This book explains Joshua chapters 1 through 12 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. From the death of Moses and the crossing of the Jordan to the fall of Jericho and the defeat of the kings of Canaan, Joshua points to Jesus Christ the Savior. Jesus took all our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose from death to complete salvation.

Discover the true victory that is obtained not by human strength but by believing the Word of God. Lay down your own righteousness, rise again from failure, be united with the Church of God, and walk boldly in the rest and the spiritual inheritance God has already given.

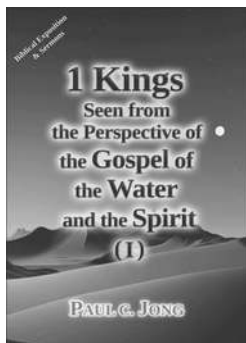
Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)



“Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (1)” 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.

1 Kings seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

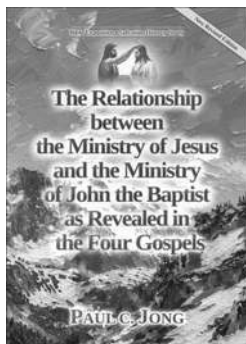


Why did Solomon, who received great wisdom from God, spend more time building his own palace than the Temple? Through David's old age and Adonijah's fall, and Solomon's accession and the building of the Temple, 1 Kings chapters 1–7 show that the glory of man fades, but the faith that fears God endures forever.

This book reveals the gospel of the water and the Spirit contained in the Temple and its furnishings. Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete salvation.

Do not rely on your own wisdom and your own kingdom. Use the wisdom, wealth, and time you have received for the gospel and for souls, and serve Jesus Christ as the King of your heart, building the house of God.

The Relationship between the Ministry of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptist as Revealed in the Four Gospels



The Ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist — Preparation and Fulfillment: The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit, Believed in the Order the Bible Records It

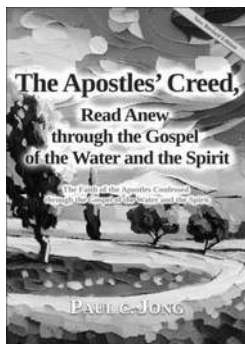
Why do the four Gospels introduce John the Baptist before speaking of Jesus' public ministry? Matthew records the baptism by which He fulfilled all righteousness; Mark, the messenger who prepared the way; Luke, the birth into a priestly family; and John, the testimony of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. These four books of the Bible—the four Gospels—together shed light on the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist.

This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete our salvation.

We must believe in the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist exactly as the Bible records them, receive the remission of sins, abide in the assurance of this completed salvation, and live as witnesses to it.

Paul C. Jong's Special Features

The Apostles' Creed, Read Anew through the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit [New Revised Edition]

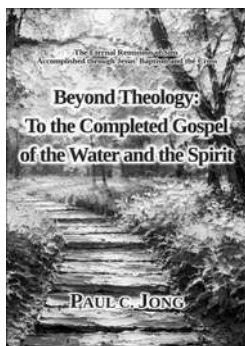


As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission 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.

Visit our website to discover this and other Christian books, available as e-books (PDF/EPUB) and audiobooks.

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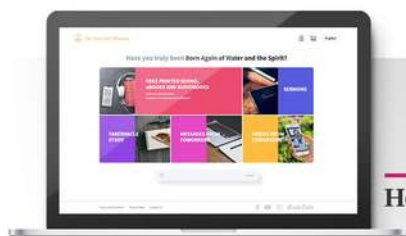
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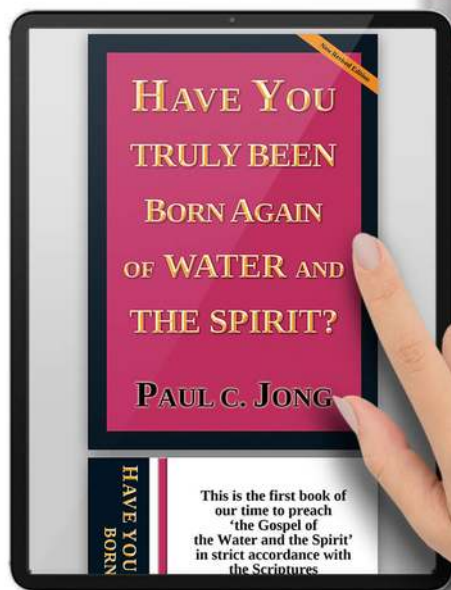
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Our The New Life Mission is distributing Pastor Paul C. Jong's spiritual books in 'printed book' form through coworkers who have been born again by water and the Spirit.

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Please help us spread the true gospel of Jesus Christ through our books so that more people can be born again of the water and the Spirit. We would also be grateful if you could introduce our website and books to many people and invite them to visit.

THE NEW LIFE MISSION

Contact: John Shin, General Secretary

E-mail: newlife@bjnewlife.org



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We pray that you will live a victorious life through God's blessings in these last days within the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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www.bjnewlife.org

Sincerely,
The New Life Mission



Pastor PAUL C. JONG

Currently, Pastor Paul C. Jong leads ‘The New Life Mission’, where he and his fellow workers are spreading the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Although he believed in the crucified Jesus, he suffered for a long time because his problem of sin remained unresolved. In the midst of this agony, he came to believe that Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world through His baptism by John the Baptist, and subsequently bore the judgment in our place on the cross.

For the past 40 years since then, he has been preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to those who only believe in the cross, documenting his actual sermons in writing. The compilation of these manuscripts has given rise to today’s ‘Biblical Exposition Series from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit.’

His works, comprising an ongoing 100-volume series, have been translated into more than 110 languages and are read in over 160 countries. E-books and audiobooks are available for free at www.bjnewlife.org, while physical books can be purchased on Amazon.

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

The Gospel of Luke, seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

“Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)” is composed of three parts in each chapter: Biblical Exposition, Questions and Answers, and Sermons.

The Gospel of Luke clearly tells us this: Salvation is not accomplished by human determination or merit, but by Jesus, who received the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, paid the price for those sins on the Cross, and then rose from the dead, thereby completing salvation. Only by believing in this gospel can a person be born again as a righteous person without sin, live a righteous life according to the will of the Lord, and bear good fruit.

A person first receives the remission of sins by believing in the salvation that the Lord accomplished through this water and blood, and then serves the Lord within that grace. Love, mercy, obedience, and good fruit are not the price paid to obtain salvation, but the fruits of faith that come from the salvation already received.

“Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)” directs our faith not toward our own deeds, but toward Jesus Christ, who accomplished salvation from all sins for sinners.