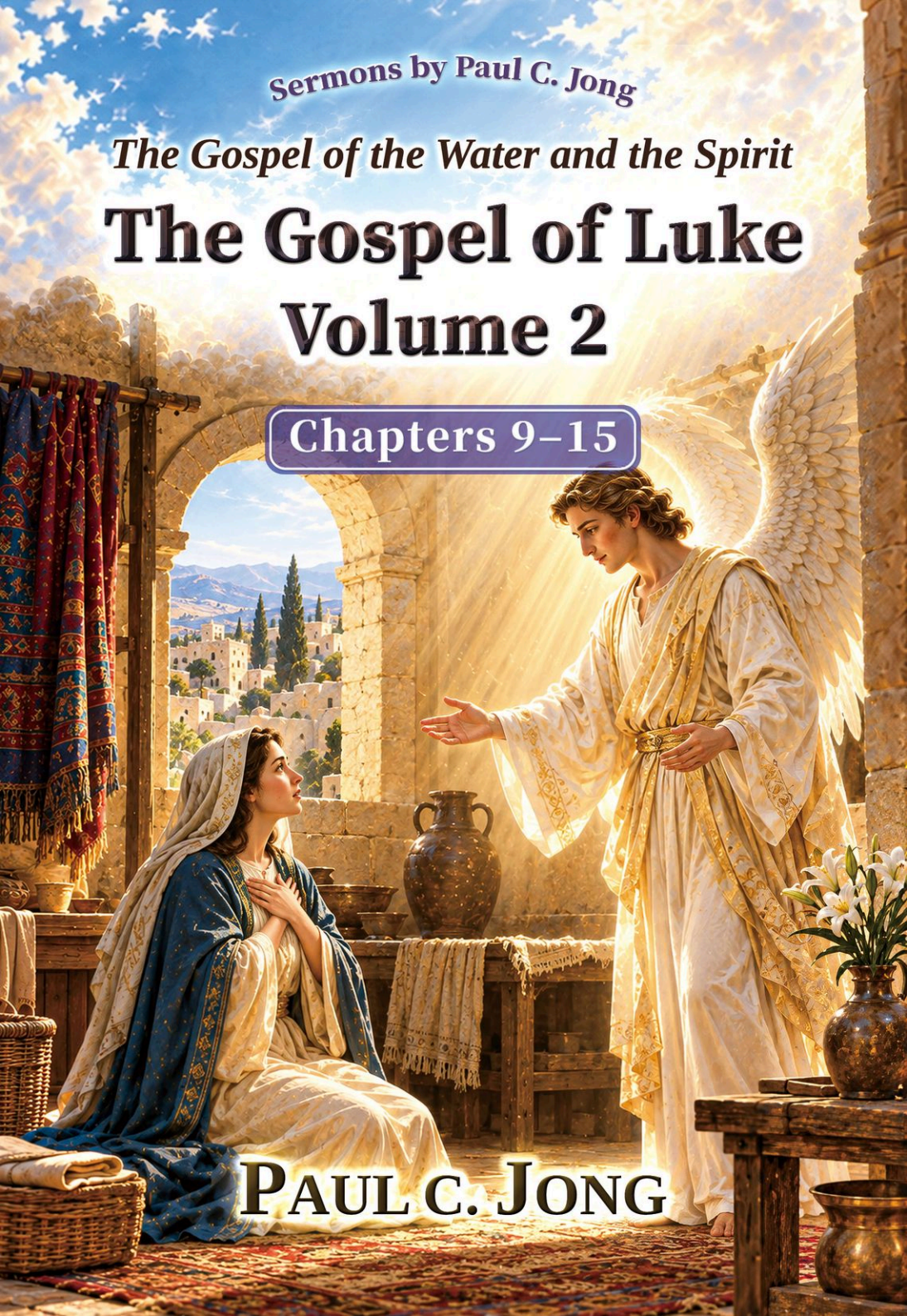
Sermons by Paul C. Jong

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

The Gospel of Luke
Volume 2

Chapters 9–15



PAUL C. JONG

“It cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem” (Luke 13:33)

Why did the Lord go that way even though He knew what awaited Him in Jerusalem? It was to give life to us, who were to perish because of sin. Because He had all the sin of the world, including even the sins of our whole lifetime, passed on to Him when He received baptism from John, He went to the place where He would receive the judgment for that sin. The blood He shed on the Cross was the punishment He received in our place, and the Lord rose again from death and accomplished that salvation. This book follows the words that the Lord spoke to sinners and to His disciples on that way. May you receive into your hearts as your Savior Jesus Christ, who went toward Jerusalem with the love that chose that way for us.

This is a book that everyone must seek out

and read now,

before the Antichrist appears,

as this world is heading toward destruction.

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

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Sermons by Paul C. Jong

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

The Gospel of Luke

Volume 2

Chapters 9–15

PAUL C. JONG

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL C. JONG

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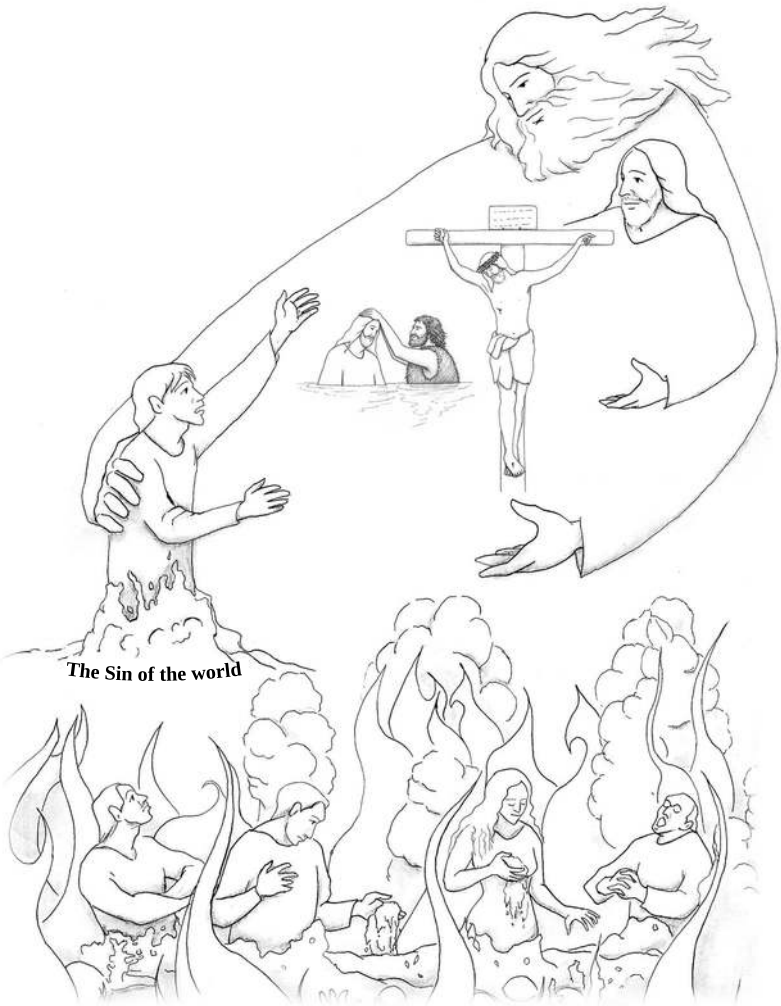

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Preface

The way to follow the Lord, who has saved me

Jesus saved us, who were lost, from sin, and now He has called us to live together with Him, following His will. Just as we abandoned our own righteousness and believed in the Lord's grace when we received salvation, so even after we have been saved, we must regard the Lord's word as right rather than our own thoughts, and follow it. Luke chapters 9–15 show Jesus going toward Jerusalem and the people He met on that way. The Lord teaches them and makes clear by what people receive the remission of sins and on whom they must rely as they live. To know the heart of the One who has saved us and to follow Him—this is the faith that we who read this word must learn.

After speaking of His suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23)*. The One who tells us to follow Him is the Savior who first bore our sins. Therefore, even when we hear the word that tells us to take up our own cross, we must not take it to mean that sins are removed only when we go through much hardship. The remission of sins is the salvation that the Lord accomplishes for us, and we, as people who have received that grace, endure the difficulties we go through as we follow the Lord.

However, even the disciples who walked the road with Jesus did not fully know the Lord's heart. When a village did not receive Jesus, James and John wanted to bring fire down from heaven and destroy them, but the Lord rebuked the disciples and went to another village. Beside the Lord, who was going to give

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life to sinners, the disciples tried to do away with the people who had rejected them. We, too, while thinking that we are doing it for the Lord, can put our own anger and our own rightness first. So saying that we follow the Lord must go together with correcting our own hearts every day before the word.

Lay down your own righteousness and receive mercy

The self-denial that the Lord desires begins first with knowing what kind of people we are. The lawyer who asked Jesus about eternal life knew the word that says to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. But before that word, rather than discovering his own sin, he tried to make himself appear right. We, too, after doing a few good deeds, consider that we have righteousness, but the law demands a perfect love with all the heart, soul, strength, and mind. When we hold ourselves up to that word, sin is revealed that cannot be erased by conduct that looks better than that of others. Only when we acknowledge this sin do we come to know why we need a Savior.

Jesus told this lawyer the story of a man who fell among thieves and was left on the road. The priest and the Levite left the man and went their own way, but the Samaritan had compassion on him, poured oil and wine on his wounds, set him on his own animal, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. What gives life to us, who have been wounded by sin, is likewise the mercy of the Lord, who came to us first. What a person who has no strength to make himself righteous needs is not a demand to try doing something more, but the Savior who will bear that sin and solve it. Just as the Samaritan himself took

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care of the wounded man, Jesus Himself bore the sin and the judgment that we could not bear.

When Jesus received baptism from John, all the sins of the world were transferred to Him once and for all. The sins of our whole lives that we commit from the time we are born until we die, and even the future sins we have not yet committed, are included in that sin of the world. The reason Jesus went toward Jerusalem was to receive in our place the judgment for the sin that had thus been passed on to Him. Jesus, who bore that sin and shed His blood and died on the Cross, rose again from death and saved us from all sins. We receive the remission of sins by believing in our hearts this gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even a person who tried to provide the price of salvation by his own zeal finds rest in that mercy only when he believes in what the Lord has accomplished.

The Samaritan entrusted the man he had rescued to the inn and asked that he continue to be cared for. The Lord, too, cares for us, who have been saved, with the word within the church and makes us live by faith. Therefore, when our faults are exposed, we must not hide them or try to fill them up with our own goodness, but must believe the word that has remitted even that sin, and receive teaching. The fact that there is much to correct after we are saved and the fact that the remission of sins the Lord has accomplished is complete do not contradict each other. Because we believe that grace, we can acknowledge our wrongs, correct our hearts, and follow Him again.

The faith that entrusts even our lives to the One who has saved us

If we have come to know the mercy of the Lord, who rescued us from sin, we must rely on Him in our daily living as well. Jesus told His disciples to ask, seek, and knock, and taught that the heavenly Father gives good things. If we say that we follow the Lord yet try to provide everything we need by our own strength, we lose heart whenever we find ourselves lacking. We must not just calculate how much strength we have, but believe who it is that told us to ask for help. The wisdom to preach the gospel, the strength to carry out the work entrusted to us, and the help needed by those who serve with us—we ask the Father for all of these and receive them.

We must also entrust our cares about our daily life to Him with the same faith. Speaking of the Father, who knows our needs, Jesus said, *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32)*. Because there is the promise that the Father, who has given us the kingdom of God, takes care of us, we can seek that kingdom without letting our hearts be taken up only with making a living. Serving the gospel and helping people in difficulty with the time and the material things we used to spend on our own living also come from this faith. It is turning back the heart that used to think that what I have protects me, and entrusting my life to the Father, who has saved me.

Such faith that entrusts life to the Father comes from the person who has entered through the narrow gate. To the question whether those who are saved are few, Jesus answered, *"Strive to enter through the narrow gate" (Luke 13:24)*. This gate is not a gate that one enters in one's own way; it is the faith that believes that the Lord has removed all our sins. Because God has

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accomplished all of salvation, the person who has believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit has already entered within that gate. But it does not end merely with entering; from then on there is a way that the Lord has set, and when He spoke this word, Jesus, too, was going on that way toward Jerusalem. The reason people cannot follow after they have entered is not that the gate is narrow, but their own desires. The word that tells us to strive does not mean to be dragged along against our will; it is a word telling us that we, too, should want what the One who has saved us wants.

However, laying down our own thoughts is not always easy. For not only wrong thoughts, but also plans that we ourselves consider right can differ from the Lord's will. The people who, even after hearing the call that the feast was ready, made excuses on account of a field, oxen, and marriage each considered their own affairs to come first. But those affairs could not take the place of eternal life. Those who should have received the salvation that had been prepared put their own circumstances first and rejected the invitation. If you have not yet received the remission of sins, do not put off believing the gospel. We, who have already been saved, must also value that grace and lay down the attitude that we will follow only when all our circumstances are in place. If, even after hearing the Lord's will, we always try to keep only our own plans, we cannot receive His leading.

A life of seeking lost souls together with the Lord

As we read the word following this way, we meet people who are displeased with Jesus, who receives sinners. Before them the Lord told of the joy of the shepherd who found his lost sheep.

"And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'" (Luke 15:5–6). The shepherd's labor led to the joy of finding the one sheep and laying it on his shoulders. The Lord rejoices this much when a person who has lost his way because of sin meets the Savior and receives the remission of sins.

Because we, too, are people whom the Lord sought out, we must value the salvation of other souls as precious, as if it were our own affair. If I think only of how much I have labored and how much I have been recognized, I may pass by a person who desperately needs the remission of sins even when he is right beside me. But if I know the heart of the Lord, who sought me out, I come to pay attention to that person's sin and distress as well. Praying that those who have not yet met the Lord may hear the gospel, preaching the word, and caring for those souls together with the church—this has been entrusted to us. When we see a soul believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and rejoice, we, too, come to know what we have labored for.

The will of Jesus, who was going toward Jerusalem, lay in thus giving life to us, who were lost. The answer to the question of how we will follow the Lord, who has saved us, also lies within that will. It is to humble the heart that used to insist on its own rightness, to believe the word that has saved us, and for us, too, to value as precious the souls that the Lord values as precious. I hope that you who read this word will accept into your hearts the mercy of Jesus Christ, who has completely remitted our sins, and live rejoicing together with Him, who seeks lost souls. ✉

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CHAPTER

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Preach the gospel in every village with the authority the Lord has given

< Luke 9:1–6 >

"Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. And He said to them, 'Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them.' So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere."

The One who gave the disciples power and authority

Jesus called the twelve disciples together and sent them to many villages. It was not a journey the disciples set out on in order to test what work they could do on their own. In their

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departure there were the calling of Jesus and the work He had entrusted to them. Only when they knew whose command they had received and what they were going to preach would it also become clear what the disciples were to rely on and what they had to keep on that road.

"He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases" (Luke 9:1). The power and authority to control demons and to cure diseases did not come from the disciples themselves. Because the Lord gave it to them, they were able to do the Lord's work. Therefore, even if the disciples displayed some power, they could not make it the grounds for exalting their own names. What must be revealed is what kind of One Jesus, who entrusted that work to them, is.

The purpose for which the Lord sent them is also clearly written in the text. *"He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick" (Luke 9:2)*. Jesus did not turn away from the suffering of people, and through the disciples He caused the news of salvation to reach many villages. He did not have their work end at letting people watch marvelous things. He had them preach both the Lord, who shows compassion to suffering people, and the gospel of the kingdom of God.

Even when we look at this work in the light of our service today, the Master is clear. More than whether the person who preaches the gospel looks impressive, what matters is whom he testifies of and what he preaches. If we hide Jesus and display only the talents or achievements of a person, we drift away from the purpose of the Lord who sent us. The work entrusted to us is not to make the hearers admire the one who preaches, but to preach the gospel so that they may know and believe in Jesus Christ, who saved sinners.

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Rely on the Lord who sends you rather than on what you have

Jesus also spoke about what the disciples were to take with them on the journey. *"He said to them, 'Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece'" (Luke 9:3)*. The Lord told them not to take the things we think are necessary when we set out on a long journey. It would have been easy for the disciples to think that they could fulfill their mission because the money and food they had were sufficient. But in this sending, the One they had to rely on, even before their provisions, was the Lord who was sending them.

We must not turn this word into a rule that every preacher today must set out on the road without even preparing the fare. We must learn whom we are to trust and live by while doing the Lord's work. Even if we prepare what is necessary, we must not conclude that the Lord cannot do anything without it. Conversely, we must not have the attitude that, because we have plenty, we need neither prayer nor the guidance of the Lord.

The Lord also spoke about where they were to stay. *"Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart" (Luke 9:4)*. The disciples needed a heart that valued the place and the time for preaching the gospel. If we put first only the things that make our own life more comfortable, it is easy to forget the purpose for which we went to preach to people. It is fitting for one who has been sent to fulfill the work entrusted to him in that place while receiving the help the Lord has allowed. The attitude of measuring the value of the work by the size of the hospitality one receives does not accord with the will of the Lord.

The clearest grounds on which we can rely on the Lord lie in the salvation the Lord has already bestowed on us. What could we, who had to be judged because of sin, have prepared to solve that problem? To save mankind, Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. The sins we commit from the time we are born until we die were also included in them. Bearing those sins, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross and so received our judgment in our place, and He rose again from death and accomplished eternal salvation.

This salvation revealed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not something accomplished by our preparation or our ability. In the place where we could not put forward what we had, the Lord bore and resolved all sins for us. If we, who believe in that salvation, now rely only on our own strength again while serving the Lord's work, it amounts to forgetting the One who gave us life. Rather than trying to hide what we lack, we must tell it to the Savior and fulfill the work entrusted to us by receiving the strength and the help the Lord gives.

Keep the word even in the face of people who do not receive you

Just because the disciples followed the Lord's command, it did not mean that everyone would gladly receive them. Jesus also taught them what to do when they met with rejection. *"Whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them" (Luke 9:5)*. The disciples were to make it a testimony against them by shaking off the dust from their feet. He had them show

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that the act of rejecting the gospel does not pass by without any meaning.

This word is not a command to hate the other person because the pride of the one who preaches has been hurt. What was entrusted to the disciples was the work of preaching the word of the Lord, not the work of forcing those who did not accept it to submit. We must not change the content of the gospel because people reject it, nor hide the righteousness of the Lord in order to be welcomed. Because the One who sends us is the Lord, even at the time of leaving we must follow the word the Lord has established.

When we are rejected while preaching the gospel, it is easy to think that everything failed because our own words were clumsy. Of course, we must explain so that the other person can understand, and if there is a part we preached wrongly, we must correct it. But no matter how faithfully we preach, we cannot create faith in another person's place. Believing in salvation must take place in the heart of the person himself who hears the word. Acknowledging that fact, we must entrust the outcome to the Lord and go on to other souls to whom we must continue to preach.

Also, we must receive this warning from the position of the hearer as well. If a person rejects the gospel for the reason that it differs from his own expectations, he cannot receive as his own the salvation Jesus has bestowed. If, even after hearing the news that the Lord has borne all sins, a person holds on only to his own righteousness, the problem of sin and judgment remains with that person as it is. Before weighing the appearance or the circumstances of the one who preaches the word, we must look at the salvation of Jesus that the word testifies of and accept it in our hearts.

The news of salvation preached in every village

After hearing the word of Jesus, the disciples actually set out on the road. *"They departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere" (Luke 9:6)*. The command received from the Lord moved the steps of the disciples, and the gospel was preached to the people of many villages. They did not try to be recognized by the Lord by creating new work that they themselves wanted, but did the work the Lord had entrusted to them. The service of a disciple is accomplished in remembering to the end the One who gave the mission and the content of the mission.

After we, too, have believed in the Lord and received the remission of sins, we must live as people who know that grace. We can preach the news of salvation to those who are still in anguish because they do not know the way to resolve their sins. It is to make clear that we have been saved not because our sins disappeared on account of our being excellent, but because Jesus has borne all sins. When that person comes to know the salvation accomplished through the Lord's baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, he can enjoy by faith the peace of the remission of sins that he could not obtain through the comfort of people.

For this work we can pray together and join our strength. The work of explaining the word directly and the work of helping the gospel to be preached are both work that serves the same Savior. What matters is not boasting of oneself for having done many things, but setting one's heart on the spread of the gospel that the Lord desires. Even a small service that we can do now, if we fulfill it knowing the will of the Lord, differs in its purpose from big activities carried out to be seen by people.

The road of the twelve disciples began with Jesus calling and sending them. Our service, too, must be done within the will of

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the Lord who saved us. Let us neither exalt ourselves because we have much nor step back in advance because we lack. Valuing the news of salvation the Lord has entrusted to us, and relying on Him, we must preach the gospel to the souls before us today. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Is the desire to see Jesus faith?

< Luke 9:7–9 >

“Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him; and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen again. Herod said, ‘John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?’ So he sought to see Him.”

The news of Jesus that reached even the king

The things Jesus did and the news the disciples preached reached even Herod the tetrarch. The king, who came to know what was happening among the people, could not remain calm. *“Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him; and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead” (Luke 9:7)*. People said many things about Jesus, who was doing marvelous things, and among them was also the word that John, whom Herod had killed, had risen. To Herod, who was sitting on the king’s seat, this news was not a story he could easily overlook.

“By some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen again” (Luke 9:8). What people said differed from person to person, but all of them were words acknowledging that a special power was being revealed in Jesus.

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However, regarding Him as a marvelous One and knowing rightly who He is are not the same thing. If people try to explain Jesus only as one of the figures they already know, they can miss the salvation He Himself accomplishes.

To us today, too, stories about Jesus come in many forms. There are people who know Him as One who gave excellent teachings and respect Him, and there are people who expect from Him the power to solve difficult problems. Having such an interest does not mean that one already believes in Jesus, who saved one from sin. The fact that Herod was greatly perplexed in the text shows that the news of Jesus moved his heart, but that reaction itself cannot be called the faith of salvation.

We must examine this difference. Even while one's heart is startled on hearing rumors, one may not know what kind of sinner one is before God and what kind of work Jesus has done. If one is satisfied with having taken an interest, one comes to seek only new stories continually. But what matters to a person who needs salvation is not hearing more marvelous stories, but knowing rightly the Savior, who remits sin, and believing His word.

Herod, who stood facing the fact that he had killed John

Herod, on hearing the words that had reached him, said as follows. "*Herod said, 'John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?' So he sought to see Him" (Luke 9:9)*. He knew that the one who had beheaded John was himself. The fact that John was dead and the news that kept coming about Jesus lay together in his heart. Just because he had the power to

kill a person, it did not mean that he could also explain or stop, as he pleased, even the work God was doing.

John was a servant of God who pointed out sin and turned people back to God. Herod, too, was no exception before that word. The fact that John was dead could not make the word he testified of false, nor could it remove Herod's sin. Just because a person has come to no longer hear the voice of the one who rebuked him, it does not mean that the problem of sin before God is solved.

This passage makes us, too, look back at ourselves, because if we avoid words that point out sin, our hearts can feel at ease for the moment. We may also distance ourselves from the person who told us our fault and try not to recall those words. But the heart that refuses to see sin and the heart that has received the remission of sins are entirely different. Since the faults revealed in the light of the word of God do not disappear even if we turn away from them, we must acknowledge them and receive the grace of the Savior.

Therefore, when our sins are revealed, we must not first look for a way to save face. The reputation or the position we have maintained before people cannot bear our sins in our place before God. What we need is an honest heart that acknowledges sin as sin. That acknowledgment itself is not a merit that saves us, but only when we stop trying to dress ourselves up as righteous can we know why Jesus, who came to save sinners, is necessary.

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The confession of the Christ, clearer than the many rumors

Herod asked who Jesus was and sought to see Him. But the text does not say that he believed in Jesus as his Savior. There is a difference between the interest of wanting to see Jesus and the faith that accepts into one's heart the truth Jesus testifies of. This difference becomes even clearer when we look together at the question Jesus asked His disciples in the same chapter.

Jesus first asked His disciples as follows. *"He asked them, saying, 'Who do the crowds say that I am?'" (Luke 9:18)*. The answer the disciples relayed was also that He was John, or Elijah, or one of the old prophets. But Jesus did not stop at the question of what other people were saying, and asked the disciples themselves, who had been with Him, whom they believed the Lord to be. *"He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered and said, 'The Christ of God'" (Luke 9:20)*. Peter did not stop at listing what others said just as they said it, but confessed Jesus as the Christ of God. For the person who believes in Jesus, too, there must be such a clear object of faith.

Jesus is the Savior God promised and the Son of God, who came to bear our sins. John was not the same as Jesus. God sent John first and had him prepare the way of the Savior, and Jesus, at the age of thirty, by receiving baptism from that John in the Jordan River, had the sin of the world passed on to His own body. That sin includes not only a part of the past but all the sins we commit throughout our whole lives. Jesus is not John risen again, but the Savior in whom those who accept the testimony of John must believe.

Therefore, knowing Jesus is not a matter of collecting many stories about His name or His power. It is a matter of knowing and believing how He bore the sins that we cannot resolve. We

cannot stop at saying that He is the Christ just because others say so. Only when we accept the work of Jesus revealed in the word of God as salvation for ourselves does the heart that was shaken by rumors come to stand on faith in the Lord.

Listen to Jesus, who speaks of the work of salvation

After hearing the confession that He is the Christ, Jesus told His disciples what He would suffer. *"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).* People, seeing the power Jesus displayed, thought of various prophets, but the Lord spoke of suffering, death, and resurrection. To know the work of the Christ, we must know not only His marvelous power but also why the Lord had to be killed and rise again.

Jesus, who bore the sin of mankind once and for all when He received baptism from John, was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died bearing that sin. That death was the Lord receiving in our place the judgment our sins had to receive. And the Lord rose again from death as He had said, and saved us completely. The gospel of the water and the Spirit makes us, who are afraid because of sin, believe in the righteousness of the Savior, who bore sin and even received the judgment.

If we accept this salvation in our hearts, there is no need to endlessly avoid the word that reveals sin. Because the Lord, though He knows our sins, has borne them all, we can acknowledge our faults and rely on that grace. It is not a matter of stopping at briefly soothing a heart in anguish because of sin, but of coming to be sure of the remission of sins through the

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salvation the Lord has accomplished. This peace is different from the peace gained by dressing oneself up or pushing away uncomfortable memories.

We who already believe in the gospel, too, must not let our hearts be captivated only by new rumors. More than stories that someone has seen some event, the word of the Lord who saved us is the standard of faith. If we judge our faith by the degree to which we get excited on hearing of marvelous things, we come to feel as if even our faith had vanished when our emotions subside. But the sin the Lord has borne and the salvation He has accomplished do not change according to our emotions. We must follow the Lord while confirming that fact again and again through the word.

Herod's question makes us ask how far our interest in Jesus must go. We must not remain only in the place of being curious about Him, but must believe in Him as the Christ of God, who bore our sins. If we know rightly who Jesus is, there is no reason either to hide our sins before His word or to prepare salvation by our own strength. Herod only sought to see Jesus, but we must go on to the place of believing in Him, who received baptism for us and accomplished salvation through His death and resurrection, as our Savior. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The bread handed from the hands of the Lord into the hands of the disciples

< Luke 9:10–17 >

“And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing. When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, ‘Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.’ But He said to them, ‘You give them something to eat.’ And they said, ‘We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people.’ For there were about five thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, ‘Make them sit down in groups of fifty.’ And they did so, and made them all sit down. Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them.”

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The problem of food that arose before the Lord, who had received the multitude

The apostles returned from preaching and told Jesus what they had done. The Lord took them and went aside privately to a town called Bethsaida, but the multitude knew it and followed. The Lord did not regard them as a nuisance and turn them away. *"But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing" (Luke 9:11)*. The work of teaching the kingdom of God and the work of healing the sick were carried out together. The Lord, who knew the circumstances of the multitude, gave them the word they needed and also cared for the suffering of their bodies.

When the day was ending, the disciples, worried about where the people would eat and sleep, spoke to the Lord. *"Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here" (Luke 9:12)*. Since there were no provisions in the deserted place for keeping so many people there or feeding them, the suggestion to send them to the nearby towns and country was a proposal that took the circumstances into account. It was not that the disciples had no concern at all for the hunger of the multitude. It was only that they examined what they could do with what they had at the moment and considered sending the people away to be the solution.

We, too, when we are entrusted with some task, first count what we have. Examining how much is needed helps us fulfill our responsibility. But we must not decide even the will of the Lord by the result of our calculation alone. This is because even in a situation we feel we cannot handle, the Lord knows what people need and has the power to take care of that need. We must

not judge our circumstances while leaving out the fact that the Lord, who received the multitude, is with them.

It is the same when we hold this word up to the church of today. When we meet people who are suffering because of sin and people who do not know the gospel, we may feel that we lack time or the ability to speak. But because there is the word of salvation that the Lord first gave to us, we cannot conclude that there is no way at all to help such a person. We cannot produce salvation for anyone on our own, but we can help that person believe in Jesus by preaching the gospel we have received from the Lord.

The work He entrusted to the disciples while knowing what was lacking

The Lord said something different to the disciples, who wanted to send the multitude away. *"But He said to them, 'You give them something to eat.' And they said, 'We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people'" (Luke 9:13)*. The five loaves and two fish that the disciples had were far too little for a multitude of about five thousand, counting only the men. Nevertheless, it was not because the Lord did not know of that shortage that He commanded them to give the people something to eat; therefore, the disciples had to look to the Lord, who commanded that work, rather than to the amount in their hands.

Believing in the Lord is not thinking that what we have is more than it actually is. Nor is it saying that what we do not have is there, or turning away from necessary preparation. It is acknowledging what is lacking as lacking, while believing that this fact cannot limit even the power of the Lord. The disciples

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did not have much food, but Jesus, who had sent them out and was still with them, was there. It was He who entrusted them with the work of feeding the multitude.

When we preach the gospel as well, we cannot rely only on our own strengths. The ability to speak well and experience in meeting people may be of help, but they are not what washes away sin. On the other hand, we must not regard even the power of the gospel as small because we lack such abilities. What has been entrusted to us is not the work of displaying our own excellence, but the work of making known to people the salvation that Jesus has already accomplished.

This is also the reason the church undertakes this work together. If one person tries to handle every situation alone, he soon comes to look only at his own limits. But when people who have received the same gospel each do the work they have been entrusted with and join their strength, they can fill what they lack with the help of other members. What we can boast of then is not who has more, but the grace of the Lord, who has entrusted even us, who are lacking, with the work of preaching the gospel.

The bread handed from the hands of the Lord into the hands of the disciples

First, Jesus said to His disciples, *"Make them sit down in groups of fifty" (Luke 9:14)*, and the disciples seated the people as He had said. After that, we must see what the Lord did. *"Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude" (Luke 9:16)*. The disciples were not people who made the bread multiply by their own strength. They were people who received what the Lord had blessed and broken and

given to them, and set it before the multitude. In the multitude's eating of the food, there were both the grace of the Lord and the labor of the disciples, who received that grace and brought it to the people.

Therefore, the disciples had to keep hold of two things. They must not try to feed the multitude by their own strength without the Lord, and they also must not receive what the Lord had given them and keep it only in their own hands. The faith that the Lord had the power to feed the people did not do away with the work of the disciples; rather, it made them bring to the people what they had received from the Lord. In this way, a heart that relies on grace and a life that carries out the work entrusted to us are connected.

The food of life that we are to share with people today was also first accomplished in the hands of the Lord and then handed into our hands. When Jesus received baptism from John in the Jordan River, He had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. Since that sin of the world includes all the sins we commit throughout our lives, none of our sins remains outside the scope of the sin the Lord bore. Bearing that sin, the Lord was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, thereby receiving in our place the judgment for sin we were to receive, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that we are to preach is the salvation already accomplished in this way through the work of the Lord.

We do not demand that those who hear us produce the ability to become righteous by themselves; rather, we clearly preach what Jesus, who bore sin, has done, so that they may believe in Him. Just as the bread was broken in the hands of the Lord and handed into the hands of the disciples, this salvation, too, was entrusted into our hands after the Lord had accomplished it all. The risen Lord is the One who accomplished all this work of

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salvation. Those who believe this gospel receive the remission of sins, not by the size of their own efforts, but by relying on the righteousness the Lord has fulfilled.

The twelve baskets left over after all had eaten

The food the disciples had counted at first was not much, but what they confirmed at the end was the multitude filled and bread left over. *"So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them" (Luke 9:17)*. The food the Lord gave was not something only some of the people tasted and that was the end of it. The whole multitude ate and was filled, and the leftover fragments came to as many as twelve baskets. Right before their eyes, the disciples saw that the Lord's provision was far greater than their own judgment that there was not enough.

This abundance makes us think of the grace of salvation we have received. It is not that the scope of the sin Jesus bore is so small that some people do not receive the remission of sins even if they believe the gospel. Since the Lord bore the sin of all mankind, anyone can hear and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive salvation. Nor does the righteousness the Lord has fulfilled decrease because we preach that salvation to many people. The fact that there are still many people who do not know the gospel means that there is still preaching left to do, not that the grace of the Lord is insufficient.

Just as the multitude was filled with the bread the Lord had blessed, our making a living, too, comes about by the blessing of the Lord. What the text shows is the fact that the Lord knew the needs of the multitude and gave them food through the disciples. We, too, must care for the people entrusted to us and

The bread handed from the hands of the Lord into the hands of the disciples

preach the gospel while relying on the grace of the Lord. Attending to the material things that are needed and preaching the word of salvation to souls are not reasons to disregard each other.

At first the disciples thought of a way to send the multitude away, but in the end they shared the bread the Lord gave and gathered up the leftover fragments. What changed things in between was not the possessions or abilities of the disciples, but what Jesus did. We, too, must not remain only in the thought that we have little, but must preach the gospel we have received from the Savior, starting with those close to us. Just as the bread held in the hands of the disciples came from the hands of the Lord, we must not forget where the grace of salvation that we preach comes from. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Live not by human means and methods but by the blessing of the Lord

< Luke 9:1–17 >

"Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. And He said to them, 'Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them.' So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him; and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen again. Herod said, 'John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?' So he sought to see Him. And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place

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belonging to the city called Bethsaida. But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing. When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, 'Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.' But He said to them, 'You give them something to eat.' And they said, 'We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people.' For there were about five thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, 'Make them sit down in groups of fifty.' And they did so, and made them all sit down. Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them."

Jesus, who gave the blessing in the deserted place

These days there are so many things going on that it seems an age of chaos has come. In the work of preaching the gospel, too, there have been various things that blocked the way, and it seems that through such things the Lord first prepares the hearts of the servants of God. Even when we go through difficulties, we must seek the guidance of the Lord and preach the gospel. In any case, as all things work together for good, I believe that He has made things turn out well. But one thing is clear: whatever danger there may be in that country, we must go. We must not only go and preach the gospel to them, but also raise up workers,

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and we must make it possible to keep preaching the gospel to those brothers and sisters until the day the Lord comes, without cutting off our concern for them. I have the thought that we must translate the sermons very simply into the language of that country, and also into the languages of the many peoples living in it, and preach the gospel to them. Whatever happens, we go. This is because the Lord has started the work there. But since there are many things that human strength can do nothing about, I feel that God must bless us.

The disciples of Jesus, starting from the Sea of Galilee, went throughout the whole land of Israel, preaching the kingdom of God, healing the sick, and preaching the gospel. Many people followed Jesus, and Jesus received them and spoke to them of the things of the kingdom of God. In the midst of this, many people followed Jesus even to a deserted place in the wilderness, and when it came time to eat, there was nowhere to get food. So when the disciples spoke to Jesus about it, Jesus said, *"You give them something to eat" (Luke 9:13)*. The disciples answered, *"We have no more than five loaves and two fish" (Luke 9:13)*. One lunch box, and as the side dishes of that lunch box, two fish and five barley loaves—this was all they had, they were saying.

Then Jesus told the disciples to make the people sit down in groups of about fifty. And it says that our Lord *"took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude. So they all ate and were filled" (Luke 9:16–17)*. There were about five thousand men, and I think that if the women and children were all counted, there must have been about fifteen thousand. It says that all those many people ate because of that bread and fish which the Lord blessed and gave them.

We cannot live without the blessing of God

I have the thought that the Church of God, too, needs our Lord to give it the blessing in this way, and that only when the Lord blesses all the work we do can we live. Looking at the things that have been done in our church all this while, I think from time to time about the works the Lord has done. In the beginning we started in a very cramped place. The chapel, the dining room, and the bedroom were all in one space, so when we made literature we would move the pulpit, at mealtime the chapel became the dining room, and at night it became a bedroom. Looking at it now it is a laughable thing, but at that time we were really full of zeal. There we trained workers, held retreats, and held evangelistic meetings; there was nothing we did not do. Then, thinking that we needed a larger site in order to preach the gospel, we prayed, and it was done right away. Now that we use it, I cannot tell you how perfectly it fits. At that time, too, we had no material means, but God supplied everything.

God has given us everything we need. That is how we have lived. I cannot tell you how greatly He has blessed us. So what we must be careful about is not to forget how greatly God has blessed us. Also, we must truly pray that God will bless us. And we must live in the blessing of God.

What I am saying is that we cannot live by human means and methods, by our money or material things or our efforts alone. With these alone we cannot live. Whether it is the spread of the gospel or the mission work, or my own life ahead, or the lives ahead of the brothers and sisters and the servants of God, I never think that it depends on man. I believe that the God who saved you and me must bless us with health, and that God must bless our hearts and thoughts and circumstances, the spread of the

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gospel and the mission work, our livelihoods, our children and families—everything of ours. I believe that we live because God blesses us. Do you believe so, too? I do not think that we live because someone does something for us in some way. If someone helps us, that, too, is God blessing us and helping us; I do not think of it in human terms. If God does not permit it, who is there to help? It comes about because God permits it and helps.

The blessing of Aaron and the blessing of Jesus

There were about fifteen thousand of the people of Israel who had followed Jesus into the open country, and when it came time for a meal, these people had nothing to eat. A person must eat at least three regular meals a day. But at that time, among the people of Israel, there were a great many people who could not eat even one meal a day. Yet it says that Jesus took the lunch box of the five loaves and two fish and, looking up to heaven, gave the blessing. How did Jesus give the blessing at this time? It is written that He looked up to heaven; how did He do it? Let us look at the word of the Old Testament.

"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, "This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: 'The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.'" So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them'" (Numbers 6:22–27).

Jesus is God. However He may have given the blessing, lifting up the bread and the fish, in any case, it is a fact that He prayed for a blessing. Whether He prayed for a blessing that these people might have abundant food, or whatever He did,

some fifteen thousand people ate bread in the open wilderness because of Jesus.

It is the same with us as we live our lives. We need the blessing of God in many areas. We need the blessing of God in every single move of our lives, upon all the work our hands and feet do. We need the blessing of God in the spread of the gospel, in our health, upon our livelihoods, in the health of our children, in our souls and our faith, and in all this service with which we serve the Lord. In the Old Testament, God spoke that way to Aaron the high priest and the priests. He said that if they blessed in this way, God Himself would bless them. Therefore we must pray for blessings. The priest in particular must pray for blessings upon the servants of God and upon the saints, and must do it just as it says. *"The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace" (Numbers 6:24–26)*. If they did so, the LORD would give the blessing—that was what it meant.

So I believe that, as for the work ahead—if we were to take stock at the midpoint, also in the work we will do ahead—we have lived by the grace of God until now, and we must live by the grace of God from now on as well. We are now doing mission work and various kinds of work, and there is a great deal to do. I want God to bless us, and especially to bless the work of missions. I want Him to bless and keep the church and your families as well. The blessing of the remission of sins that we have received is also a blessing we enjoy because Jesus, with the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and bore those sins and received the judgment in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross. Since we have been saved by believing in Jesus, who rose again from death, in the work of preaching the

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gospel, too, we must not trust in our own strength but seek the grace of that Lord.

What we must do now

While doing the work, we must be clear about what work we must do now before the Lord, what we must think about, and what we must do, but it does not seem that everyone is like that. Of course, everyone grows by going through such a process, but I see that there are not so many workers who see what must be done right now, at this time, and unite their hearts. We must truly know what we must do now, where we must direct our attention, and what we must prepare.

We are not doing mission work just as an ornament. It is not something we do and then quit if it does not work out. There are not a few cases of people seeking their own honor while saying they are doing missions. There are also many cases of people who, when things go a little well over there, come back and just make their own names known. But we ministers and brothers and sisters are not seeking to make our names known, are we? If we were trying to make our names known, there would be no need to do this. If we work in the manner of taking a good camera, going there, taking pictures with the people of that country, and coming back to boast, it may seem very splendid, but that is displaying one's own honor and making one's own name known. We must do mission work now, in this age.

Another important work we must devote ourselves to in this age is preaching the gospel to our families and to the souls around us. For this we must devote our strength to the work of preaching the gospel through literature, but the fact is that we lack the strength to do so. It is truly regrettable. But I want God

to bless this work as well. This is never doing the work of some individual. When time passes and we come to maturity, we come to know this and unite in heart. The work of preaching the gospel through literature is extremely important. It is work that must be done in these last days. We must pray about this. The literature ministry, then the salvation of our families, then saving the souls around us—that is what we must do now. And raising up workers.

No matter how many brothers and sisters there are, if there are no workers, it is nothing. No matter how many soldiers an army has, if there are no commanders, it is nothing. It is a disorderly mob. If they are scattered at a blow, it is over. Servants must arise. Servants are made. But it is not that one becomes a servant by being good at something. One must do well with the gifts God gives, but that is basic; a servant is one who yields his own heart and does as the master orders. A servant does not become a servant just by being good at running. The one who yields his own heart and does as the master wants—that is a servant. A servant may say, "I am qualified to be a servant," because he does something diligently and well and does everything well, but that is absolutely not the qualification of a servant. The one who acts as God wants and as the Lord is pleased—he is a servant. Even if no work arises through it, the one who carries things out as the master orders and as the master wants—that one is precisely a servant.

The one who does as the master orders is a servant

We establish churches in many places and send the servants of God there, but it is not that one is a servant just because many special works happen there. The one who truly preaches the

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gospel with the heart of the Lord, keeps his faith as the master wants, keeps his position without leaving it even if he is lacking, and carries out exactly what the master wants—he is precisely a servant. How do we think of a servant? We learned in the world that a servant is one who does everything far better than the laity, reads far more diligently, is capable, and does everything well—that such people are servants. But that is not a servant. A servant is one who does as the master orders.

There are farmhands, are there not? Such a farmhand is precisely a servant. The master looks at the farmhand and gives the order, "Today, load up all this manure and take it all down to the middle of that field below." But if this farmhand thinks to himself, "The weather is this cold right now; even if I carry this over there, it will not be of much benefit," and does not listen, and instead does ever so much other work he was not told to do, that is not a servant. When we say servant, a servant is one who, when the master orders, carries it out exactly, whether or not it fits his own thinking, and when he has finished the work, says, "I have finished," and waits for the next task. That is a servant.

What I learn from the Lord while serving Him is this: it is good if many works happen, but whether many happen or not, I keep my position and do the work as the Master orders until the day the Lord comes. To do what the Lord is pleased with and what the Lord wants—not to do what I want but to do the work the Master wants—that God is pleased when we do that, I have learned a little through the Lord. A church is established in order to preach the gospel. When we send out the workers of God, we send out servants so that they may obey the Master's command, so that they may attend to the Master's command. When Abraham sent the old servant who was under him, he said, "You go and do thus and thus; do as I tell you." What if it did not work out? He said, *"If the woman is not willing to follow you, then*

you will be released from this oath" (Genesis 24:8). It means, do not resort to means and methods but just come back. We must become servants.

Each of us, in living our life of faith, must live our whole life as a servant and then go before the Lord. The laity are all the same. We are all servants. Male servants and female servants, every one of us. Can it be right for us to live our life of faith as we please? Can it be right to do it according to our own liking? In the past and now, there have been many who have been ruined among those who do the work and those who live the life of faith; how were they ruined? They were all ruined by doing as they liked, as they wanted. Even an individual's faith is ruined if he does it according to his own liking. When we look at what has become of the fruit today of ministries in church history that started as gatherings of the saved, it is that they did not live as servants but lived a life of hobbies.

We have one Lord

We do not do things as we please. We do not do the work as we please, and we do not do everything as we please. We have one Lord. The triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is our one Lord. We only serve that one Lord as our Master and carry out what that Master orders. "My style of ministry is like this. I am this kind of person. I have a gift in this area and am good at this, so I do it this way." It is not like that; we must do as the Master orders. Whether the work goes well or not, we need only do as the Master orders. That servant receives praise on the last day and receives a great reward. Even though he has accomplished nothing, he receives a great reward. The Lord is actually One who looks more at the inward than at the

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outward. He said, *"Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7)*. He examines the heart more and looks more at the inward.

Therefore we have no style of ministry. We have, in fact, abandoned all our personal desires and cravings. *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20)*. Since the Lord, with the baptism He received from John, had all our sins passed on to Him and was crucified, we, too, are those who have been crucified with Christ. Those who have been crucified still have a body, but they cannot indulge such things as the cravings of their own hearts. I do this work because the Lord is pleased with it; if the Lord were not pleased with it, there would be no need to do it. Why would I take the trouble to do it?

Do not rely on human means and methods

When we take stock at the midpoint before God, we have come this far by the blessing of God. If by any chance, among us, though it is God who blessed us, we think of it wrongly and think that everything was accomplished because of some person and forget that God blessed us, that must not be. In the deserted wilderness, Jesus blessed some fifteen thousand people and made them eat food. He did not let them go without a meal. This is the blessing of God. How on earth could those fifteen thousand or so people go somewhere, to some restaurant, and eat a meal? For fifteen thousand to eat, even if you brought all the vegetables and fruit in the market of this city, even if you brought all the grain from a grain store, however big it might be, you could not feed them one meal. That much food is needed.

We are now living by the blessing of God. We have lived so until now and will live so in the future. We must never resort to human means and methods. If it does not work out, we must wait for the will of the Lord, accepting that it does not work out. If it goes well, we must thank the Lord and give glory to the Lord. However poor we may be, the Bible says, *"Better is a dry morsel with quietness, Than a house full of feasting with strife" (Proverbs 17:1)*. Even if we live in a hut, it is good to live with God and in the blessing of God. That is a blessing. However luxurious the palace we live in, living by trusting in our own strength is a curse.

Only by learning obedience does one become a servant

Then what must we do to become servants? In the place where we train workers, do we learn only the Bible? There is something else that is learned there. What is it? Doing as the master orders—knowing the master's will well and obeying as the master orders—that is what is learned. Among the brothers and sisters, too, there are people who are ready to obey the will of the Lord and carry out the work entrusted to them. But not just anyone does so. However much one has learned of the Bible and knows of it, even if one has the talent to recite fluently from Genesis to Revelation, even if one understands the word spiritually, if one does not know how to yield oneself, deny oneself, and obey, that person is not a servant of God. He cannot even be a layman. That is what a servant of God is. A servant is one who, when told to do this, does this, and when told to do that, does that, and has no style of his own.

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When one goes into another's house as a farmhand, one has no style of one's own. A farmhand is one who does as that master orders. If one goes in as a farmhand and says to the master, "Oh my, is that how you do the work? Master, step aside. Is that any way to manage the finances? I will do it. Is this how you build a house? The design has to be done like this," and crushes what the master designed and does the design himself, that farmhand is thrown out that very day. He cannot act as a farmhand. It will be, "You go out and be a master. You are not a farmhand. You are a master just like me. How can two masters be in one house? You a master, I a master—we have to go our separate ways." Who did the work how well or how poorly—this is not what is important. How much one lives obeying as the master orders, how much one upholds the master's will—that is the duty all servants must fulfill. This is the way of the disciple. This is the way of the brothers and sisters, of the people of God.

So we have a great deal to learn. We have much to deny and much of our own style to abandon. Then can one not be a servant without ability? Rather, it is the person without ability who becomes a servant. If one has too much ability, one cannot be a servant. He is of no use. Then what must we do? It is extremely simple. A servant is one who does as the master orders. And we must live in the blessing of God. If the Master does not let it work out, if our Lord does not let it work out for us, it does not work out. If the Master's will is, "I am not pleased with this work; I want this work to stop," then that work must stop, and if the Master wants it to go well, we must go well.

We have lived in the blessing of God until now. From now until the day our Lord comes, we must live in the blessing of God. And we must receive blessings. "God, please bless us." That is how we must live. Do not rely on human means and methods or on your own cleverness. "God, please bless me.

Please bless the church. Please bless our families." Praying for blessings, we must live the rest of our lives in the blessing of God. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The person who has received the remission of sins must live united with the Lord and with the church

< Luke 9:23 >

"Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.'"

The matter of unity that comes after receiving the remission of sins

Examining ourselves before God in the light of the word, I would like us to think together through the word about how we should go forward serving the Lord. After we have received the remission of sins, the joy of having received the remission of sins is truly great. But the Psalms say, *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1)*; yet because people do not do this part of uniting well, their faith does not become a complete faith but becomes a faith of their own alone, and because it does not become a uniting faith, it brings a setback to their life of faith. People make very many mistakes in this part. The remission of sins can be

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received by grace, but uniting cannot be done unless one denies oneself. And serving the Lord, too, cannot be carried on unless one denies oneself. We must give thought to these matters, and we must think through the word about how we should go forward while uniting.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1). First, we must be united with the Lord and receive the remission of sins. Next, we must be united with the heart of the Lord. We must be united in such matters as what the Lord wants, what He is pleased with, and how He leads us. We may be able to preach the gospel well. We may be able to preach the gospel and also preach the word well. But we see people who, because they do not know what it is to be united with the Lord, and because they have received the remission of sins but do not know how to live the life of faith, go back and forth, make no progress in their faith, and just remain alone in that state.

The workers of God are not bound by their own affairs. The Bible says, *"That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us" (2 Timothy 1:14)*. It is this keeping, and also following. The Lord said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23)*. So the point is that people do this part of denying themselves very poorly. You have received the remission of sins, but your heart is packed full of the self. It is packed full of your own way of thinking. Not knowing what the Lord says and how He leads, as soon as you think you have received the remission of sins, you try to live your life as you please and keep trying to make plans as you please. So I intend to talk first about how the guides should be united with the Lord and how they should lead the church, and then about union with the church, then union with the guide, then the life of offering

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oneself to the gospel, obeying the leading of the church, and the life of walking together with the Lord, continually living together with Him, dying together with Him, and rejoicing together with Him.

Do not make the Lord follow behind you

The guides in the church are not guides merely because they preach the gospel. Lay believers, too, can all preach the gospel well. You may preach the gospel even better. This is because fruit is borne on the new shoots of the vine. Clusters of grapes do not grow on the thick trunk; fruit is borne on the new shoots that go out. So we must know how the guides should go forward united with the Lord, and we must truly know it and go forward united with the Lord. But many people, not knowing what it is to unite, say as they please, “Lord, follow behind me. I will do it all, so follow behind me.” We must follow the ark of the covenant; it does not work for the ark to follow behind us. There is this problem of making God follow behind us. If, as we carry on our life of faith, we feel that something is a bit strange in this faith, then clearly we are not following the will of God. We come to feel that we are making the Lord follow behind us and that we ourselves are leading the Lord.

What is the life in which the guide is united? Let us look at the Levites of the Old Testament. Then who is there in the New Testament? There are the apostles and the servants of God. We need only examine what kind of life they lived. What about the Levites? They had no private property of their own. Did the apostles have private property? They did not. The point is that we must know these matters accurately, and our church must go forth with its foundation laid on the word of God. After we

receive the remission of sins, there are very many things that must be set in order within the church.

I am not saying this in allusion to anyone. When we look at it squarely by the word, when a certain church is newly established, the saints there have a heart rising up before God that says, "That piano will be needed—shall I give it? What shall I give?" When we receive the remission of sins, such a heart rises up. But the obstacle there is this: if the guide who has been set up has a great deal of private property of his own while the church is poor, the saint, while trying to go forward, comes to look at the guide. "In what state is my guide serving the Lord right now?" This is because the sheep always follow the guide who goes ahead of them. Suppose the guide is building his own house comfortably while the church is holding worship in a place rented from someone else. There, a certain saint suddenly has a heart, through the Holy Spirit, that wants to offer something before God, but when he looks at the guide who goes ahead of him, that person is also living well, so he thinks, "Is there any need for me to do so?" and it becomes a stumbling block squarely in his heart. The point is that though he likes the gospel, though he is sure of the gospel, he does not obey the heart that wants to deny himself and serve the Lord according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

God promised by His word to give material things to the church. He also promised that He would rescue souls. But when souls receive the remission of sins and a church is established, we feel good and should keep going forward, yet there are times when there is some frustration in our hearts. Why does the Holy Spirit give this frustration? In such matters, as we build up the church, we come to have the heart that the guides must first be united with the Lord. If the guide is not united with the Lord, the saints live their own lives fully and offer the dregs of their lives

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before the church. This is not a life of union. Then what the Lord says is this: lend your ear, give your heart, and see what the Lord is pleased with. As to why we feel frustration, it is a matter of examining ourselves in the light of the word before the Lord and asking why this is so.

The guide must lay down his possessions before the church

If, among the guides, one has a great deal of private property, the church absolutely cannot be a true church. It is the same for anyone. “I got married; I have received the remission of sins; this is my property and that is your property”—a guide must not act that way. The guide must lay down all his possessions, all his property, his heart, his life, and everything together before the church, live on what comes out of the church, rejoice together with the gospel, and be filled with the gospel. If there is abundant food there, he eats it; if there is no food, the guide must go hungry. The point is that if the church is poor, the guide must be poor, and if the church is rich, the guide, too, should receive a certain measure of benefit in keeping with that. When the heart of the guide and the heart of the church are not in accord, when the guide is the guide, the church is the church, and the saints are the saints, this word, *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1)*, is not fulfilled.

This word does not appear in many places in the Old Testament, but this part about unity is extremely important. We have looked at the Levites of the Old Testament and the servants of God of the New Testament, and the one thing they have in common is that they had no private property of their own. When

we have received salvation and run a church, we must not offer material things before God and then assert our own claim with those things; rather, the material things of the Church of God must all be used as the church needs. The saints offer material things, the guide also offers if he has material things, and everyone offers and gathers them in one place, and those material things are used for the needs of the church—that is the first view of material things for following the Lord. If this distinction is not made, the church cannot be revived, because in this world material things come first. And the gospel cannot be testified of cleanly. After going a little way, it becomes corrupted. If a person controls things at will, if there is property of one's own and this and that in the church, before long the church becomes a fault, no matter how much it talks to the saints.

People hate to offer their own property. At some moment they want to offer material things voluntarily, but that is a momentary heart, a heart moved and inspired by the Holy Spirit, and when they come to their senses and look, the heart arises that says, "Oh my, how much money this is!" But if the guide has private property, the saints are very comfortable. Such a church does not do any fighting. They do everything they want to do, and then, at best, they may sit and preach the food of the spirit or the gospel, but the church is not built up. They may receive the remission of sins, but the life of being united with the Lord is over. That remission of sins we first received is the grace by which Jesus, receiving baptism from John, had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and received in our place the judgment for those sins by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross. Since Jesus rose again from death and became our Savior, we who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit must know the heart of the Lord who saved us and follow Him.

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You, too, can become guides. When you truly deny yourselves and follow the Lord in serving, the Lord also gives you gifts through the Holy Spirit. Being a servant of God comes about as God gives. When one stands as a guide, one must be united with God. It is the same with our church. However our church has come along until now, the point is that there must not be any private property within our church. If the church is poor, it is poor; if it is rich, it is rich; this church must be run on the material things offered before the Lord, and it must not be built by any human means and methods. If God permits, you will establish churches in the future, and you will marry and go forward serving the Lord, won't you? Then you will have property, won't you? Your family will give you some, won't they? But if you say, "These material things are mine, so do not touch them," and clutch tightly what is your own, while the church, a newly planted church, holds worship in someone else's house, watching their faces—if you serve the church in that way, that church will not work.

The guide must be united with God. Guides who preach the gospel and preach the word cannot do the work of God unless their lives are in the gospel and in the church. There are many hard things, and many things they really must fight for. First, the guide must be united with God. Everything of his must be offered to the church. Only then, when he proposes to do something for the church, does it carry weight with the saints; if the guide is not like that with the Lord, it is useless for him to talk. The saints are the saints, the church is the church, and he himself is himself—this is not union. If the Lord is pleased, "Yes" to this; if the Lord wants it, "Yes" to that; he must be able to do all of it. That is a servant of God.

There are conditions for setting up a worker. A person who has not received the remission of sins, however clever he may

be, even if he is a preacher whose name is known throughout the whole world, must first receive the remission of sins. Even after he has received the remission of sins, we look at whether he is fit material and then set him up. The guide must truly be united with the Lord; if those who are to be sent out in the future really want to serve the Lord, they must offer everything of theirs and serve the Lord. If they serve the Lord while keeping what is their own, whom do they become like? They become like Lot. Lot was following Abraham, but because he had much private property, he made his decision as he pleased. He put an end to the life of union.

Second, in the church, everything must be offered before the church and the work of the church must be done out of that; if one does not offer to the church but does this and that before the Lord with what is one's own, it is all void. It has nothing to do with God. It is all vain and a blank sheet of white paper. He says, "You labored hard, doing it alone. It has nothing to do with Me. Why did you bring what is yours and offer it before Me?" Some people who have the gospel, too, increase their private property and say that they will do business with what the saints have offered, earn a lot of money, and do mission work. It must not be done that way. If the church could succeed that way, the Lord would have saved those with much money, let them earn a lot of money, and done the Lord's work. The Lord does His work only with those who are united with Him. If one is not united with the Lord, one is not qualified to be a worker.

Therefore the guide must live on the living expenses the church supplies. To become a servant of God, one must settle one's job and property, and if one has property, one must duly offer it to the church and live on what the church gives, in complete cleanness. This must be made clear. Only when the sheep know what sacrifices the guides of the church endure as

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they serve the Lord do they follow in the footsteps of those sheep who go ahead. If the guide himself does not live that way and yet tells them to follow, the saints do not trust his words. If one truly wants to offer the rest of one's life before God to the ministry, one must quit one's job, settle the part of one's life that was lived as an individual, pay no attention whatsoever to other things, and devote all one's heart and strength to the saints of the church and the gospel, to the work of building up the church, and pray. That is a guide. It is done after everything has been offered to the Lord, in the state of having nothing, not done just while still having what is one's own. After we receive the remission of sins, we can come to realize these many things.

With the same heart on the way the church goes forward

Now let us think together about the part of being united with the church. *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1)*. It is because we have received the remission of sins that I am speaking of this. To be united with the church means that in the work the church does, when the church goes forward toward the gospel, all the saints must unite their hearts. When Israel marched in the wilderness, when the cloud moved forward, that army of Israel moved forward all together, centered on Moses, and when the cloud stopped, they stopped together and pitched their tents there. But suppose, after going a long way in the wilderness, someone is thirsty and goes somewhere and finds a spring coming out of the ground. Glad that water is coming out, he digs it, makes a private spring, covers it with leaves, and drinks it sip by sip by himself. But one day the people of Israel suddenly depart and

march on. Moses takes the lead and all his people depart, but for him, there is spring water here and it is so nice that it is too much of a pity to leave this place behind and depart. When the church departs, we must depart uniting our hearts together, and when it marches together, we must march together. When the church goes forward toward the gospel with a certain prayer topic, we must go forward praying together with exactly the same heart as that prayer topic. But while the church is now pouring out its heart toward the newly established church, one says, "That is your business, and I have my own business to do," and does his own thing by himself.

To be united with the church is to know what will God has revealed to the church and to offer oneself to that will of God. And it is to do the work together in union. What about when we hold a retreat? When a retreat has begun, there are many who unite in cooking the meals and doing the kitchen work. When the church holds a student retreat, we must gather our hearts there. Our bodies may not be able to be there, but our hearts must be praying from here and paying attention to it. Next, when the church has held a founding worship service in a new place, our hearts must go there. We must pray for the people there and for their families. We must look together into the help needed so that the newly established church can preach the word and care for the saints. If we share our hearts with the church, we also come to have the heart to find out what is needed and to help. But if people do not unite in the work the church does, this is not something that can be done by the work of one or two people.

Each member of the church prays together for what is needed and adds his strength with a willing heart. In doing so, one comes to take part in it and to be united with the church. Even though our ages and the roles we have been given differ, we can all join together with the same heart. Even so, faith is entirely individual.

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When we return to our families, we may be one family and one community, but the soul is the soul of each individual. It is not that, because the father received the remission of sins, the children followed one after another and received it; rather, it came about because Jesus Christ had the sins of each individual passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John and removed those sins by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross. Then we, too, must pray about how we should serve the Lord and what is needed, and offer it before the Lord. This is precisely being united with the church.

It is not that receiving the remission of sins is the end of it. After we receive the remission of sins, we have entered inside the gate of the kingdom of heaven and our names have been written in the Book of Life, and after that it is fitting that we live the life of the saints. But the thing is, we know far too little about the part of being united with the church. So everyone knows nothing but his own life. Now our church must pay attention not only to preaching the gospel but also to how those who have heard the gospel are united with the church and how they build up the church. If we are paying attention to the part of building up the church before the Lord, souls automatically come and receive the remission of sins, and God begins to fill this church with souls. If God has caused the souls of a certain land to receive the remission of sins, there is surely a purpose there. Then a gathering of those who have received the remission of sins must be formed for that region. We must pay attention to such matters, too. Being united with the church is offering our lives concretely. Taking part together, not in our own plans but in the plan of God and in the work of God—this is being united with the church.

This is not something it is enough to know only in words. If the guides who go ahead do not go forward in these matters, and

the brothers and sisters do not go forward praying and taking part with material things, we receive the remission of sins as ourselves and end as ourselves. Where there is no sacrifice, there is no one who goes out to sow seed, and without labor no fruit can be reaped. To follow God without offering oneself before God, without denying oneself, and without taking up the cross is unreasonable. To follow the Lord while dwelling in a royal palace makes no sense.

The end of a church united with its own craving

Let us compare the churches of the world with this word that the Bible says: *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1)*. The Bible says that the Lord is the Head and we are His body, the church, and its members; He said, *"You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8)*, and He said, *"Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20)*. It means that we are to serve the Lord. But the churches of the world today are frantic to fill up their own churches, conducting campaigns to increase the number of church members and campaigns to make bigger churches. This is not being united with the Lord but being united with their own craving. The Lord does not accept such a life of being united with oneself. Work piled up for one's own craving will not be acknowledged before God in the end. The Bible speaks of the life of the disciple who is united with the Lord, and of how the saints are united with the Lord. If our Lord went forward that way, taking the lead, and the disciples of the Lord gave up their individual lives and went forward that way, then we, too, must go forward that way.

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In the Lord there is complete peace. There is true joy and freedom, too. But if we, too, put our own craving ahead of the will of the Lord, we cannot enjoy that peace and freedom. Because there are so many things deserving reproach, people look at the church and revile it. So there are very many people who say they would rather there were no church at all on this earth. If the church that has received the remission of sins lives a life united with the Lord, it does not hear such talk in this world; that we hear such talk means there is a problem.

Being united with the guide is being united with the Lord

Now comes the part of being united with the guide. *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1)*. This word is extremely short, but it is telling an extremely deep story. First, we must be united with the Lord. Next, we must be united with the church, which is the body of the Lord. Who is there in the church? There is the guide. A person who has no guide cannot have his faith established rightly. We are united with that guide whom God has set up, the guide is united with the church and united with the Lord, and the saints are united with the guide; and so we become one member and one body, and in the end we come to serve the Lord.

Being united with this guide is no ordinary faith. This is because people keep looking only at the outer shell. What heart the guide now has, how he is serving the Lord, how he is thinking to please the Lord, what plan of the Lord he knows and how he is taking interest in serving—to unite one's heart with that guide is directly to be united with the Lord. If the guide lives a life united with the Lord, the life lived uniting one's heart with

the guide is a small thing, but it is precisely a life lived united with the Lord. If one says, “I unite well with the Lord, but I do not unite with the guide,” that makes no sense. When a man of God is united with the Lord, why is it that one’s heart is not united with that person while one’s heart is united well with the Lord? It is because the Lord is not visible to the eye and does not interfere in every single matter.

It takes a lot of time to know the guide. The guide, as he goes forward toward the gospel, though you may not know it, when some problem arises for you, thinks, “How can that be made most beneficial and fitting?” and prays. Even if the guide has guided wrongly, if you listened to the guide and went forward following the order, and there really was a mistake, that is a matter for which God will take responsibility. If the guide went forward centered on God and the work went wrong, God takes responsibility for it. Surely there is the will of God in it, and later God changes it.

In serving the gospel, one can serve well on one’s own as an individual. But the life of being united with the guide really does not go well. Why is that? It is because of immaturity. Being immature, people are reckless and act as if there were no one but themselves. So, without a guide, at first they went forward well and thought it would go well, but after going on for a long while, the end is not good. The church absolutely needs those who go ahead. You may not need them, but God needs them and they are needed for the church. The guide, looking over the church, comes to think about what is most needed and what we must do, and gives detailed guidance in certain areas. When the guides are giving their hearts to a certain area, for you to go forward with exactly the same heart is what is truly fitting before the Lord. This is what is called good, and what is called pleasant before God.

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"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments" (Psalm 133:1–2). The revelation of God that God has shown to the guides of the church, the will of God, and faith toward God—all these things, when we are united with the guide, all go forward as the same body, the same faith, the same will, and the same purpose. Of course, we must live the life of faith personally with God. Nevertheless, it is through the church that grace comes down and we come to know the will of God; there are many things that cannot be known even in ten or twenty years if we try to realize the word by ourselves alone. The secret within this church is what heart and thoughts God gives to His servants for this church. The will of God revealed through the guide comes down entirely to the saints when they unite their hearts with the guide.

When I look at you in this way—as to how our church must go forward now, the guides first set things in order, and then as to how the church must go forward, what God ultimately is pleased with is building up the church. He does not like it when we gather only among ourselves and are satisfied only among ourselves. He is pleased when the church is built up and the saints serve the Lord. After receiving the remission of sins, if people are told to serve, they do not serve. But if material things are needed for the work of God, for the church to preach the gospel, the Holy Spirit stirs up in you the heart that wants to offer your material things before the Lord. There are those who refuse, but there are also those who obey. The Lord has surely allowed many material things among us so that we may serve Him. The members of the newly established church also offer voluntarily, from the heart, and our church also offers before the Lord, and so those material things are used for building up the church, for

a place where a servant of God can go and dwell. What we are trying to preach by offering material things is the news that Jesus had all the sins of the world, including our sins, passed on to Him once and for all with the baptism He received from John. Because Jesus bore those very sins and was judged in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, we serve together so that those who are still in sin may also receive this remission of sins.

"Desire the pure milk of the word"

It is good for all of us to learn the word in the church and follow its leading. What is the church telling you? What are the guides telling you? They urge you to worship together and learn the word. The Church of God leads us to worship together and learn the word. Do you obey this? Is there no case where, even though there is an official meeting of the church, you go off because there is some other meeting somewhere? Also, do they not tell you not to go somewhere? They tell you not to go to other churches and not to listen to other gospels. Is that right or not right? It is right. That is what it means to unite one's heart with the church. Obeying the leading of the church is precisely this. You must eat the food you truly ought to eat and not eat what you ought not to eat. If you eat poisonous herbs, you die. Your spirit cannot grow and dies. That is why the church leads you. Yet even though the church leads them, some people do not listen. Then they go through every hardship, to the point of death, all alone. If one does not obey the leading of the church, one suffers oneself.

When one eats poisonous herbs, it is not visible to the eye. When one eats poisonous herbs, the heart becomes very fearful

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and shaky, and then poisonous herbs spring up in the heart. If the seed of poisonous herbs has been sown, would poisonous herbs not sprout? Poisonous herbs come up. “Our church is self-righteous. A tiny church saying it is better than a big church—what a joke.” Only very bad thoughts rise up inside. But the word of God is not like that. The word of God says, *“Desire the pure milk of the word” (1 Peter 2:2)*, and it says that if we eat leaven, we die. It means that if we eat poison, poison comes up, and if we eat pure and spiritual food, only spiritual sprouts come up. So if we eat poison, we come to refuse the leading of the church, and a heart that takes offense springs up. If one eats poisonous herbs once, twice, and keeps on eating them, then whenever the church says something, such a heart keeps arising. Even though one tried not to have such a heart, it keeps rising up. It is because what one had eaten sprouts. When one listened to the words of a guide who was not right, one did not know it, but later the fruit springs up. The part that refuses, opposes, and goes against the will of the Lord springs up.

So I, even though I am a pastor, do not eat teaching mixed with leaven, that is, bread with leaven in it. If I eat bread with leaven in it, my head aches and my heart becomes defiled. My heart quickly becomes defiled and loses its purity, and human thoughts rise up about how to do the ministry in human terms. So when I listen to it a little and think, “Ah, this is filthy. This is terribly wrong,” I boldly throw it in the trash, even if it is somewhat expensive. I keep in my house only what I really need, and I sweep out what I do not need. This is because, whenever I look at it, it is poison.

Before God, a pastor and a lay believer are the same. They are the saints of God. Even though God tells us through the church not to eat leaven, if we eat leaven, we die. Our hearts become defiled. Telling you not to go to other churches is not

telling you not to go for fear that you will like that church and leave our church. You must truly eat the pure and spiritual milk and grow up, later become a person of faith, become a young man and then a grown man, and at that time use your faith to have certain problems solved, and receive the help of God until the day the Lord comes; but if you eat leaven, you are cut off from that faith. If you are cut off from faith, from then on your life of faith is over. If your heart becomes defiled, you cannot live the life of faith until this heart is made clean. So if, while eating the pure, spiritual milk in this church, one goes and eats some strange milk for a month or a year and comes back, one's heart is strange. When one goes there and listens to the talk, one's head aches. If it is not disgusting and one does not feel bad, I tell you precisely, it means that that soul is not wholly pure and has not removed all the old dregs. Holding on to all the old dregs, one is saying, "Oh, this is good; it is a pity to throw this away." I cannot tell you how clean our hearts must become before God.

What do the people of the world do when they run a church? They make it big by human means and methods. This is not a church. It is not our uniting; it is diligently piling up the Tower of Babel. At first He leaves it alone, but if it is piled up too high, God tears it all down. If increasing the numbers greatly, enlarging the church building, and making a name for oneself—if such things are not fitting in the sight of the Lord, we must not take part in them. If we take part in that useless work, our hearts only become defiled. In this world there are also very many people who misappropriate the name of the Lord and give the glory to themselves. Even though he has built a big church building, a person who does not believe in the salvation of the Lord and seeks only his own glory cannot escape the judgment for sin. It is no different from heaping coals of fire on his own head. If you pile up coals and set them on fire, is it not hot? Many

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people in this world today are as good as heaping coals of fire on their heads. A person who does not believe in the salvation of the Lord cannot escape the judgment for sin at the final judgment even with the achievements he has piled up. It says, *"A tree is known by its fruit" (Matthew 12:33)*. When we see the fruit, we know the tree.

Deny yourself daily and follow the Lord

The life of truly being united with the Lord and dwelling with Him, the life of living together with the Lord, sharing joys and sorrows with Him after being united with Him, is the most peaceful and beautiful life. Even though it is written here that, whatever this world may be like, dwelling with the Lord, being united with Him, and living together with Him is the most trouble-free and happiest life, people think the word is just the word and simply leave it at that. If our lives cannot follow it that way, if in our life of faith our living does not come to be like this, there is a problem. If we say that we truly believe in and follow the Lord, that we have received the remission of sins and are united with the Lord, and yet live a life the Lord does not want and go on doing things the Lord does not want, we must repent. Is it not right that, if we truly love the Lord, we receive the will of the Lord and do it as the Lord is pleased, as those who love the Lord?

If we truly love the Lord, it is right to know what the Lord is pleased with and to live as the Lord is pleased. But if we say with our words that we love the Lord, and yet, while knowing full well that this is the will of the Lord, do not do the will of the Lord, that is loving the Lord with the mouth only. It is just as He said, *"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And*

honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me" (Matthew 15:8). It is not loving the Lord in reality. If we truly have the heart that the word of the Lord is the truth and that we love the Lord, it is fitting to say "Yes," change our lives, and bring them into line with the will of the Lord. Because Jesus, who remitted our sins and rose again from death, is the Savior who is alive even now, we follow the will of the Lord as those who have received that love.

As I live on this earth, when the will of the Lord is done, there is great peace in my heart and I am glad. But when I sense that this is not the will of the Lord, from then on my heart becomes frustrated and I do not even want to speak. It is not doing a lot of work that is important; what is right is to know the will of the Lord correctly and to go forward practicing the will of the Lord. Then even if the work is slow, there is gladness and joy in the heart. Then what did the Lord say about the life of sharing joys and sorrows with Him? *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23)*. Denying oneself—dear fellow believers, you have memorized this word many times and know it well, don't you?

In reality, if our Lord says to us, "Deny yourself. What you are doing now is not right," and we say, "Yes, then what shall I do?" and He says, "Do this and this," and we say, "Yes," and do so, that is a true disciple of the Lord and a person who follows the Lord. But how painful it is to the heart to do so! The thought of God comes, but we also have our own thoughts. Then, when we try to throw away our own thoughts, how much inner conflict there is! Because we try to throw away our own thoughts, it is death. It would be so good if we had no thoughts of our own at all, but because we have our own thoughts, it is painful. We follow, yes, but because we do not follow well, it is painful.

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So our Lord speaks this word decisively. We say, "God, I know this word well." We all know it well. But when some problem arises, the Lord speaks exactly this word, that one must *"deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23)*. It is really hard. If only He had said just to follow Him, but He tells us to deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow Him; just following is hard enough, but this is really hard. But since the word is like this, we must do one of two things: either we tear up and alter the Bible, or we throw away our own hearts. As long as this word exists, if we want to follow, we must engrave this word in our hearts. If we try to follow according to this word, it is not denying ourselves only once. We deny again and deny again, and even when our thoughts are like this, we deny again, and each time our pride is hurt, we feel wronged, and we feel ashamed. We wonder why we received the remission of sins; we had to receive it in order to go to the kingdom of heaven, but we wish the life after that did not exist, we wish it had just ended with receiving the remission of sins. But the amazing thing is that we received the remission of sins not merely in our heads but in our hearts. If our Lord had not come to be in us, we would do as we please, but the Holy Spirit has come to be in our hearts. Because the Holy Spirit is there, He fights with our hearts. The Holy Spirit says, "You must not do that." If He were not here, we would do as we please, but since He has come, wherever we go, He is with us. It is because He does not follow after us; rather, we are in the Lord and the Lord is in us—we have simply become one.

So the way for a person who has received the remission of sins to live is to follow the will of God by faith, whether he lives or dies. That only this will of God, *"Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10)*, be done is their wish, and it is the very wish of our hearts. If the saints are truly to live with

the gospel and die with the gospel, and together become a right church, they must be united with the Lord, united with the church, and united with the guide. And those who are united must know what the Lord wants, give their hearts, give their material things, give their bodies, and pray for the work of building up the church, and devote all their heart and strength to the work of saving souls, to this work of keeping this beautiful gospel.

After the Lord saved us, did He just leave us out in the world? No, He did not. After we received the remission of sins, He did not leave us as we were, but entrusted these works to us so that His good will might be accomplished through us. The guide must be united with God; the church builds up the church and raises up the workers of God; and the saints, united with the church, united with the guide, and united with God, preach the gospel personally, do their best in the position each has been given while preaching the gospel to souls, and serve the Lord by offering material things, prayer, and their bodies. We are one lump. The church is like a ship. Beside the big ship there are small boats; when a storm comes and there is turmoil, they all come inside the big ship, and when it is calm, the small boats all go out and head together along the same course—that is the church. We keep going forward to the place where the servants of God built up churches and went forward.

Because private property is surely a stumbling block in the work of the church preaching the gospel and building up the church, the servants of God must settle these matters. And I believe before God that the church must truly offer its material things and everything before God so that they may be used preciously before God, and that it must become a church that sacrifices itself and is devoted to building up the church and preaching the gospel to souls. So let us all pray personally before

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God, settle what must be settled, lighten our burdens before God, and run forward before our Lord. I believe that if we do so, God will be pleased. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord saved me, lacking as I am

< Luke 10:17–24 >

"Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.' In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.' Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, 'Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it.'"

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Rejoice that your names are written in heaven rather than that demons submit

In Luke chapter 10, our Lord chose seventy others besides the twelve disciples and had them go about to every place and spread the gospel. When they had preached the gospel and come back, they rejoiced, reporting to the Lord, *"Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name" (Luke 10:17)*. The seventy had been held especially precious by Jesus, had gone on a preaching journey with the life of disciples and come back, and so they testified in this way of what they had experienced. As they rejoiced so greatly, our Lord said, *"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:18–20)*. He was telling them not to rejoice in that very thing, that demons submitted in the Lord's name, but to rejoice that their names were written in heaven.

When we hear the testimonies of people who have believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins, we come to give thanks to God. A sister testified that although she had been coming to church and knew the word, it was only after going out into the world that she could know herself; that she now abandons her own thoughts and wants to stay inside the church somehow; and that she believes the Lord came to this earth, received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and so saved her. Such a testimony is the testimony of you and me today. Although her words did not come quickly, I know that it is a very great blessing that she is so thankful for the grace of the Lord, has realized it, and could come to the meeting like this,

hear the word of the gospel, and see herself. I pray that God will uphold in both spirit and body and bless all those who have believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins.

In the church, it is not important who is first and who is last. Rather, in the Lord, a person who has some lacking aspects is held precious before God. Because he is lacking, he needs God, and I know that when God reveals that He has truly removed his sins, he comes to believe and give thanks. Our Lord also spoke of this part as follows: *"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight'" (Luke 10:21).*

He hid it from the wise and prudent and revealed it to little children

He said that these things were hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to little children, and that this was right and was the Father's will. When we think about it, too, we are thankful that the Lord concealed it from the wise and prudent, and revealed the gospel of the water and the Spirit to us, who are lacking like little children, showed us this truth, and caused us to believe it. I believe that this is the will of God our Father and the will of our Lord Jesus Christ. I, too, am truly lacking. In a way, I am last, and I am last in the world as well. Yet I believe that God, according to the Father's will, had compassion on me, looked on me with favor, loved me, and saved me because I am foolish like a little child and, in a way, a dimwitted person. If I had relied only on the wisdom of the world and had not accepted

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the salvation of the Lord, I would not have been saved. If I had pretended to be smart in my own way, I would not have been saved. Because life is nothing, I myself am nothing, and I have nothing to be proud of and nothing I do well, I wanted to know the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and I wanted to believe and rely on what the Lord had done. I did not hope for anything great; having been born into this world, and hearing that God so loved the world—that He loved me like this—I wanted to know concretely how much He loved and how He removed sin, I wanted to believe it concretely, and I wanted to hold on to it concretely.

But to me, who was like a little child knowing nothing, and also to all of us, God revealed His own truth and love—how much He loves us and how He removed our sins—with the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and caused us to believe it. And so He caused our names to be written in heaven. I am also so thankful that this is the Father's will. If God had saved only those who are excellent in this world, only those who are wise and prudent, only those whose conduct is upright and who are strong, I would have been completely excluded from salvation. I am a person who talks big only in my thoughts but has no strength and nothing at all, and even if I have some strength, once I have used it, I collapse afterward and can do nothing. But the Father, on the contrary, met the things that are not in the world, the things that are not wise, the foolish things, those who truly seem deficient and yet, because they are deficient and lacking, rely on God; He gave them salvation, made them His own children, made them His own workers, let them receive blessings in spirit and body on this earth, placed them in the Church of God to protect them and let them do righteous work, let them reign as kings in the Millennial Kingdom, and let them enter the eternal kingdom of God to

enjoy eternal riches and glory. I am so thankful that this is the will of God the Father.

He determined to save us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit even before we were born

We have nothing to be proud of. It is not because we were excellent in something, because we kept the law well, because our conduct was upright, or because we knew something well that God saved us. God the Father determined, before we were born, to save us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit in His Son Jesus Christ. That is, He planned to make you and me the people of the Lord and children of God, and determined to give us this blessing within the whole process and plan in which His Son would come to this earth, receive baptism from John, be crucified and die on the Cross, and rise again from death. And just as He had determined, He made it so that only those who are lacking could believe. Let me say it again: we became the people of the Lord, became the servants of the Lord, and are in the church because we are lacking, and I believe that for that reason we are looked on with even more favor by God. If we had pretended to be clever, pretended to be excellent, and thought that we were wise and prudent in human terms and in worldly terms, we probably would have left this church to live only for ourselves, and tried to live by our own strength without relying on God. We would have tried to mobilize everything we had, multiply it somehow, and live well only for ourselves. But those who can succeed at that are not even one in a hundred million.

God, as God, wanted to reveal Himself to us, wanted to reveal that He loves us, and wanted to give us the remission of sins and true happiness in that love. That is, God, as the Creator

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who created all things in the universe, as the One who makes all things exist out of nothing, made us human beings and wanted to give us the most precious love of God, the most precious life, and all the best spiritual blessings that are in God. So we receive the remission of sins by faith. Those who believe have received the remission of sins. I hope that you will honestly acknowledge your own lack and will believe with your heart and give thanks for that plan of God, who, because we are lacking, had all the more compassion on us and, because we are weak, loved us all the more, removed our sins, and made us His people. I hope you will be saved by faith. I hope you will give glory to God by faith.

The wish of the Son is to save those who are lacking

Whether you are among those who received the remission of sins this time or those who have already received the remission of sins and are in the church, we have obtained salvation in Jesus Christ by believing according to the will of God the Father, according to His wish. It was not that we loved God first, but God loved us first and had such a plan in His heart; and before we were born, even when we were in the loins of our parents, He had already determined to save us in the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that is in Jesus Christ, in that love. When the time came, God revealed it. The word says, *"No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Luke 10:22)*. The wish of Jesus, the Son of God the Father, is to save the pitiful, the sinners. It is to save those whose own conduct is weak. It is not to save the excellent but to save those who are lacking, those whose conduct is lacking, those who are

weak. That is the wish of the Son and the wish of God the Father. We have been saved according to that wish, because we are lacking.

In reality, all people are lacking. It is just that they do not acknowledge their own lack and do not know their own lack, so they simply do not know that they are lacking. But in reality, they are all lacking people. If we call what is lacking lacking, come forward with that lack, and believe and accept that God loved us and planned and wished to give us salvation, it is accomplished according to the Father's wish and according to the Father's will. Perhaps God saved us, who are lacking, so that we would not challenge God when we go to the kingdom of heaven. If He had saved us because we were smart, then when we lived in the kingdom of God, we would have challenged God and tried to pull Him down. Then would that be the kingdom of heaven? God wished to save people who are lacking, and as He wished, He saved those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Do you believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit? Then that is enough. It does not matter whether one gives a testimony of salvation well or poorly. What we hope for is to hear their confession of faith that Jesus, by receiving baptism from John, bore all their sins, took away the sin of the world, and so saved them.

Those of you who received the remission of sins this time were not saved because you are excellent, but were saved because you are lacking. It is not that you are lacking in comparison among people, but that, seen before God, we were saved because we are lacking. I am that way too, and all of us are that way. It is something to be so thankful and grateful for. Even when those who have been saved are in the church and keep hearing the word, their own thoughts rise up. But when they keep hearing the word and doing the work they are given in it,

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the wrong coloring they had absorbed washes out. Even so, it takes several years. No matter how quick a person is, it takes several years, and for a slow person it takes even ten years or twenty years. For a person who is said to be quick, after about five years, his self-righteousness drains out a little, to some degree. Before that, everyone lives on pride in his own excellence. The Lord knew that we would be like that and took away the sin of the world. He bore even the sins we would commit while acting as if we were excellent. How thankful and grateful this is! He is truly great.

The Lord, who removed our sins once and for all

During this meeting, I was afraid in my heart that a forest fire might break out, so I sprayed water along the boundary of the mountain with a motor and a hose. But no matter how much I sprayed, I could not completely wet even one stretch up to about two meters toward the mountain before it was time for the sun to go down. That evening, as it happened, snow fell and painted the whole mountain white like a picture, like a watercolor, so the worry about a fire breaking out simply disappeared. It was truly something to be thankful for.

God removed our sins in that way. Because the Lord is mighty, He planned to come to this earth, bear our sins once and for all by receiving baptism from John, shed His blood and die once and for all on the Cross, and rise again from death to remove our sins; and because He carried this out just as He had planned, He removed them all once and for all with His power. But what do we do? To remove our sins, every day we say, “I have sinned. Lord, please remit my sins.” There are also people who do not even say that they have sinned, but when we have

sinned, we must at least say that we have sinned. But even if we beg to have our sins remitted with this, it does not work; no matter how much we beg, it does not work; even if we pray with fasting, it does not work; and no matter how many good deeds we do, it does not work. Whether Jesus, the Savior, removed your sins and mine or did not remove them—that is what is important. This is because He is the Savior, but He is also the Judge and judges us. If He has saved us, we are saved; if He has not saved us, we are not saved. But it is certain that He has saved us. Then we only need to believe. But the point is that He is the Judge. If we do not believe that He has saved us, He will in turn judge us. Because He is both the Savior and the Judge, the person who does not believe receives judgment and dies.

Salvation comes first. Jesus gave us salvation and saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, so what is so special about believing it? You do not need to know difficult things. You only need to eat well and go to the bathroom well, believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, know that God loved me and loved you, know that He removed all sins and made us His people, and serve the gospel because you are grateful for it. Live knowing just that much, and when the Lord takes you, go; and while you are here, ask Him to let you live righteously without hardship and then go. You only need to know that much.

Do not pray to gods made by man, but believe in God, who loved us

Whether you are among those who received the remission of sins this time or those who have already received the remission of sins and are living a life of faith, for all of us—and for me, too—it is a great blessing to have been born in this present age,

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to hear this gospel, and to receive the remission of sins. Of the people who were born on this earth, lived, and died, how many died without hearing this gospel of the water and the Spirit and without knowing that God loved them, became a man from God's side, came, and removed their sins! The Lord said, *"Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see" (Luke 10:23)*. Those who heard the gospel this time truly have reason to be thankful. Those who have believed this gospel must stay firmly attached to the church and live a life of faith, listen well to the words of the pastors, the evangelists, and those who have gone ahead, and, within their families, too, regard the person who received the remission of sins first as one who has gone ahead and obey him well. That is how you keep your faith and enjoy blessings. Otherwise, you will be dragged around by Satan the devil, and your faith will be shaken.

Are you excellent people? I am not an excellent person either. Because I am a worthless person, because I am a lacking person, because I am a person like a little child, I could believe the love of God. No one whose heart is not as simple as a little child's can know that God loves us like this. Who knew that He loved us like this? Who knew that He loved us like this and took away all sins perfectly? We pray every day. All the ideologies and religions of the world are praying. They set up anything at all and pray to trees, pray to rocks, pray to the sun, and pray to the god of the sea. There is a right one to pray to; will praying just anywhere work? By relying on an object that cannot save us, we cannot solve the problem of sin.

People are foolish. Man was originally made in the likeness of the image of God, yet he is foolish. People are so dull and foolish that at times they are worse than beasts. The Bible says, *"The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master's crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider" (Isaiah 1:3)*.

It is God who loved us; who else has loved you? What god besides God has loved you? Look to the love of God, who bore our sins and saved us. The objects that people pray to and serve are not God; they are merely human. The gospel of the water and the Spirit must be believed when one realizes it. Having been born in this world from a mother's womb through sinful parents and living one's life, when we come to know Jesus, the Son of God, who is the love of God, come to know that Jesus is God and the Savior, and come to know that He came to this earth, received baptism from John and so bore our sins, died on the Cross, rose again, and saved us—when it dawns on our hearts that we could not help but die and go to hell because of sin, but He loved us and removed our sins—we must grasp it at that very moment. We must grasp it just as we have realized it, never let it slip away, and believe it. If we let this slip away, it is the end. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the love of God.

"Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see"

The word says, *"Many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it" (Luke 10:24)*. Countless people wanted to see but did not see, and countless people wanted to hear but did not hear. But today you and I are hearing. You are blessed. The little children and young people here are blessed, too. It is not that they are blessed because they are physically smart, good-looking, intelligent, and have good grades in school. It is that we have been saved because God loved us. This is so worthy of thanks, and so good.

Dear fellow believers, I hope you will live a life of faith well. Do not say that it is the end because you have received the

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remission of sins, and do not pretend to be excellent either. Where is the home of you who have received the remission of sins? The Church of God is my home and your home. A person who turns his back on the Church of God and keeps away from it is not a wise person. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Even if we gain the whole world, we lose our life if we abandon the Savior

< Luke 9:18–27 >

“And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, ‘Who do the crowds say that I am?’ So they answered and said, ‘John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered and said, ‘The Christ of God.’ And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, 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.’ Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels. But I tell you

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truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God.'"

The salvation that must be contained in the confession that He is the Christ

When Jesus was alone praying, He asked the disciples who were with Him who people said He was. In what the crowds said, the names of John the Baptist, Elijah, and the old prophets came up. Then the Lord asked how the disciples themselves believed. *"He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered and said, 'The Christ of God'" (Luke 9:20)*. Peter did not call Jesus merely one of the outstanding prophets. He confessed Him as the Christ whom God had sent, and after that confession, the Lord taught the work He would accomplish.

The Christ is the One who, anointed by God, accomplishes the work of salvation. Jesus is our King, the Judge, and the Creator, and He is the Savior who offers Himself for sinners. Therefore, believing in Jesus as the Christ is not a matter of attaching one special honorific title to Him. It is the faith that knows who it is that will give us life and accepts the salvation He accomplishes.

We cannot replace that faith with our own religious life or long experience. Even if we have called on the name of Jesus for a long time, if we do not know how He remitted sin, we come to rely only on our own strength again when faced with our own sins. The Lord does not want us to stay only listening to the confessions of others. We must believe the salvation He revealed through His word as the salvation for ourselves. Only then does the life of following the Lord, too, start not from vague respect but from the faith that knows the Savior.

The reason He spoke of being killed and rising again

After commanding them to tell no one this word about Him, Jesus told His disciples what He would suffer in the future. *"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)*. Right after the confession that He is the Christ lie suffering, death, and resurrection. The fact that the Lord is the King and His being killed on the Cross do not contradict each other. This is because, to save His people who were under sin, He had to bear their sins and their judgment Himself.

When Jesus received baptism from John in the Jordan River, He had already had all the sin of mankind, including the sins of our whole lives, passed on to Him once and for all. The Lord's going to the Cross was not a matter of an unexpected misfortune befalling the sinless One and salvation collapsing. It was a matter of His going, bearing the sin of the world He had received through His baptism, to receive in our place the judgment we were to receive. That is why the Lord said that He must be killed and rise again.

Just as He said, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and so bore the price of our sins, and He rose again from death and completed salvation. A person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not supplement this salvation with his own deeds. He receives the remission of sins by believing together in the baptism Jesus received, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection. What makes us stand before Christ is not the amount of suffering we have endured but the righteousness He accomplished.

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Only when we make this fact clear can we also rightly understand the taking up of one's own cross that comes afterward. It is not that if we endure many hardships, our sins are removed to that extent. Jesus accomplished the work of salvation that remits sin, and we follow the Lord as those who have received that grace. The faith by which we are saved and the life after being saved are connected, but we must not put our own labor in the place of the redemption of Jesus.

What we must lay down daily before the word of the Lord

The Lord spoke of the way of following not only to the disciples but also to the crowd. *"Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me'" (Luke 9:23)*. Whoever would follow the Lord must lay down the thought that he himself is always right. We must not turn back only when our wrong is clear, but must also examine, in the light of the word of the Lord, the things we ourselves consider good plans. This is because the reason that something is beneficial to oneself does not become evidence that it accords with the will of God.

Denying oneself is not a matter of doing away with the ability to think, but a matter of acknowledging before the word, and laying down, one's own stubbornness and cravings that become a hindrance to following the Lord. There are times when we cannot hear the teaching of the Lord because of the heart that thinks, "I have much experience, so I know better." At such times, we must lower even our self-assurance that we know well. Conversely, if we are trapped in the thought, "I am lacking, so I

cannot do anything," we must believe the word that the Lord helps us rather than that judgment.

Therefore, both the person who does well and the weak person must rely on the Lord. The person who has ability must not put his own will first with that ability but must serve the will of the Lord, and the person who has little strength must not push away all the work the Lord has entrusted to him on the grounds of his circumstances. What the Lord wants is not a life of endlessly blaming ourselves. It is for us to turn the heart that had stopped because it looked only at itself, believe in the Savior, and walk the way He guides us.

The Lord also said to take up one's own cross daily. This is not a word to set out only after first removing all the difficulties on the way of following. When we make time for the gospel and serve our brothers and sisters, there also arise occasions to give up our own convenience, but we must not shift that labor only onto others but must shoulder it in the place entrusted to us. Since the fact that we obeyed yesterday does not make today's stubbornness right, we must renew our hearts daily before the word.

The same faith is needed also when we work together in the church. If we put forward only our own way, hearts are divided even over small things, but if we look to the same purpose of preaching the gospel, we can acknowledge and help one another's labor. Discussing together and correcting the work according to the word is also a real form of lowering our own will. We must distinguish between unconditionally following the demands of people and obeying by believing the word of the Lord, and at the center of unity there must be the will of the Lord, who saved us.

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Where will we entrust the life more precious than the whole world?

The Lord spoke of the outcome of the heart that tries to preserve its own life and of the life that loses it for the Lord's sake. *"Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it" (Luke 9:24)*. A person who abandons the Savior for the reason of keeping himself safe cannot obtain true life. But the life of a person who accepts loss because he believes in and follows the Lord is not in vain. *"What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?" (Luke 9:25)*. Even a success as great as being able to say one has gained the whole world cannot take the place of solving the problem of losing one's life before God.

This word does not mean that caring for one's family or taking responsibility for one's livelihood is useless. It means that, though those things are important, they cannot occupy a place higher than the Lord, who gives life. We can work for our livelihood and yet not be ashamed of the gospel, and we can love our family and yet not follow a will that goes against the word of God. The problem lies not so much in what we have as in whether we abandon the Savior and His word in order to keep it.

The Lord also warned against being ashamed of Him and His words before people. *"Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26)*. If we look only at the evaluation of the world today, hiding our faith may seem advantageous. But the One who comes in glory at the end is Jesus. We must not decide our life only by whom we are acknowledged by now, but must think of standing before the Lord, who gave us life. We must examine

Even if we gain the whole world, we lose our life if we abandon the Savior

the heart that would seek only His glory while being ashamed of His words.

The Lord then said, *"There are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27)*. The way of the One whom the disciples follow does not end in suffering, and the glory of the Lord that we will see in the next text is not separated from this word of suffering and resurrection. We must not decide whether to follow the Lord only by our immediate comfort, but must entrust our life to the Christ of God. The confession that He is the Christ of God must not end on our lips, but must lead to a life of lowering our own will and taking up our own cross daily. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

Hear the words of the Son, who showed His glory

< Luke 9:28–36 >

"Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. (And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my Son, my chosen: hear ye him –ASV). When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen."

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The glory that appeared on the Lord as He prayed

After speaking of His suffering, death, and resurrection, about eight days later Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain. The purpose of His going up on the mountain was to pray. The disciples followed the Lord, with whom they had always been, but there they came to see a glory different from the appearance they usually saw. *"As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening" (Luke 9:29)*. It was not the appearance of the Teacher they had always seen. It was not a glory that arose because the disciples made something for Him, but a glory that appeared on the Lord.

A short while before, when the Lord said that He must be killed, the disciples did not fully understand the meaning of that way. But the appearance they saw on the mountain made them think again about who the One who had spoken of suffering was. Because Jesus, who would be rejected by people, is not One without glory, His original glory does not disappear just because the evaluation of man falls. The One who goes forward to the Cross is none other than this Lord of glory.

We, too, while believing in the Lord, easily judge Him by the circumstances visible before our eyes right now. We may think that if we follow the Lord, there should be no hard things, and that the lives of those who believe should always look better than those of others. But the Lord showed His own glory after speaking of suffering. If we separate these two, we exalt Jesus only in comfortable circumstances, and when difficulties come, we come to doubt even His power. Even in the suffering before our eyes, we must not forget in whom we believe.

This scene also makes us think about the hope to which we who have been saved look. Our present bodies and

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circumstances cannot show all that we will enjoy with the Lord in the future. The Lord revealed His own glory to the disciples, and He makes those who believe in Him also look to the glory of the Lord's kingdom. Because the basis of our hope lies not in our changing selves but in the Lord who saves us, we must not look only at our present weakness and consider that there is no hope at all for us.

What they talked about in glory was the decease at Jerusalem

On the mountain, Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus. The content of what they talked about is important for understanding this scene. *"Who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31)*. What the two men who appeared in glory discussed with Jesus was the decease He would accomplish at Jerusalem. The suffering and death He had spoken of earlier did not disappear even in the glory on the mountain. Rather, they lay clearly before them as the work of salvation the Lord would accomplish.

The law given through Moses teaches what sin is. It makes us know the will of God, but it does not give the guarantee that a sinner can fulfill all of that will by his own strength and become righteous. Before the law, we realize our own sins and come to know that we need the Savior. The fact that Moses appeared with Him does not mean that another Savior arises who would bear our sins alongside Jesus. The One who would give His own body for sinners is Jesus.

The name of Elijah also makes us think of the work of God turning people back to the Lord. Jesus taught elsewhere that the

Elijah who was to come was John the Baptist, and this John prepared the way of the Savior and, by giving baptism to Jesus, passed the sin of mankind on to Him. We must know that the salvation God promised was not something accomplished without regard to the thoughts of man, but was accomplished according to the work He had prepared beforehand.

The reason Jesus would be killed at Jerusalem also becomes clear within that salvation. When the Lord received baptism from John, He said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15),* and with that baptism He had the sin of the whole world, including the sins of our whole lives, passed on to Him once and for all. By bearing that sin, hanging on the Cross, shedding His blood, and dying, He received in our place the judgment that we sinners were to receive. And He rose again from death and rescued us from sin and death. The fact that the One who showed His glory on the mountain gave His own body for this salvation is the center of our faith.

Therefore, a person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot avoid the Cross while speaking only of the glory of the Lord. Nor must he, while speaking only of the Cross, forget how the Lord bore the sin of the world. The glory on the mountain and the decease at Jerusalem are two sides of one salvation accomplished by the one Savior. The Lord is not One who stayed in glory while turning away from sinners, but One who went forward toward the death He would accomplish at Jerusalem in order to give us life.

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The word that must be heard first, rather than the thought of building tabernacles

The disciples who were with Peter were heavy with sleep, and when they were fully awake, they saw the glory of the Lord and the two men who stood with Him. When the two men were about to leave, Peter spoke of his wish to stay there. *"Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—not knowing what he said" (Luke 9:33)*. But the Scripture adds that Peter did not know what he was saying. The fact that he had seen something amazing did not make right even all the thoughts and words he had at that place.

In Peter's suggestion was contained the feeling that the place was good. But Jesus had not come up on the mountain to hold on to the good feelings of the disciples for a long time. The Lord was speaking of what He would accomplish at Jerusalem, but Peter's heart turned toward staying where he was now. However sincere the tabernacles he suggested might have been, they could not take the place of the work of salvation the Lord would accomplish.

We, too, when we receive grace, sometimes wish that the emotion and circumstances of that time would continue. But if that experience becomes a standard that takes the place of the word of the Lord, it becomes difficult to follow the way the Lord leads next. We may even lay down the work entrusted to us only because it no longer feels as joyful as before. Faith grows not so much by preserving the good moments as by hearing the word of the Lord both in those moments and in the ordinary days afterward.

Also, when we serve the gospel together in the church, we must not insist only on the ways we ourselves like. What is important is to examine what the gospel we have received is and what work the Lord has now entrusted to us. We must not try to serve the Lord by the standard of our own satisfaction, but must serve according to the will of the Lord, who saved us.

Jesus, who remained even after the voice had ceased

While Peter was speaking, a cloud came and overshadowed the disciples, and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. The voice heard then taught clearly where the disciples should set their hearts. *"And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my Son, my chosen: hear ye him" (Luke 9:35)*. God declared Jesus to be His own Son, the chosen One, and told them to hear Him. What the disciples needed was not to add more of their own thoughts, but to accept the words of the Son.

Those words also include the teaching of suffering and resurrection that the Lord had already given. If we welcome only the appearance of glory and avoid the word that He must be killed, we are not fully hearing the words of the Son. The Son whom God sent obeys the will of the Father in order to give life to sinners. We must not pick out and believe only what is good for ourselves among the words He spoke, but must accept as it is the will of the Lord, who accomplished salvation.

"When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen" (Luke 9:36). Even after Moses and Elijah left and the voice ceased, Jesus was with them. The amazing scene passing did not mean that even the Lord had disappeared. We also have

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days when our emotion subsides, but the Lord who saved us and His word are still the basis of our faith.

Therefore, what we must hold on to is the word of the Lord rather than the wish to see a certain scene again. When our hearts are shaken because of sin, we must believe the word of salvation that the Lord bore that sin, and when the work entrusted to us is hard, we must listen to the word that tells us to follow the Lord. The Lord, who showed His glory on the mountain, died for us at Jerusalem and rose again. We who believe in that Son must not try to stay only in good circumstances, but must hear His words and go forward to the place entrusted to us today. ✉

Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

The authority of Jesus, who healed the boy and gave him back to his father

< Luke 9:37–43a >

"Now it happened on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, that a great multitude met Him. Suddenly a man from the multitude cried out, saying, 'Teacher, I implore You, look on my son, for he is my only child. And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams at the mouth; and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him. So I implored Your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.' Then Jesus answered and said, 'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.' And as he was still coming, the demon threw him down and convulsed him. Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father. And they were all amazed at the majesty of God."

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The father who was waiting for the Lord at the foot of the mountain

On the next day, when Jesus came down from the mountain, a great multitude met the Lord. While the three disciples were seeing the glory on the mountain, at the foot of the mountain there were a suffering boy and a father watching that boy. That father, who was among the multitude, cried out to Jesus and implored Him. *"Suddenly a man from the multitude cried out, saying, 'Teacher, I implore You, look on my son, for he is my only child'" (Luke 9:38)*. He did not merely wait for the Lord to recognize him among many people, but asked the Lord to look on his only son.

The father told in detail what suffering the boy was going through. The demon seized the boy, made him suddenly cry out, convulsed him, and made him foam at the mouth, and this happened again and again, the demon departing with great difficulty only after bruising him badly. Even though his love for his son was deep, the father could not cut off that suffering by his own strength. The limitation of the father, who loved his son yet could not resolve that suffering, is contained in that plea asking the Lord to look on his son Himself.

The text makes us see, together with the father's desperation, to whom he entrusted his son, and makes us look to Jesus, who answers his plea. A person's earnest heart itself is not the authority that overcomes demons. It is simply that a person who knew he could not do it by his own strength came to Jesus and asked for help. When we pray, too, we must not examine only how fervent our hearts are, but must believe what kind of One the Lord is, who hears our prayers.

There are many things that we cannot resolve for others in their place even though we love them. Especially when we deal

with a person who is suffering because of sin, we cannot remove that sin for him with our comfort alone. Yet there is no need to draw back, saying that we can give no help at all. We can preach Jesus, who bore sin, examine His word together, and help that person believe in the Savior. A heart that acknowledges its own limits becomes a reason to come to the Lord.

The suffering that was not resolved though he had asked the disciples

Before coming to Jesus, the father had already asked the disciples to help the boy. But what he had hoped for did not happen. *"I implored Your disciples to cast it out, but they could not" (Luke 9:40)*. The disciples were people who had been sent out earlier in this chapter. *"Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases" (Luke 9:1)*. It was authority they had received in that way, but that authority did not become a power of their own possession that they could always use relying only on themselves.

In the face of the failure the father spoke of, the disciples had to look back again on whom they must rely. Even if they had preached the gospel and healed the sick before, that does not mean that there is no longer any need to rely on the Lord today. Remembering the grace one has received and making past experience into one's own boast are different things. If we remember the fact that the Lord worked, we rely on the Lord all the more, but if we consider that we ourselves accomplished it, we come to think that our own strength is enough.

We, too, when we have served the work of the Lord for a long time, sometimes do not examine our faith because of

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familiarity. Knowing how to preach the word and now believing the word of the Lord are not the same thing. The experience of having preached the gospel to someone in the past cannot take the place of today's prayer and reliance. Because what saves people is not our eloquence but the gospel that testifies of the work of Jesus, the more we serve, the more we must rely on that word.

Also, we must not conclude that even the Lord is One who cannot do something just because some help we asked for did not come about. The limitations of the disciples and the authority of Jesus are not the same. The father came to Jesus bringing the unresolved problem just as it was, and there he heard the word of the Lord. We, too, rather than abandoning even the word of the Savior for the reason that we have been disappointed in people, must distinguish what is the work the Lord has accomplished and what is the deficiency of man.

The Lord, who called while rebuking the faithless generation

Jesus heard about it and rebuked the faithless generation. *"Then Jesus answered and said, 'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here'" (Luke 9:41)*. In this word, the longsuffering of the Lord and His clear rebuke are present together. The Lord did not regard the state of faithlessness as something with no problem, but neither did He say not to bring the suffering boy. The command to bring the boy here shows that, even for the people who heard the rebuke, the way to receive help is in the Lord.

Faith is not a power that tightens one's own heart firmly and accomplishes anything. It is relying on the Lord, who has power, and on the word He has spoken. Therefore, when we hear the rebuke that we have no faith, we must not end by thinking only of how shabby we are. We must examine what we have believed and what thoughts we have put ahead of the word of the Lord, and turn our hearts back to the Lord. Bringing when He says to bring is the actual deed of believing the word.

We must also take the problem of our sins before the Lord with the same faith. Because Jesus knew us, who are sinners, and accomplished the work of salvation first, it is not that we obtain salvation after we have reduced our sins and come to look worthy of being accepted by the Lord. By receiving baptism from John at the age of thirty, He had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lives, passed on to Him once and for all, and bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and so received in our place the judgment we were to receive. And He rose again from death and became the Savior who overcame sin and death.

Believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is accepting this work as salvation for oneself. We cannot think of the extent of the sins the Lord bore as smaller for the reason that our sins are great. Also, it is not that the Lord remits sin only on the days we feel our faith is strong; rather, He has us accept by faith the salvation He has already accomplished. What we must rely on is not our own feelings or qualifications, but Jesus, who accomplished salvation with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. If we hear His word, there is no reason to cut off all hope because of our own incompetence.

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The authority that gave the boy back to his father

Even while the boy was coming to Jesus, the demon threw him down and convulsed him violently. Even though it was the way of being brought to the Lord, it was not that the suffering disappeared first; but the sight of the boy still suffering could not stop the word of the Lord. *"And as he was still coming, the demon threw him down and convulsed him. Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father" (Luke 9:42)*. Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. The Lord accomplished what the father could not possibly do.

In this scene, rather than at the magnitude of the suffering, we must look at the greater authority of Jesus, who rebukes and drives away the power that had seized the boy and bruised him. Even what the disciples could not do was resolved before the Lord. Therefore, our faith must not stop at our own ability or at the reputation of other people, but must reach Jesus, who saves us from sin and death. We must not measure what the Lord will do by the limits of man.

In the word that He gave the boy back to his father, the care of the Lord is also revealed. Jesus was not One who only showed His own power and left the suffering person as he was. The plea of the father, who had asked Him to look on his son, was answered by the boy being healed and returning to his arms. We, too, when we serve the work of the Lord, must think about what help the person in need actually receives rather than about whether our own ability is revealed. The purpose of preaching the gospel, too, lies not in exalting our names but in souls believing in the Savior and receiving the remission of sins.

"They were all amazed at the majesty of God" (Luke 9:43). That amazement must lead to believing who Jesus is. We, too,

must ask for the Lord's help when we have difficulties, and after receiving grace, we must remember what He has done. We must not make past grace into evidence of our own strength, but must rely on the word of the Lord today as well. Believing that Jesus, who healed the boy and gave him back to his father, is our Savior, we must fulfill the service entrusted to us within His grace. ✉

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Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

Even though you have seen amazing things, do not forget the word of His suffering

< Luke 9:43b–45 >

"While everyone marveled at all the things which Jesus did, He said to His disciples, 'Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.' But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying."

The word He spoke when everyone marveled

When Jesus *"rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father" (Luke 9:42)*, the people marveled at the majesty of God. Because the Lord did what the disciples had not been able to do, the hearts of the people who saw it were greatly moved. But the word Jesus spoke to His disciples at that time was not only the story of victory that people might have expected. *"While everyone marveled at all the things which Jesus did, He said to His disciples" (Luke 9:43)*. At the very moment when people were marveling at His power, the

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Lord spoke of His being delivered into the hands of men in the days to come.

The disciples who heard this word may have been perplexed. It would have been hard for them to easily understand why the One who rebuked and drove out even demons had to be delivered into the hands of men. But the Lord did not change the way He was to go for the reason that the response of the people was good. The multitude's rejoicing at seeing His power and the work the Lord would accomplish to save sinners had to be distinguished. This is because the expectations of people do not determine the will of God.

We, too, when things go well, easily think that everything will continue according to our expectations. When we get a good response after preaching the gospel, it seems that the difficulties, too, will soon disappear, and when the work we serve in together goes smoothly, we feel as though it will keep on being that way in the future. But in the word of the Lord there is not only the joy of grace but also the labor and difficulties we will bear while following Him. If we remember only the words that are pleasant to hear while in good circumstances, our hearts are greatly shaken when our circumstances change.

Therefore, rather than judging that our faith has grown sufficiently just because we have seen amazing things, the more we have received grace, the more we must listen to what the Lord is saying. Jesus spoke so that His disciples would not misunderstand His work of salvation by looking only at the power before their eyes. We, too, while giving thanks for the things the Lord has done, must learn together what meaning those things have within the salvation He accomplished.

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The delivering up of the Son of Man that we must let sink into our ears

Jesus was not telling His disciples a story they could hear for a moment and let pass. *"Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men" (Luke 9:44)*. The word telling them to let these words sink down into their ears carries the meaning that they should keep them in their hearts and not forget them. Even if the disciples did not understand all its meaning right away at that time, the fact that the Lord had spoken it had to remain. In order not to judge what would happen later only by their own thoughts, they had to remember the word of the Lord they had heard now.

The words that He would be delivered into the hands of men do not mean that Jesus would be seized without any preparation and come to depart from the plan of God. The Lord knew of that beforehand and taught it to His disciples Himself. People would treat the Lord with evil intent, but that evil could not become the final power that overthrows the salvation of God. Jesus went forward on the way of suffering in order to accomplish the work of salvation for sinners.

When we remember this word, we no longer see the Cross merely as an unjust death. The sin of the people who opposed Jesus and handed Him over to death is clear, but if we look only at their actions, we miss why the Lord accepted that way. We must also know that the delivering up of the Son of Man is connected with His work of bearing the sin of the world, and that through that death He saved us from the judgment for sin.

Keeping the word in our hearts is also necessary for our everyday faith. If we erase all the promises of the Lord we heard before, only for the reason that things have become difficult, the circumstances before our eyes come to decide our faith. The

word that the Lord has saved us and the word that He has entrusted us with the gospel do not change according to the praise or opposition of people. When we remember that word, we can rely on the same Savior on comfortable days and on hard days alike and carry out the work entrusted to us.

The death that the One who received sin with His baptism would bear

A little earlier, the Lord had spoken to His disciples not only of His suffering and death but also of His resurrection. *"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)*. The word that He would be delivered into the hands of men is not separate from this teaching. We must remember that the Lord would be killed, but we must also remember that He would rise again. Only then can we look to the work of salvation the Lord accomplishes without regarding the Cross as a failure.

When Jesus received baptism from John, He had the sin of all mankind passed on to Him once and for all, just as the sacrificial offering of the Old Testament had sin passed on to it through the laying on of hands. We have sins we have forgotten and sins we have not realized, but the sin of the world that the Lord bore includes all the sins of our whole lives. Because the Lord went to the Cross after bearing that sin, that death was not something that ended with One who had nothing to do with sin merely suffering. It was the Savior bearing in our place the judgment our sins had to receive.

The Lord hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and, just as He had said, He rose again from death. His bearing sin

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with His baptism, His paying the price of sin on the Cross, and His overcoming death and rising again together accomplished our salvation. We who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit do not produce that salvation over again with our own deeds. We receive the remission of sins by believing in Jesus, who accomplished all that work for us.

So keeping the delivering up of the Son of Man in our hearts is not a matter of recalling a dark event over and over and being tormented. It is a matter of remembering through what work the love of the Lord for sinners was accomplished. Because the Lord bore our sins even though He knew them, we have no need to hide or to pretend to be righteous ourselves when our faults are exposed. While admitting our sin, we can rely on the Savior, who has already borne that sin. This faith keeps the heart of the person who has received the remission of sins.

The price of sin that Jesus paid is not something we pay back little by little by enduring hardships. Therefore, the person who has received this salvation does not make the labor of following the word that says *"take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23)* his own atonement. We know the grace by which we were rescued from sin and serve the gospel in gratitude. When we know with what sacrifice the Lord gave us life, even the heart that used to make only immediate convenience the standard of its life comes to think of His will first.

Do not close your heart when faced with a word you do not understand

The disciples heard the word of the Lord, but they did not know its meaning. *"They did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it; and they*

were afraid to ask Him about this saying" (Luke 9:45). The Scripture says that it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it, and records that the disciples were even afraid to ask. We cannot explain the reason as if we knew it all. What is clear is the fact that there was a distance between what the Lord said and what the disciples understood, and that they felt fear in the face of that distance.

We, too, at times do not clearly grasp the meaning while hearing the word. Sometimes we cannot easily accept a word because it is so different from our own expectations, and sometimes we are perplexed because a thought we have long considered right conflicts with the word. At such times, if we pretend to know what we do not know or cover it over because it is uncomfortable, the way to learn narrows. We need the attitude of admitting the fact that we do not understand everything, yet examining the word the Lord spoke without discarding it.

This is also why learning the word together in the church is precious. For a passage whose meaning we do not know, we can examine the context, check it together with other words of the Scriptures, and seek the help of faith. Rather than being ashamed to ask questions and reaching a conclusion alone, it is better to make clear what we do not know and to learn. What is important is not to become a person who answers quickly but to become a person who knows and believes the will of the Lord rightly.

The people were amazed at seeing the power of the Lord, but the Lord left the word of salvation in the ears of His disciples. We, too, must not stop at a heart of admiration but must believe in the work of the Son of Man, who was delivered up for us. Without being confident that we have realized all its meaning at once, we must keep in our hearts the word we have heard today. When we learn and believe according to that word, we will grow

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into a faith that relies on what the Savior accomplished rather than on the responses before our eyes. ✉

Sermon 11 by Paul C. Jong

The little child He set before the disciples who disputed over who was greatest

< Luke 9:46–48 >

“Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, and said to them, ‘Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great.’”

The dispute over greatness and smallness that came in among the disciples

Jesus taught His disciples, *“The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men” (Luke 9:44)*. But in the text that follows appear disciples who are concerned with a completely different matter. *“A dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest” (Luke 9:46)*. While the Lord was speaking of the way on which He would humble Himself for sinners, a dispute arose among the disciples as to who was the greater person. Just because they were following the same Lord,

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it did not mean that even their hearts in looking at one another had already been made right.

When we begin to weigh greatness and smallness, the ways we differ from one another catch our eyes before the grace we received together. We can think about who followed longer, who did more work, and who served the Lord more closely. The text does not say in detail by what standard the disciples disputed. But from the fact alone that they disputed over who was greatest, we can know that their hearts were drawn to their positions relative to one another rather than to the will of the Lord.

We, too, can harbor such a heart while believing in the same gospel. As the work we have labored at in the church increases, it is not only our thankful heart that deepens; sometimes the thought that we ought to be recognized also grows along with it. When we see someone else being praised, rather than rejoicing at that person's labor, we can feel that our own labor has been forgotten. Then the people serving together with us begin to look not like fellow workers but like people who threaten our own position.

At such a time, rather than calculating again who actually did more, we must look back on why we began that work and where our hearts are now heading. We received the remission of sins by the grace of the Lord, and we serve together so that others, too, may believe that gospel. If exalting our own name becomes the goal, we lose the meaning of the work we were first entrusted with; therefore, we must remember the grace we received from the Lord and look on the labor of others, too, with thankfulness.

The little child who stood by Jesus, who knows the heart

The dispute of the disciples was not hidden from Jesus. *"Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him" (Luke 9:47)*. The Lord did not only hear the words they exchanged with their mouths, but knew even their disputing within their hearts. And He did not respond to their dispute over position by deciding for them who would be first. By taking a little child and setting him by His side, He showed the disciples, who wanted to be acknowledged as great, whom they should look to.

The little child was not someone who would be regarded as a strong rival in the disciples' dispute. The Lord set that very child in the middle and spoke the word about who is great. Even while the disciples were weighing who was the more important person, the Lord treasured one person whom they could easily pass by. In this scene, the heart of the Lord in treating people and the heart of the disciples who wanted to raise their own positions are revealed.

When we hear this word, we must know that our own hearts, too, are laid bare before the Lord. If, even while speaking polite words outwardly or giving help, we have a heart that wants to confirm that the other person is smaller than we are, we must first turn back from that very thought with which we treat our brother. Because the Lord knows even such a heart, we must not stop at keeping up appearances but must honestly look back on what we are seeking.

Admitting the wrong in our hearts does not mean that the way for us to come to the Lord disappears. When we do not hide our self-exaltation but bring it out before the word, we come to know again how much we need the grace of the Lord. A person

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who insists that his heart is already completely humble finds it hard to learn what he must correct. But if we acknowledge ourselves just as the Lord knows us, we can receive His teaching and change even our attitude in treating people.

Receiving the little one in the name of the Lord

After setting the little child by His side, Jesus spoke of how that child should be treated. *"Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me" (Luke 9:48)*. Receiving a little child in the name of the Lord does not end as a trivial kindness. Jesus connected that act with receiving Himself, and extended it even to receiving the Father who sent Him.

What is important here is the name of the Lord. It is not showing off one's own generosity while dealing with the little one, but believing who Jesus is and receiving that person according to His will. The One we exalt is the Son of God, who came to save sinners. If, while believing in Him, we still receive people by sorting them only by status and usefulness, we come to have an attitude that runs contrary to the grace the Lord has bestowed on us.

We were originally sinners who could not stand before God with our own righteousness. The Lord did not accept us because we had much to put forward; He bore our sins Himself and saved us. Seeing Jesus, who had received baptism from him, John testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*. This is because with that baptism the sin of the whole world, including all the sins of our lifetime, was passed on to Jesus once and for all. Bearing that sin, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross and received in our place

the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and became our Savior.

Believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit means receiving the remission of sins by relying on the righteousness of such a Lord. Since we were not saved because we were better than others, even after being saved we have no grounds to boast of our superiority. We are all people who have received grace from the same Savior. If we accept this fact in our hearts, rather than regarding those who still have much to learn and who ask for help as bothersome, we come to welcome them as people with whom we will enjoy grace together.

Receiving in the name of the Lord appears in small attitudes in our daily lives. Helping someone who does not know the word well to understand, without hastily ignoring him when he asks, and making room for a person who is not yet familiar with us to join in when he comes to a meeting—these are connected with it. We must not pour our attention only on people who stand out, but must also look after the circumstances of those who say little. Such service is not a means of exalting ourselves but fruit that comes from a heart that believes in the Savior, who received us.

The standard of the Lord that the least is great

After speaking of receiving a little child, Jesus gave the answer to the matter the disciples had been disputing. *"He who is least among you all will be great" (Luke 9:48)*. The great person before the Lord is not someone who secures his own position by lowering others. The person who does not put himself forward but receives the word of the Lord, and who receives even the little one in the name of the Lord, is the person who lives according to the will of the Lord.

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Regarding oneself as small is not saying that one has no value at all. We, whom the Lord saved by shedding His blood, are precious people to Him. It is just knowing that the basis of that preciousness does not lie in one's own merit or in a position higher than others. If we know the fact that we stand by the grace of the Lord, then even while working hard at what we have been entrusted with, we do not try to dominate others with that labor.

The more responsibility someone has been entrusted with in the church, the more he must remember this word. Responsibility is not the right to push through one's own words more, but a place for watching over the members more carefully so that they grow in the word. Rather than looking down on someone who asks about what he does not know, we must check the word together with him; and rather than comparing someone who has made a mistake with ourselves, we must help him to act rightly again. Letting others also enjoy the grace one has learned first is the part of the person who serves ahead of others.

Also, we must not turn even humbling ourselves into a calculation for being exalted. The heart that thinks we will be recognized more later if we look humble is still staying in its own position. When we look at what kind of person the Lord set by His side, our attention can move from our own evaluation to that person's needs. Even if it is service that no one recognizes, if it accords with the will of the Lord, we have reason to do it with joy.

The disciples disputed over who was great, but Jesus set a little child by His side. We, too, must lay down the heart that measures each other's greatness and together receive the people whom the Lord receives. Remembering the grace that saved us, we must listen to the words of the little members and take care of their needs. When we receive people in the name of the Lord in this way, we will learn the joy of serving according to the

heart of the Lord rather than the pleasure of becoming higher than others. ✉

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Sermon 12 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord said not to forbid the man whom John had forbidden

< Luke 9:49–50 >

"Now John answered and said, 'Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us.' But Jesus said to him, 'Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side.'"

John, who saw a man calling on the name of the Lord

After Jesus had said, *"Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me" (Luke 9:48)*, John reported one matter. It was that they had seen a man casting out demons in the name of Jesus, though he did not go about with the disciples. *"Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name" (Luke 9:49)*. There was the name of the Lord in what that man did, but what weighed first on the hearts of the disciples was the fact that he was not with them.

John did not merely look on at that matter quietly. He told the Lord that they had forbidden what that man was doing for the reason that he did not follow with them. Since the disciples

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were people who at the beginning of this chapter had received *"power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases" (Luke 9:1)*, they may have thought that this authority belonged to them alone. But even if people have a heart that values the name of the Lord, they cannot regard that name as if it were their own exclusive possession. How Jesus treats each person must be judged by listening to the words of Jesus. People cannot say that they know all the will of the Lord by the standard alone of whether someone is close to them.

This matter, together with the figure of the disciples who had just been disputing over who was greatest, makes us look back on our hearts. People can be caught up not only in the thought of raising their own position but also in the thought that only the group to which they belong must be recognized as right. Because we can, while saying that we work for the name of the Lord, actually try to protect the influence of our own side, we must honestly examine before the word what we are trying to protect.

We, too, can have a wary heart first when we meet people with whom we are not familiar. It is easy to reach a conclusion by looking only at someone's background or the people he is with, even before hearing what word he believes. But if we regard even a person who asks questions in order to know Jesus as an enemy from the start, we ourselves narrow the way to explain the gospel to him. A person who serves the will of the Lord must regard helping the other person to hear the word as more important than the speed of his own judgment.

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A judgment made only for the reason that he did not follow with them

The reason John gave for forbidding him was clear. *"We forbade him because he does not follow with us" (Luke 9:49)*. He did not say that the man had slandered Jesus or had hindered the work of the Lord. He gave as the reason the fact that the man did not go about with them. We must first examine the reason the text gives, and we must not add that we know that man's inner heart, which does not appear in the Scriptures, or all the content of his faith.

Being together is a precious thing. It is fitting to the will of the Lord for saints who believe in the same gospel to serve with their hearts united. Even so, we must not turn that precious unity into the claim that a person has a relationship with the Lord only if he comes into our own group. If we regard the authority of the Lord and the bounds of our gathering as the same without any distinction, we may try to block even what the Lord permits. It is the church that follows the Lord; it is not that the Lord is confined within our judgment.

Also, there are times when we do not fully know why someone is not with us. He may not yet have heard the gospel in detail, or he may be in the middle of looking into what we believe. If, without asking about the other person's circumstances, we think that everyone who does not follow us is an adversary, we lose the place for teaching and waiting. Discernment in faith is necessary, but we cannot call even the attitude of asserting what we do not know as though we knew it discernment.

Therefore, when we meet people, we must first listen to what they actually say and what they know. We must not hastily treat a question that wonders about the gospel and words that try to

deny the gospel as the same thing. We must not regard someone's heart as hostile just because his words are clumsy, but must clarify for him the parts he has not understood. If we have received grace first, it is fitting to give others, too, the opportunity to learn that word of grace.

The attitude to be corrected before the word that says not to forbid him

Jesus' answer was not a word approving the disciples' action as right just as it was. *"Jesus said to him, 'Do not forbid him'" (Luke 9:50)*. John reported that they had forbidden him, but the Lord said not to forbid him. What the disciples had to do before this word was not to defend their action to the end, but to correct their attitude according to the will of the Lord. This is because not every action becomes right only for the reason that one did it zealously.

We, too, sometimes speak with a heart that it is for the gospel, yet those words set up a wall before people beyond what is necessary. When we realize this, we must not merely insist that our original intention was good. We must listen again to what the Lord wants and change our attitude toward the people we treated hastily. Admitting our fault is not lowering the authority of the gospel but exalting the word of the Lord above our own judgment.

That said, we must not blur the content of salvation for the reason that we accept people. Because we can believe in Jesus as the Savior only when we clearly know what work He accomplished, we cannot speak of His name by substituting for it a vague goodwill or religious zeal. An attitude that is not hostile to others and the work of preaching the truth accurately

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do not conflict with each other. Rather, the more we value the other person, the more devotedly we must explain the salvation he must believe, so that he looks not at our feelings but at the work of the Lord.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit that we are to preach is the fact of the salvation that Jesus accomplished. By receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, the Lord bore the sin of the whole world on His own body once and for all, and that sin of the world includes all the sins we commit throughout our lifetime. The Lord, who bore that sin, hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and thereby received in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive. And He rose again from death and saved us from sin and death. Those who believe in this work receive the remission of sins not by their own deeds but by the righteousness of the Savior.

Just because we believed that gospel first does not mean that we become the masters of salvation. We, too, were sinners, and we received grace by hearing through the word and believing the sins the Lord bore and the righteousness He accomplished. Therefore, when we deal with people who do not know the gospel, there is no reason to show our superiority. Our task is to let such a person know that the Lord bore his sins, too, and to help him believe in the salvation of Jesus. What must be firm is the truth of salvation, and what must be patiently cared for is the person who hears that truth.

Give those who do not oppose you the opportunity to hear the word

Jesus went on to speak of the reason He had said not to forbid him. *"He who is not against us is on our side" (Luke 9:50)*. The

disciples made much of the reason that the man did not go about with them, but the Lord spoke of the fact that he was not opposing them. If we do not hear this difference, we will always recognize only people who move in the same way as ourselves. The word of the Lord leads us out of such a narrow judgment.

When we preach the gospel today, too, there are people who grasp the meaning on hearing it for the first time and people who ask questions while confirming the word several times, so we cannot expect everyone to understand at the same pace. If someone does not oppose but is willing to listen, there is no reason to push him away impatiently because he does not immediately make the confession we expected. We must explain again the word he needs, help him to check the Scriptures for himself, and wait for his heart to accept the truth.

Waiting does not mean saying that whatever one believes is all the same. It is giving a person who does not yet know time to learn, and helping the content of the gospel become clearer through that time. If we avoid questions or cover up the differences, we cannot help true faith. But even when we speak of the differences, we must speak with a heart that wants to let the other person know the Savior rather than a heart that wants to win over him. Our words must not end in winning an argument but must help him hear the word of salvation.

Between John's report and the Lord's answer, we, too, can learn what our own attitude should be. Rather than boasting of the fact that we belong to a familiar group, we must examine by whose word we treat people. We must not block, by our own standards, the place the Lord tells us not to block. While clearly preaching the gospel we have received, we must patiently help those who want to listen. When we do so, we will be freed from the impatience of trying to make people follow us and will render the service of leading people to the Savior. ✉

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Sermon 13 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, who was rejected, went to another village instead of fire

< Luke 9:51–56 >

“Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, ‘Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?’ But He turned and rebuked them, and said, ‘You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.’ And they went to another village.”

The will He firmly set on going up to Jerusalem

That Jesus set His course toward Jerusalem was not simply a matter of visiting another town. Luke records that journey in connection with the appointed time for the Lord to be received up. *“Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem”*

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(Luke 9:51). The Lord did not move without knowing what He was going to undergo. He had already told His disciples of His suffering, death, and resurrection, and now He firmly resolved to go toward Jerusalem, where He would accomplish that work of salvation.

On the Lord's way to the glory of the ascension, there was the Cross. The Lord did not come for the sole purpose of being respected by people and staying in comfort. He came to rescue us, who were under sin, and lead us to God, and for that work He chose the way of giving up His own body. What led the Lord's steps was not seeking out the places people like, but accomplishing the will of the Father.

When we think about this resolve, we can see with how clear a will the salvation we believe in was accomplished. Jesus is not One who only had the heart to help sinners and then turned back when the difficulties grew. After receiving baptism from John and having the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all, He went forward toward the Cross with the body in which He bore that sin. Because all the sins we would commit throughout our lives were included in that sin of the world, the Lord's steps were the way of receiving the judgment for our sins in our place.

At last the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross and rose again from death, and so completed salvation. Our resolve weakens at times, but because the Savior, who bore sin and received that judgment to the end, accomplished salvation, we believe in Him and are assured of the remission of sins. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit relies on the work the Lord accomplished in this way. The Lord's firm will toward Jerusalem becomes a ground of salvation more solid than our weak hearts.

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The village that did not receive the way of the Lord

"Sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him" (Luke 9:52). But the people of that village did not receive the Lord. *"But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:53)*. The text connects that rejection with the Lord's going to Jerusalem. This village did not receive the way of the Lord, who was going to Jerusalem.

Being rejected did not mean that the direction in which the Lord was going was wrong. We cannot judge that it is the will of God if people welcome us and that it is not His will if opposition arises. Jesus was going to Jerusalem to accomplish the work of salvation He had received from the Father. Even though there were people who did not receive that way, this could not erase the will of God to save sinners.

We, too, may experience rejection when we preach the gospel or try to live according to the word. Sometimes we speak with good intentions and the other person is made uncomfortable, and sometimes a person we expected would listen turns his back. At such times, it is not something to think unconditionally that we are right and only the other person is wrong. We must first examine whether our own words and attitude were proper. However, the mere fact that the gospel we preached properly was rejected does not mean that the truth of the gospel changes or that there is no longer any need to preach it.

What matters is where our hearts are directed after that. If our hearts are completely taken up with the person who rejected us, we come to forget even the mission we have received. If only the pride of not having persuaded the other person remains, our original intention of making the Lord's salvation known can turn into a contentious heart. Only when we remember what way the

Lord was going can we continue the work entrusted to us while accepting people's responses.

The zeal of the disciples who wanted to bring down fire

When James and John saw the rejection by the village, they asked Jesus one thing. *"And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?'" (Luke 9:54)*. The disciples thought of destroying with fire the people who did not receive the Lord. Even if they considered that they had a heart for the Lord, what they asked for was not thereby the will of the Lord. Jesus did not praise their proposal. *"But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of'" (Luke 9:55)*. Zeal that claimed to be for the Lord was, on the contrary, rebuked by the Lord.

Because we can put the Lord's name forward while actually trying to act out our own anger, we must examine, along with the claim of whom it is for, what we are actually trying to do. The One who was rejected was Jesus, yet the disciples thought about how to destroy those people. The Lord was going forward on the way where He Himself would die in order to save sinners, but the hearts of the disciples leaned toward getting rid of the people who did not receive them.

We must guard against this kind of heart also when we serve the gospel. When the other person refuses the word, we should grieve, but we must not want to prove that our words were right by seeing him perish. Because the fact that Jesus bore sin and accomplished salvation is the ground of the gospel, it is not that

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the truth is confirmed to be right only when we see the other person suffer. We are people who are to preach that fact, not people who are to execute judgment on others out of our own feelings.

A person who has received the Lord's rebuke cannot boast only of the size of his zeal, but must first examine whether the direction of that zeal accords with the will of the Lord, who saves sinners. If we treasure the gospel, we must also treasure the fact that the gospel is the news that gives life to sinners. It is necessary to call sin sin and to make clear the responsibility for rejection, but that does not make a heart that hates and would harm the other person legitimate. Our attitude in preaching the word must also follow the will of the Lord, who fulfilled that word.

Follow the Lord, who went to another village together with them

After rebuking the disciples, the Lord went with them to another village. *"'For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.' And they went to another village" (Luke 9:56)*. Instead of proving His power by destroying the people who had rejected Him, He continued walking the way He had been going. The response of one village could not stop the whole work of salvation, and the Lord's steps toward another village show that His resolve did not change even in the face of rejection.

The responsibility for not receiving Jesus remained as it was, but the Lord did not forget the will of the Father by being tied up in a quarrel on that spot. We, too, must not think, when we are rejected while preaching the gospel, that only continuing to

fight back is faithfulness. After we have clearly said what we have to say, there are also times when we preach the word to other people and continue the work entrusted to us.

When we move on in this way, we must take care that our hearts, too, do not harden into resentment. This is because we can say with our mouths that we are continuing the Lord's work while inwardly waiting for the other person to come to harm. We must remember the fact that we ourselves were also sinners and yet received grace from the Savior. If we believe the gospel that the Lord bore our sin even though He knew our rebellion and weakness, we can also have the heart that hopes that other people, too, will repent and believe in the Savior.

Because the Lord went with the disciples to another village, even the disciples who had been rebuked had a way to learn the Lord's steps again at His side and follow Him. We, too, do not need to give up all our service just because we have once judged wrongly. We have only to correct the wrong heart and go forward again in the direction in which the Lord is going. In order not to repeat the same judgment, we must keep the word in our hearts, and when we incline toward anger, we must also accept the exhortation of the members who serve together with us and examine our own attitude.

Jesus, who firmly resolved to go toward Jerusalem, did not stop on the way of salvation even in the face of rejection. We who believe in Him, too, must think first of the work the Lord has entrusted to us rather than of people's responses, so that we are not proud when we are welcomed and do not try to retaliate when we are rejected. Following the heart of the Savior, who gave us life, let us preach the gospel, and without being tied down by one person's opposition, let us preach the word of salvation to the next person as well. ✉

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Sermon 14 by Paul C. Jong

The condition of doing something first, put forward while saying one will follow

< Luke 9:57–62 >

“Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, ‘Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.’ Then He said to another, ‘Follow Me.’ But he said, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.’ And another also said, ‘Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.’”

The life He made plain in response to the words of following Him anywhere

When Jesus was going along the road, someone came forward and said to Him, *“I will follow You wherever You go”*

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(Luke 9:57). Judging from those words alone, it seems that he was fully prepared to follow the Lord. But Jesus did not immediately promise a comfortable future in reply to the words that he would follow Him. *"And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head'" (Luke 9:58)*. The Lord let him know what kind of way the way of following Him was. The person who would follow Him anywhere had first to examine whether what he expected and the way the Lord was going were the same.

The Son of Man refers to Jesus Himself, who came clothed in the body of a man. Although the Lord, who is God by nature, came to this earth to save sinners, He did not set His mind on securing a comfortable place to stay and good treatment among people. The word that foxes have holes and birds have nests but He Himself has nowhere to lay His head makes us look back on the heart that first hoped for the stability of life to be gained while following the Lord.

We may say that we follow the Lord and yet think first about what we will receive in return. We may expect that if we believe, we will be recognized by people, our difficulties will disappear, and our lives will become more comfortable than now. Then, when what we expected does not come about, we come to feel as if the reason to follow the Lord has disappeared as well. This is because we regarded what we wanted to obtain through Him as more important than who the Lord is.

Because Jesus did not hide the actual life that the person who follows Him will go through, we, too, must hear that word and examine what we expect as we follow Him. The Lord is the Savior from whom we can ask for what we need, but He is not One to be served as a means of fulfilling our own desires. We must have the heart that believes in the grace by which He saved

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us and wants to serve together in the work He intends. We must look back on how we are now receiving the word of the Lord.

What one considers one must do first, and the call of the Lord

To yet another person, Jesus said to follow Him first. *"Then He said to another, 'Follow Me.' But he said, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father'" (Luke 9:59)*. Burying one's father is a responsibility that is hard to treat lightly. That person did not say that he refused the Lord, but asked for permission to do that work first. But the Lord told him to let the dead bury their own dead and to preach the kingdom of God.

This word must not be read to mean that caring for one's family is altogether wrong. The Lord called him to follow, and we must examine the heart that keeps setting before that call the things it must do first. We do not know the circumstances of this man's household or how long the funeral would take. Rather than explaining the word of the Lord by adding customs that the Bible does not tell us, we must look at what the Lord clearly entrusted to him.

We, too, have many things we consider we must finish first. We may think that we will serve the gospel after our lives have become a little more settled, after we have obtained enough of what we need, after people have all come to understand. But the time when everything is arranged as we expect does not come easily. Since another worry arises when one thing is resolved, if we keep putting it off until then, we end up not actually following even while hearing the word of the Lord.

We must not abandon the responsibilities of life, but must think first of the will of the Lord even while bearing those

responsibilities. We can make the time and the heart to preach the gospel while caring for our families and working for our livelihood. Sometimes we must reduce the conveniences we want and receive the help of other members to bear the work entrusted to us. If we attach the condition that we will obey only after we have finished everything in our own way, it amounts to keeping in our own hands to the very end the right to decide whether to follow the Lord.

What He entrusted to the person who is to preach the kingdom of God

The Lord did not merely tell that person to stop what he had been doing before. *"Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God'" (Luke 9:60)*. He clearly taught for what purpose he was to follow. Preaching the kingdom of God is not a secondary matter that may be done in the spare time left over when there is nothing else to do. It is the work of making known to people under sin the salvation the Savior accomplished, and of serving so that they, too, become the people of God through faith.

To preach the kingdom of God, we must first know who the King of that kingdom is. Jesus is not merely one person who gives us help. He is God, who made us; the Savior, who saves us from sin; and the Lord, who will judge in the future. We who believe in Him are not people who remember only the fact that we have received the remission of sins and live as we please. We must also accept that the One who saved us is the King who will guide our lives.

That King did not demand only obedience from sinners without doing anything for them. Jesus, the King, Himself

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received baptism from John and had the sin of all mankind passed on to Him once and for all, and all the sins of our whole lives are included in it. The Lord bore that sin and hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died, and so received in our place the judgment we were to receive. And He rose again from death and saved us, who had been bound by sin and death. The person who preaches the kingdom of God must preach the salvation that the Lord, the King, accomplished in this way.

The person who hears and believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not become one of the righteous people by his own efforts, but receives the remission of sins by believing in the work in which the Lord bore sin and received judgment. The baptism by which He received the sin of the world, the Cross on which He paid the price of that sin, and the resurrection by which He rose again form one salvation. The person who has become one of the people of God through this salvation testifies of the grace the King bestowed rather than exalting his own merit. Making it known to those who do not yet know that fact has been entrusted to us.

The dead of whom the Lord spoke can hold a funeral for the flesh, but cannot give new life to a soul by that work. Because a soul dead in sin must hear and believe the gospel of the Savior in order to live, the Lord entrusted the work of the kingdom of God to the person He called, so that he would preach the word of salvation by which that life is obtained. We must discern between the work that other people can do in our place and the work that we, who know the gospel, must serve in. We must not pass by the opportunity to preach the word of life because we are continually putting only our own circumstances in order.

If you have taken hold of the plow, let the direction of your heart, too, face forward

The third person said, *"Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house" (Luke 9:61)*. Then Jesus taught the direction of his heart through the image of a person who has taken hold of the plow. *"But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God'" (Luke 9:62)*. The person who plows a field must, along with taking hold of the plow with his hands, also watch the direction in which he must go. If he looks back and his heart stays elsewhere, it is hard for him to do properly the work of going forward. It means that the words of following the Lord and the actual direction of the heart must go together.

This word is not a rule that makes the act itself of saying goodbye to one's family evil, but a word that awakens the heart that keeps putting first what it does not want to let go of, even while saying it follows the Lord. If we attach a different condition every time the Lord calls, and look only to the benefits we used to enjoy before even while doing the work entrusted to us, our hearts become divided. Even if our hands hold on to the work of the Lord, if our hearts are directed toward something else, it is hard to do that work with joy for long.

We, too, though we are already serving the gospel, can look back. We may think that it might be more comfortable to spend all our time and wealth on ourselves as we did before. We must not give up on ourselves merely because such a thought occurred to us, but must examine again what is fitting for the grace we received from the Lord. When we remember what the Savior accomplished for us, we no longer see our present labor merely as lost time. We come to know that it is precious work that helps other souls believe in the same salvation.

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The conversations He had with the three people make us look back on ourselves: what we expect as we follow, what we put first, and in what direction our hearts are directed. The Lord has entrusted us with the work of following Him and preaching the kingdom of God. We must not put it off until all conditions become favorable, but must act in faith, starting with the service we can manage today. Instead of attaching the condition of doing something first to the words of following, let us look to the King who saved us and give our hearts together to the work He has entrusted to us. ✉

The condition of doing something first,
put forward while saying one will follow

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CHAPTER

10

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Preach the gospel according to the will with which He sent out the seventy

< Luke 10:1–16 >

“After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, ‘The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. But whatever house you enter, first say, “Peace to this house.” And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. And heal the sick there, and say to them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.” But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, “The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the

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kingdom of God has come near you." But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades. He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.'"

The way to go forward while asking the Lord of the harvest

When we try to preach the gospel, the first thing that comes to our minds is what and how much we must have ready. If we think that we must have eloquence enough to move people's hearts and comfortable circumstances, it becomes hard to take the first step while we look at our insufficient selves. But Jesus appointed the seventy and sent them ahead to the places where He Himself was about to go. They began the Lord's work not because they had finished all the preparations by themselves, but because the Lord gave them the word to preach and the places to go. When we look into this sending, we can know what we, who are insufficient, must rely on to preach the gospel.

First, the Lord spoke this word: *"Then He said to them, 'The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest'" (Luke 10:2)*. Because the souls who must hear the word of salvation are many but the laborers who will preach the word to

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them are few, the disciples had to ask God, the Lord of the harvest, to send out laborers. It means that they were not to stop at noticing people's need, but to pray to God, who would meet that need. We, too, must not merely measure the size of the work we can do alone, but must ask the Lord to raise up people who will preach the gospel together with us.

But after the word telling them to pray, the command to go follows. Since the Lord sent the disciples themselves, who knew the fact that laborers were needed, we cannot replace prayer with merely waiting for someone else to come. His sending them two by two also did not mean that each was to display his own strength alone, but that He had them do the Lord's work united with one another. Even if we are weak like lambs going in among wolves, we can walk together while asking for help from the Lord, who sends us.

Valuing the souls He has entrusted to us more than hospitality

The command not to carry a money bag, a knapsack, or sandals shows where the evangelist's heart must be directed. This is because if we trust what we have more than the Lord, when it runs short, our heart to preach the gospel also wavers. Preparing many things without relying on God cannot save people from sin. The word not to greet anyone along the road also makes us not forget the purpose for which the Lord sent us and keep our hearts on the work He has entrusted to us. This is because it is common for an evangelist, afraid that the other person may not listen, to go round and round with polite pleasantries and fail to bring up the very words he wants to say. What we need is not to stop at widening our relationships with

people, but to ask whether that person has received the remission of sins and to bring up and preach the main point, the word of salvation.

The Lord said that whatever house we enter, we are first to wish peace on it. The evangelist is not a person who visits with the heart of wanting his own words to be recognized, but a person who visits hoping that the peace of God will come upon that house. Since He said that even if the other person does not accept that peace, the peace that was wished returns to the evangelist, we have no reason to close our hearts from the start for fear of rejection. Rather than worrying about people's reactions, we must pray that God will open their hearts and preach the word sincerely.

The Lord also taught how they should stay in that house. *"Remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house" (Luke 10:7)*. Receiving and eating what is given is different from demanding a price for having preached the gospel. Only when we gratefully receive what the Lord feeds us and yet do not move about in search of better hospitality can we steadily preach the word to the souls entrusted to us. We must also refrain from hastily giving up on a person who has not yet heard enough. This is because the evangelist's concern must lie in that person's hearing and believing the truth of salvation rather than in his own comfort.

The peace of the kingdom of God preached through the remission of sins

The news Jesus commanded is clear. *"Heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'"*

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(Luke 10:9). Since the power to heal the sick also belongs to God, the disciples could not put forward the healing of the sick as their own ability. They had to help people and preach the kingdom of God, relying on the power of the Lord. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that we preach today is also the word that makes known the salvation of God, which gives life to souls oppressed because of sin. If we let people hear only words that comfort their hearts for a moment and leave the problem of sin as it is, we have failed to preach the most necessary news to those who will stand before God.

The reason we need peace is not only that there are hardships in our lives. Because we cannot escape the judgment for our sin if we stand before God while still having sin, only when that problem is solved can we also enjoy peace with God. Since we cannot remove sin with our good deeds and religious zeal, we must know the work the Savior has accomplished. Jesus, though He is the sinless Son of God, came to this earth in the body of a man to save us sinners.

When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, He had the sin of the world of all mankind passed on to Him once and for all. Since the sins we have committed as we have lived, our present sins, and even the sins we will commit throughout the rest of our lives are included in that sin of the world, no sin remains outside what the Lord has borne. The Lord, bearing the sin that had been passed on to Him in this way, received the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. We lay down the thought of trying to make ourselves look more righteous, and receive the remission of sins by believing in Jesus, who accomplished salvation through His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection. The peace the evangelist is to deliver is based precisely on this salvation. If we

hide this content in order to please people's feelings, we cannot deliver true peace to them.

The responsibility that comes with the place of hearing the word

Since the judgment of God does not disappear just because people refuse, the disciples had to make known the fact that the kingdom of God had come near even in the cities where they were not received. The life of each one of us also has an end, and after that comes the time to stand before God. Therefore, we must not hear this word only as something that will happen to the world in the distant future, but must receive it as the news of salvation that we ourselves need now. The command to wipe off the dust of their feet also cannot be used as meaning to vent a heart that has been personally insulted. The evangelist must convey the Lord's warning and leave the judgment to God.

The Lord said that if the mighty works done in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented already. It is a warning that having encountered grace closely and often does not in itself guarantee salvation, and that it is necessary to receive that word and turn and believe. *"It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you" (Luke 10:14)*. Capernaum, too, tried to exalt itself, but heard the word that it would be brought down to Hades. Because our being familiar with the word and our entrusting our hearts to that word are different, if we feel at ease merely because of the fact that we have heard much, we come to hear this warning as someone else's affair. We must look back on whether we know how the Lord removed our sins and believe it in our hearts.

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Finally, Jesus said, *"He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me" (Luke 10:16)*. The words of the evangelist carry weight because he preaches the word of salvation that the Lord has entrusted to him. Therefore, the one who preaches must not put his own thoughts first but must faithfully preach the word he has received, and the one who hears must not regard that word lightly for the reason that the evangelist looks weak. This is because whatever the one who preaches may be like, what he preaches is the word of God. What we must rely on is not ample preparation or people's recognition, but the Lord, who saves us and sends us. Asking Him for help, let us preach the salvation the Lord has accomplished to those who have lost peace because of sin. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

What is there to rejoice over more than the submission of the demons?

< Luke 10:17–20 >

“Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.’”

The submission that took place in the Lord’s name

When good results appear in the work we have labored over, our hearts are glad. When someone accepts the word we have long been preaching, or when work we have been entrusted with together goes well, we think of it and gain strength. But on days when the visible results are few, our joy also disappears along with them, and it is easy to look at other people’s work and regard ourselves as insignificant. Then should the joy of the saints change according to the size of the work accomplished

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today? Let us examine, from the report the seventy brought back and from the words Jesus gave them, what we should rejoice in.

"Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name'" (Luke 10:17). The people Jesus had sent rejoiced because something astonishing had actually happened to them. Since even the demons had submitted before them, they had experienced the power of the Lord, which they had not known before they went out to preach the gospel. In their report there are words that show through whom this came about. They said that it had been accomplished in the Lord's name. The demons did not retreat because those who had been sent were outstandingly skillful; rather, they submitted before the authority of Jesus, who had sent them.

We, too, when we serve the Lord and see fruit, must remember the One who gave that fruit. When someone comes to hear and believe the gospel, we can rejoice together, but we must not think that the power that saved that person lay in the evangelist's skill with words. What saves sinners is the salvation Jesus has accomplished, and we are people who preach that fact. Therefore, when fruit appears, instead of exalting ourselves, we can give thanks to the Lord, who has worked even through us, who are weak.

The authority of the Lord, who is greater than Satan

Let us look at the word with which the Lord answered the disciples' report. *"And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven'" (Luke 10:18)*. The disciples reported the submission of the demons they had encountered, but Jesus said that He had seen Satan fall. It was an astonishing experience

for them, but the Lord is the One who knows what the power of evil spirits is like. It was not through what the disciples reported that day that He first came to know of Satan's existence or power. The Lord, who sent them, is not One who is under the power of Satan, and Satan, too, cannot keep his position before Him.

As we hear this word, what we should pay attention to is not the mysterious phenomena of evil spirits but Jesus, who is greater than they are. If we pursue only the astonishing things before our eyes, our hearts are captured by the person who performs them, and it is easy to forget what the Lord has given us. Even if we hope for illnesses to be healed or difficult problems to be solved, we cannot think that such things are the same as the salvation that removes sin. Even a person whose body has become healthy must have the problem of his own sin solved before the Lord. The Lord is teaching the disciples, who had experienced power, precisely the ground for a joy deeper than that.

The evangelist who relies on the authority He has given

Jesus made even clearer where what the disciples had experienced came from. *"Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19)*. Here, the One who gave the authority is Jesus, and those who received it are the disciples. Since it was not power that the disciples had produced by themselves, they had no reason to boast of that power as if it were their own possession. They could do the work entrusted to them because the One who sent them gave them authority and protected them. The Lord has also first

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made us receive the remission of sins and has given the Holy Spirit into our hearts as its guarantee, and the authority by which we can preach the gospel without fearing the power of the enemy comes from this Holy Spirit.

This word gives an evangelist who stands in fear a reason to rely on the Lord. Even if we meet the enemy's hindrance on the path of preaching the gospel, there is no need to retreat while comparing only our own strength with that of our opponent. We must know what kind of One the Lord who sends us is, and ask Him for help. The word that no one will hurt us is a promise given in the place where we do the work He has entrusted to us. The disciples were not sent to show off authority but were sent to preach the news that the kingdom of God had come near. If it is authority given for the work entrusted to us, the life that relies on that authority must also be directed toward preaching the word entrusted to us.

When we serve the gospel together, too, there is no need to weigh whether we have greater power than others. The work each of us has been entrusted with is different, and the fruit that is visible is also different, but the One who must be preached through all that work is the same Jesus. If we sit down in discouragement because we have been entrusted with small work, or exalt ourselves because we have been entrusted with great work, we come to look at ourselves instead of looking at the One who gave it. When we, relying on the grace of the Lord, fulfill the work entrusted to us, we can also receive with thanksgiving, together with them, the fruit that other members have gained.

The joy of names written in heaven

After the word that He had given them authority, the Lord made known where the disciples' joy should rest. *"Nevertheless 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)*. It means that they should value the fact that they themselves had become those who belong to God more than the submission of the demons. Since having one's name written in heaven means having been moved from the place where one would be judged according to one's works to the Book of Life, one cannot judge one's own salvation merely by the experience of having performed some work of power. That blessing is not something a person obtains by performing works of power, but something he receives by faith—the remission of sins that the Lord gives.

If we look for the grounds on which we have received the remission of sins in the number of times we have preached the gospel or in the merit of our service, only insufficiency always remains. A sinner cannot pile up his own works to prepare the qualification to stand before God. That is why Jesus came to this earth to save such people as us, and by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, at the Jordan River at the age of thirty, He bore all the sins of the world on His own body. John, who gave the baptism, saw Jesus and testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. The sins of the past, present, and future that we commit throughout our lives are also included in the sin of the world that was passed on to Him at that time. With His body, on which He bore that sin, the Lord hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and thus received in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and

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gave us new life. Because the Lord removed our sins in this way through His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection, the names of those who believe this are written in heaven, and that joy does not come from counting one's own merits but from believing this salvation with the heart.

The word telling us to rejoice because our names are written in heaven does not mean that we should not feel sorrow even when we meet sorrowful things. It means that even while going through things that bring tears, we should not forget the grace of the Lord, who saved us. Because the work of the Lord, who bore sin, does not change even when our circumstances change, we think of the blessing of salvation that lies beyond our immediate situation and gain strength again.

Because we have received this grace, instead of working to obtain the qualification to be saved, we serve the gospel while giving thanks for the salvation He has already given us. Even on days when fruit is not visible, the sins the Lord has removed do not remain again according to our performance. If we have seen our insufficiency, we should acknowledge it and correct it before the word, but we must not change even the grounds of our salvation into our own works. Even on days when the results of our work are few, as we considered at the beginning, we have a reason to rejoice. Giving thanks to the Lord, who rescued us from all sins and made us those who belong to heaven, let us preach the word we have received to those who do not yet know that salvation. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The blessing of seeing and hearing the salvation He revealed to little children

< Luke 10:21–24 >

“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.’ Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, ‘Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it.’”

The place to lay down the heart that thinks itself wise

When we come across a part we do not understand while hearing the word, we may wonder whether we do not know God well because we have learned too little. Conversely, there are also times when we think there is no need to hear more because

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we have learned for a long time. But knowing much of the Bible and believing the salvation God has revealed do not automatically become the same thing. Only when we know to whom the Lord reveals salvation can we neither draw back because we know little nor push the word away on the grounds that we know.

Let us look at the words Jesus spoke to the Father, rejoicing, at the time when the seventy returned. *"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight'" (Luke 10:21)*. The Lord rejoiced in the Spirit because the Father had revealed salvation to little children. Because the Father's will is fulfilled in people who do not know God coming to know that grace and believe, the Son also rejoiced in that work and gave thanks. People think highly of those who are equipped with wisdom and ability, but the Father has made His grace known to those who do not boast of their own wisdom and who receive the word.

Here, being like a little child does not mean following other people's words without any thought. It is the heart that acknowledges the fact that we cannot remove sin by our own strength and believes what the Lord has done just as His word says. Likewise, the phrase about being wise and prudent is not a word that condemns gaining learning or thinking itself as wrong. It makes us look back on the attitude of measuring even what God has done with the heart that thinks one's own judgment is right, and of not accepting salvation for the reason that it does not fit one's own thoughts. Even a person who has learned much must learn before the Lord, and even a person who has learned little can believe the salvation the Lord has shown. What we need is the heart to hear the word instead of setting up our own

wisdom as the standard of salvation. Therefore, we must also look the other way around at who is really wise. The world calls it wisdom to follow the side that many people believe in, but the Bible says, *"It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21)*. A person who believes the word of God as it is, even though he looks foolish, is truly a wise person.

The love of the Father that we have come to know through the Son

The grace revealed to little children is not a religious idea that people found by themselves. Jesus went on to say, *"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Luke 10:22)*. The Father has given all things to the Son, and the Son knows the Father fully. Therefore, when the Son reveals the Father, we come to know the Father. Revelation is not our making up God with our own thoughts, but receiving what the Lord has opened and shown us.

The will of the Father that we come to know through the Son is the love that seeks to save sinners. The Father did not leave us as we were in sin, but sent Jesus Christ. A sinner cannot remove the sins he has already committed by adding good deeds, nor can he escape the judgment of God by evaluating himself favorably. For such people as us, Jesus came to this earth, and when He received baptism from John the Baptist, all the sins of the world were passed on to the Lord once and for all. Our sins were also passed on at that time, and the sins of the past, present, and future that we commit throughout our lives were all passed on as well.

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Bearing the sin of the world He had borne in this way, the Lord hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and thus received in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death and saved us. Instead of vaguely imagining the love of the Father, we can know that love concretely through how the Son bore our sins and was judged.

Believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not convincing oneself while hoping one's heart will become comfortable. It is accepting the fact that Jesus received even our sins through His baptism, received the punishment for those sins in our place on the Cross, and gave us new life through His resurrection. In the word that He bore all the sins of the world, there is no reason to set aside only one's own sins as an exception. When we do not reduce the size of salvation by our own thoughts but believe it just as the Lord has accomplished it, we move from the place where we regarded God only as One to be avoided out of fear, and come to know Him as the Father who saved us. How great a grace it is that we can come before the Father, whom the Son has made known to us, with thanksgiving!

The blessing of eyes that recognize Jesus

After giving thanks to the Father, Jesus spoke to the disciples. *"Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, 'Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see'" (Luke 10:23)*. The disciples received the grace of hearing the words of Jesus Christ, the Savior sent by God, at His side and of directly seeing the works He did. However, since even among those who saw Jesus with their own eyes there were people who did not believe in Him as the Savior, being near Him alone cannot fully explain the blessing the disciples received. When the Lord revealed

Himself as the Savior, it was necessary to recognize Him and believe. In saying that the disciples' eyes were blessed, the Lord made them engrave in their hearts who the One they had met was.

Today we are not standing in that place where people looked directly at the physical body of Jesus. But because the words the Lord spoke were recorded and have been conveyed to us, we, too, have come to know who Jesus is and what He has done for us. If we know and believe the fact that the Son of God came to bear our sins, we have come to see even the grace of salvation with eyes that used to see only the circumstances of the world. Even a person who used to count only what he did not have comes to value the remission of sins and eternal life received from the Lord. Since it is written, *"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered" (Psalm 32:1)*, the blessed person in this age is not a person who has riches and power, but a person who believes that the Lord has borne all his sins and so will never again be judged for those sins. Even if our visible possessions are not many, the blessing of knowing the Savior who rescued us when we could not help but perish because of sin does not become smaller.

Therefore, when we preach the gospel, too, we must not conclude in advance from the outward appearance of the hearer whether he will be able to receive the word. A person who used to boast of his own wisdom may collapse in the face of sin and seek the Lord's salvation, and a person who listened quietly may receive that grace with his heart. Since it is the work of the Son revealing the Father, the evangelist must clearly preach what Jesus has done rather than exalting himself. Also, we who hear must examine what the word being preached is making known to us and receive it by faith.

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Today, when we hear the long-awaited salvation

The Lord explained the blessing the disciples received by comparing them with people who had waited for a long time. *"I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it" (Luke 10:24)*. The prophets and kings of earlier ages heard God's promises and waited for the Savior, but they did not directly hear the words of Jesus, who came in the flesh, as the disciples did. It was not because the disciples had higher learning or status than they that they enjoyed this blessing. It was the grace of meeting the Lord and hearing His word at the time when God fulfilled His promise.

We, too, cannot regard that opportunity lightly because we hear the word often. If, while hearing of the work of the Lord, who remitted sin, we skip past it as familiar words, we come to treat the salvation that many people desired to see and hear like an ordinary story. When we hear the word again, we must not think only of how many times we have already heard it, but must receive into our hearts the grace of Jesus revealed in that word. Even when we are discouraged because of the insufficiency revealed in ourselves, we must confirm again the extent of the sin the Lord has borne, believe that salvation, and gain the strength to follow the Lord.

The amount of learning, which we thought about at the beginning, does not determine the qualification to come to God. The heart that acknowledges what it does not know and seeks to learn is not something shameful, and the fact of having known for a long time is also not a reason that one need not hear more. Since the Son, who saved us, has shown the will of the Father, let us believe what He has done just as the word says. Giving thanks for the grace revealed to little children, let us value the

gospel we have received, and let us preach Jesus, who made the Father known, also to those who do not yet know that love. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord came near to us, who cannot live on our own

< Luke 10:25–37 >

“And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?’ So he answered and said, ‘“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.”’ And He said to him, ‘You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.’ But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ Then Jesus answered and said: ‘A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, “Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.” So which of these three do you think

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was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?' And he said, 'He who showed mercy on him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'"

Our true state, revealed before the right answer

A person who wants to show that he is right asks what more he must do to be approved. He stores up in his heart the good deeds he has already done, and calculates how much he must add to them to obtain eternal life. But what we must know first before God is not how much our deeds have piled up, but whether we can escape from sin by those deeds. The question of the lawyer who came to test Jesus makes us look back on what we are relying on as we try to stand before God.

When Jesus asked him what was written in the law, he answered that one must love God with all one's heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love one's neighbor as oneself. To that answer the Lord said, *"He said to him, 'You have answered rightly; do this and you will live'" (Luke 10:28)*. Answering rightly and living fully according to that word are different things. The Lord's telling him to do this was not a word acknowledging that he could do it, but a word intended to make him know, once he tried to do it, that he was a person who could not do it. The command to love is fitting, but our hearts, which seek our own benefit first and hate others, have their sin exposed before that complete demand. The fact that we have helped our neighbor a few times does not remove even the sin of having loved ourselves more than God.

Before this word, the lawyer, wanting to justify himself, asked again who his neighbor was, and in that question there was still the heart that wanted to put forward his own works. Before

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this question we must also examine our own hearts, which think that if only we decide whom we must love, we can fulfill that duty. We easily choose people worth loving, love them, and judge ourselves righteous by that. But to the person who chooses his objects and establishes his own righteousness, the Lord showed one man abandoned on the road.

The help needed by the man abandoned on the road

The thieves stripped the man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho of his clothing, beat him, and left him almost dead. That man had neither the strength to heal his own wounds nor the standing to put himself forward. Yet it is written, *"By chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side" (Luke 10:31)*, and the Levite also saw him and passed by on the other side. Having a religious position did not mean that the mercy to save that man was shown of its own accord.

In the face of sin, we too are like this man in that we cannot obtain life by our own strength. Because we inherited sin from Adam and commit sins with our hearts and deeds as we live, we cannot escape the judgment of God by putting forward our own righteousness. Even if we regret our wrongs and resolve to live good lives, we cannot remove by ourselves the price of the sins we have already committed. Since neither knowledge of the law nor a religious office can bear that sin in our place, we need a Savior who will rescue us from sin.

Giving actual help to our neighbor is precious. We must not regard lightly the labor of giving food to a person who has nothing to eat and caring for an injured person. However, even

the person who gives such help must receive the remission of sins before God, and he cannot wash away another person's sins with his own good deeds. It is not that the law of God is imperfect and so cannot give us life; it is that we, who are sinners, cannot fully accomplish its righteous demand. The Bible says, *"By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20)*. God gave the law not with the intent that we keep it and live, but with the intent of making us realize and know our sins before it. Therefore, a person who has come to know his own sin before the law must not lower the demand and defend himself, but must seek the righteousness the Savior has accomplished; and before boasting that he has helped others, he must admit that he, too, is a person who cannot live without the mercy of the Lord.

The Savior, who came near and bore sin

The Samaritan saw that man and had compassion, and it says, *"He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him" (Luke 10:34)*. His mercy did not stop at a heart that felt sorry from afar. Because he personally undertook the labor of bandaging the wounds, setting him on his own animal, and taking him away, the man abandoned on the road was able to receive care.

In the mercy of this Samaritan we come to see Jesus, who came to us, who could only die because of sin. The Son of God came clothed in human flesh and did not merely look at the plight of sinners from afar. Jesus, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, at the age of thirty went to John the Baptist at the Jordan River, said, "*Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all*

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righteousness" (Matthew 3:15), and by receiving baptism had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. In the sin of the world that the Lord bore are included all the sins we commit from the time we are born until we die—past, present, and future. It is not that He received only the few sins we have confessed and left the rest to us.

Because Jesus went to the Cross bearing the sin that had been passed on to Him through baptism in this way, the blood He shed there and His death are the sacrifice by which He received in our place the judgment for our sins. The Lord rose again from death and became our eternal Savior. When we think of the mercy that bandaged the wounds with oil and wine, we must look to this salvation the Lord accomplished with His baptism and blood. To believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not to offer our own tears or resolutions as the price of salvation, but to receive into our hearts Jesus Christ, who bore all our sins and received the judgment in this way.

The care entrusted to us and mercy toward our neighbors

The Samaritan did not abandon the injured man on the next day either. It says, *"On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you'" (Luke 10:35)*. He did not stop at bandaging the wounds but entrusted him to someone who would keep caring for him, and said that he himself would bear the cost as well. It is not that the man who fell among thieves received this care because he paid the price first or promised to repay after he recovered.

The care at the inn makes us think of the grace of the Lord, who looks after saved souls within the Church of God. Just as He entrusted the two denarii, the Lord has given the church the word of the Old Testament and the New Testament, so that the saved may learn the salvation that has already been accomplished and live by faith. To hold up weak saints with the word, pray together with them, and look after what they need is a precious service the Lord has entrusted to us. Since the worker who gives care is also a person who lives by the grace of the Lord, he cannot establish his own righteousness over the saints who receive help. We receive the care of the Lord together and serve one another. Just as the man entrusted to the inn kept receiving care and recovered, we too grow up through the word within the church. The life of faith is to receive the rebuke of the word and turn back from the wrong path, but not to pile up our own labor in order to obtain the remission of sins again, relying instead on the salvation that has already been accomplished.

At the end, when the Lord asked who had become the neighbor, the lawyer answered. *"And he said, 'He who showed mercy on him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise'" (Luke 10:37)*. Even after hearing this word, we must not turn away from the troubles of others while saying only that salvation is grace. If we remember the mercy we have received, we come to preach the Lord's salvation to souls suffering because of sin, and also to give needed help to the neighbors in difficulty before our eyes. That labor is not repaying the price of the remission of sins, but sharing the love we received first.

From the place where you were calculating what more you must do to make yourself look right, look now to the mercy of the Lord. What gave us life was not the good deeds we had piled up, but Jesus Christ, who came to sinners and accomplished salvation. We, who have obtained eternal life by relying on Him,

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have no reason to pick and choose our neighbors in order to prove our own rightness. Remembering the Lord, who had compassion on us, let us go near to the souls beside us today and show mercy. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus Christ, who showed us mercy

< Luke 10:25–37 >

"And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?' So he answered and said, '"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."' And He said to him, 'You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.' But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' Then Jesus answered and said: 'A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you." So which of these three do you think

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was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?' And he said, 'He who showed mercy on him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'"

"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

This is a word we know well. I intend to testify of the gospel centering on this word. *"And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'" (Luke 10:25)*. This is how he asked. Here a lawyer appears. It means a teacher of the law. It is easy to understand him as a person who kept the word of God well. There was a person who kept the commands of God—do this and do not do that—very well.

That man came to Jesus and asked, *"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25)*. When Jesus said, *"What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" (Luke 10:26)*, he 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)*. Jesus said, *"You have answered rightly; do this and you will live" (Luke 10:28)*. Then this teacher of the law, who claimed to practice the law well, this man who claimed to live well according to the law, asked again. It says, *"But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" (Luke 10:29)*.

Jesus gave him an answer. *"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and*

passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" (Luke 10:30–36). This is what He asked. When that teacher of the law, who was good at doing works, said, *"He who showed mercy on him" (Luke 10:37)*, Jesus said, *"Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37)*.

This is the conversation between the teacher of the law and Jesus. In this conversation we can realize an amazing truth. When he asked who his neighbor was, Jesus spoke by giving an example. A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among thieves, was robbed of his clothes, was beaten, and was abandoned almost dead. But although the priest came down and the Levite also came down, they all avoided him, and only the Samaritan treated the man who had fallen among thieves and was dying, took him to an inn, told the innkeeper to take good care of him, and even gave him money before he left. When He asked which of these three would be the neighbor, the answer is of course the Samaritan. To the man who asked who his neighbor was, the Lord was saying this: if you truly want to fulfill the duty of a neighbor, what kind of person must you become? It is only natural that you must become like the Samaritan, not like the priest or the Levite; so you also do likewise, and then you will live. In the end, this teacher of the law was a man who came before Jesus with the question of obtaining eternal life, putting forward that he was a person who

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did his works well, in order to try to compete with Jesus. “I hear that You have a great reputation and are quite a decent man. Let us have a contest, You and I. What must I do to obtain eternal life?” That is what he was saying. When He asked what was said in the law, he answered that it said such and such; and when he said that he had done all such things and asked who his neighbor was, He told him plainly that the person who helps someone in this kind of situation is his neighbor.

In the course of this conversation our Lord told us the way to obtain eternal life, and told us that, to obtain eternal life, we must receive salvation. Ordinary people read this part and their thoughts go only as far as trying to live good lives, but it is my heart’s wish that we would understand well what Jesus is truly saying, receive salvation before God, and obtain eternal life.

Does a person obtain eternal life by living a good life?

Ordinary people, like these lawyers, think that they do their works well, but there are few people who do that well. All religions teach in this way that people must do good works, must live good lives, and must live moral lives. Even a thief teaches his own children not to steal. A thief, too, teaches at least his own children to live upright and good lives. Murderers, thieves, and religious people all teach people to live good lives. But the question is whether, by living good lives in this way, one can become a person who can obtain eternal life. Some people say of themselves: Just live like me; if there is a kingdom of heaven, it is the place where people like me go; do I ask others to give me anything? Do I steal? Do I kill people? People like me, who cause no harm to others at all, will go to the kingdom of heaven.

There are many people who think of themselves as people who would live rightly even if there were no law. But the question is whether one can obtain eternal life by living that way.

The question is whether there is anyone who has truly helped a man who fell among thieves. A person who truly lays down his own life, abandons honor and everything, and helps—such a person is a truly good person and a person who does his works rightly; but as for not harming others while not helping them either, who cannot do that? That is something anyone does. Ordinary people think that they obtain eternal life because they think they live good lives. They say that psychologically everyone is like that. But Jesus did not say so. It means that, while telling him that if he truly claimed to do his works rightly, a person like the Samaritan is a good person, He spoke about eternal life, since the theme of this word is eternal life. The word says, *"Then Jesus answered and said: 'A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead'" (Luke 10:30)*. Jesus spoke by giving an example.

The most fearsome thief is sin

It means that the man who fell among thieves while going down from Jerusalem to Jericho after being born into this world is precisely our human life. We meet many thieves as we live in this world. We sometimes actually meet thieves holding knives, sometimes meet gangsters, sometimes meet very bad people, sometimes meet religious swindlers, and also meet sin. This sin is also a thief. Why do people die and come to ruin? Why can people not live happily, and why do things not go well for them? It is because of sin. Dear fellow believers, of all thieves the most

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fearsome thief is sin. If people commit sin and have sin in their hearts, they cannot live. When they commit sin it feels good, but once sin is in their hearts, they are tormented and a curse comes upon them. And if sin is in their hearts, their spiritual eyes are darkened, so that they cannot see anything, cannot know what lies ahead, and cannot know the future. As the Bible says, *"Because the darkness has blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:11)*, because sin blinds people's eyes, they know nothing. Some people say that, as they walk along the road, they see money rolling around, and whatever they look at, they know well that it will make money. But other people say that, no matter how intently they look, they cannot tell where the money is or what will make money.

Dear fellow believers, here a certain man fell among thieves and was half dead; people do not commit just one or two sins, but commit sin all their lives and die because of that sin. So people become covered in blood, are wounded in their souls and wounded in their bodies, and suffer. Why do people come to ruin? They come to ruin because of sin. So, to the question of what one must do to obtain eternal life, Jesus spoke this parable. A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among thieves, was robbed of everything by the thieves, and was abandoned half killed. Our human life is like that. From the time we are born into this world from our mother's womb, we are born with twelve kinds of sins, and as we live we meet those sins: we commit the sins that are within us, and we meet people who have sin and are wounded by them, and so we die. So when a person is covered in blood, his heart is wounded, and his soul is crushed because of sin, other people like the Levite or the priest all avoid him, but the Samaritan came and helped him. The Samaritan did not avoid him but had compassion, went near, poured on oil and wine, bandaged him, set him on his own

animal, took him to an inn, and took care of him. The question is who this Samaritan is. When we fall into sin and are dying, when we are wounded in our hearts because of sin and are dying, who is the One who will save us from sin? The One who saves us from sin is Jesus. Jesus saved us.

Jesus, the Samaritan who bandaged the wounds with oil and wine

It means that Jesus came to us, did not avoid us, and, when we were struggling and suffering because of sin, came and poured oil and wine on the wounds and bandaged them. What do this oil and wine speak of? They speak of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Our Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, came to this earth clothed in human flesh, bore our sins by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, and personally shed His blood and died on the Cross, and so saved us. How did Jesus heal and bandage the wounds of sin in the hearts of you and me? It means that He bandaged, healed, and treated the wounds of sin of you and me with the gospel of the truth of the water and the Spirit. The oil and the wine here speak of that. The oil speaks of the Holy Spirit of God, and the wine speaks of the salvation by which Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John, died on the Cross, rose again from death, and saved us.

Who is the One who has made you and me new? Who is the One who rescued us from the curse, when we could only die because of sin and could only go to hell? It is Jesus. When we fall into ruin, all people keep away from us, but Jesus came to us, healed our souls and bodies, brought us to the inn, gave money to the innkeeper, and said, *"Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you"*

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(Luke 10:35). The inn here speaks of the church, and the Samaritan speaks of Jesus. Who is the one who healed the wounds of the man who fell among thieves, bandaged them, brought him to the inn, gave money, and said to take care of this man? It is Jesus. It means that the One who truly loves you and me and heals the problem of sin and the wounds of the heart is Jesus. Jesus alone is the Savior who has truly saved you and me and the One who has completely healed us. When He asked who would be the neighbor of the man who fell among thieves, he answered, *"He who showed mercy on him" (Luke 10:37)*. But who shows that mercy? Do people show mercy to people? Even if that were so, they show it because they have received the merciful love of God; there is no such thing as people showing mercy to people. It is the law of the jungle, as they say: the strong live by preying on the weak; the One who has truly shown mercy to us is Jesus Christ. That Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and He is the Savior who personally received baptism from John, gave His body over to the Cross, had compassion on you and me, and saved us from sin. This is what the word is telling us. How do we obtain eternal life? Since Jesus bore our sins with the baptism He received from John, hung on the Cross and died, rose again from death, and saved you and me, we believe in that, receive the remission of sins, and obtain eternal life. We must know this truth. There is no one who can do anything well before God.

Only Jesus can show perfect mercy

All people want to live good lives, and they also think that they themselves live good lives. I was like that too. But what happens if we ask ourselves, "Am I really a person who can live a good life? Am I a human being who lives a good life?" If the

situation Jesus spoke of came about, could you go to a person who had met thieves and was dying, treat him, carry him on your back to a hospital, pay all the costs, and help him in that way? Ordinary people run away when they meet a man who has fallen among thieves. People, worried that harm may come to them, try to avoid him. That man has already met thieves, been robbed of everything he had, been stabbed with a knife, and is bleeding; who would go there and say, "Oh dear, the poor man"? If it were a place where many people pass by, it might be different, but if one came across him in the mountains, it is human psychology to run away for fear of being falsely accused if something goes wrong while helping. Of course, one could carry him on one's back to a hospital, but there is not one person in this world who helps by paying all the hospital bills and providing everything that person needs for his whole life. Only Jesus can.

When we usually say we help people, we help a little and make a show of it; but there is no one but Jesus, who saved us, who not only saved us from sin but also came into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, takes responsibility for us, helps us with everything we need, guarantees us the kingdom of heaven, and gives us the Church of God to take care of the people of God. People can say things like this: live a good life; it is right to live a good life; I too am striving to live a good life. They can go this far, but the One who shows mercy perfectly is God alone. That is why we must know ourselves and believe in Jesus as our Savior.

You and I meet thieves throughout our whole lives. We meet them at any time. We meet them on television, we meet them on the Internet, and we meet them through people. How many there are in this world who rob you of your heart, soul, and body! And the sin within you is your thief. In your heart, is there an adulterous heart, a heart that steals, a heart that murders, and

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every kind of filthy heart, or not? There is. One meets a thief in oneself. It is the thought, “I am not this kind of person; why am I like this?”

I, who was called a devoted son, was of a seed of evildoers

Dear fellow believers, I often tell my own story, but in the old days I thought there was no one who lived as good a life as I did. If, while walking along the road, I came across an old person who had lost the way, I took him to the police station, found his house for him, and carried him there on my back. In the old days there were many old people pulling carts, and when I saw them pulling one up a hill, I pushed it for them. And as for my parents, if you told me to boast, I would have much to boast about. For more than ten years I attended to my father’s bowel and bladder needs. This is my boasting. I too want to boast like the lawyer. In the morning before going to school I cleaned up his feces, and when I came back from school I cleaned up again. Since he could not go to the toilet, I cannot tell you how many times I had to catch it with paper. After doing that for more than ten years, I became very used to it.

So I thought that I was a person who did not know sin. In fact I had bad thoughts, but because I did not carry them out in action, I thought I was a good person. So in the neighborhood, too, they called me a devoted son. If you take care of someone’s bowel and bladder needs for ten years, you get a reputation in the neighborhood as a devoted son. The people of the neighborhood even recommended me as a candidate for an award for filial piety. Anyway, even though I did not receive the award, taking care of someone’s bowel and bladder needs for ten years is not

an easy thing. I did it from before I entered school. But when I got a good deal older, what happened? From then on, the feces were filthy. Even though he was my father, whenever I went out and came back, I would think, "Has he made such a big mess?" Later, before he passed away, because he had grown very old, he even got it on his clothes and on the floor. As I wiped and washed, I was burning with anger. Later, because it became too much for me to bear, I said I would go on a preaching journey without money and wandered here and there. I wandered around because I was under a lot of stress, not because I was wicked. Still, I was faithful. I thought I did not commit sin, and the people of the neighborhood also said I was good. But as I grew older, something became strange. From then on, thinking, "Ah, I am not this kind of person," I was shocked to see myself committing sin more and more as I grew older. "That I would commit such sins, that I am like this—no, I am not that kind of person." But even though I committed sin more the older I got, for several years I said it was not so. "It was not me; it was because of the circumstances; I am absolutely not like that," I said. When I passed the age of twenty, I thought, "Ah, something is strange about me. I am not this kind of person." I had thought that I committed sin because of other people, but later, as I came to believe in Jesus and read the books of the law, I came to know, "Ah, I am a person who commits sin." Seeing the word that says, *"From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21–22)*, I came to know that He was saying that these hearts are in people's hearts and in me and pour out. "Ah, so I was of that breed. I am of a breed that commits sin, yet I was mistaken. So this is the kind of person I was." And so I met the Lord.

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But though I met the Lord, I believed only in the blood of the Cross. I believed only in the blood of the Cross, offered prayers of repentance every day, and truly believed, but my sin did not go away. Because I committed sin every day as I lived, I was at the point of being half dead. Then, about ten years later, I came to know that Jesus bore my sins by receiving baptism from John. So I believed in my heart: "So He died on the Cross, rose again from death, and became my Savior. Of course! Jesus came to this earth to bear all the sins of you and me and the sin of all mankind, received baptism from John once and for all and bore them once and for all, died on the Cross for us once and for all, rose again once and for all, and became our Savior. He is truly the Savior who has shown great mercy." Believing this, I became a person who has received the remission of sins. It means that I received the remission of all sins and became a person without sin.

Are the thoughts of the flesh good? They are not good. When the thoughts of the flesh rise up, a person tries to save only himself, and people are absolutely not good. The twelve kinds of sin, such as evil thoughts, murder, envy, strife, theft, adultery, and foolishness, take turns committing sin. Because the raw material of sin is so full within people that there is no shortage even if the twelve ingredients keep committing sin, sin is never cut off. The word says that the thieves took everything the man had and left him half dead. Those sins killed you and me in that way. Dear fellow believers, I am one who was like that. It is a tremendous blessing that you now encounter and hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit through the word. To realize this by experiencing it with your body, you would end up half dead.

Today many people who believe in Jesus think that they are good. But even while saying they believe in Jesus, there are cases where they do not rightly know the sin within themselves.

Why is that? It is because, without knowing what kind of breed they are, they live a life of faith believing only in the blood of the Cross. It means they believe only in the Lord. Originally we are a seed of evildoers. But the Lord came to us to show us mercy and showed us mercy. Because we were so pitiful, He showed us mercy through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus saved us by receiving baptism from John and even going so far as to die on the Cross for us. Therefore we must believe and must receive salvation. When we receive salvation, we obtain eternal life.

The mercy of salvation, the mercy of eternal life, and the mercy of blessing

I give such great thanks that He saved a person like me. In terms of the flesh, I have nothing to be proud of. But when I meet people who show off, I can say that I too have much to be proud of. The Apostle Paul also, after meeting the Lord, said, *"I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish" (Philippians 3:8),* and that it was in order to gain Christ. A person who has truly met the Lord is like that, and a person who has not met the Lord has much to be proud of in himself. What is there to be proud of? We could only die and could only be cursed, but the Lord showed mercy, and by receiving that mercy we were saved.

Since the Lord saved us, we must give thanks; and not only did He save us, He also gave us eternal life. He gave us the right to become children of God so that we may live forever. Dear fellow believers, He has given us every blessing. Who gave it? Jesus gave it. He showed mercy. Mercy means showing grace because the other person is so pitiful. In the face of difficulties

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they cannot resolve by themselves, people seek mercy. They hope that others will have compassion on them and help them. The One who shows us mercy is God. Only when God shows us mercy do we receive mercy. The Lord, the Son of God, has shown mercy to you and me. He showed the mercy of salvation, showed the mercy of eternal life, and showed the mercy of blessing. That is why we have been saved. I hope that you will believe in Jesus Christ, who has shown this mercy. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Let those who have received merciful love show merciful love

< Luke 10:25–37 >

“And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?’ So he answered and said, ‘“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.”’ And He said to him, ‘You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.’ But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ Then Jesus answered and said: ‘A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two

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denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you." So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?' And he said, 'He who showed mercy on him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'"

If one does not know the law, one is overconfident about oneself

This word, as you know well, is the passage where Jesus met a lawyer who put forward his own righteousness, explained with one example, and asked who had truly shown mercy, since the Samaritan had done such a good deed.

"And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'" (Luke 10:25). When we look at how this word unfolds, a teacher of the law appeared before Jesus and asked, *"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* This man was overconfident about himself. He was overflowing with confidence. When people who believe in Jesus do not know rightly about the law of God, about God, and also about themselves, but know only superficially, they become people like this. He challenged Jesus head-on, asking, *"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* He was confident in himself, confident in the manner of saying, "If there is anyone who does as much as I do, let him come forward." But if one actually knew accurately about the law of God, about God, or about oneself, one could not be so overconfident.

First, take a look at the law. Can we be overconfident that we keep all the law? The law includes the Ten Commandments, but it is said that if all its commandments and orders are put together,

there are about 613 commandments concerning daily life. Can we be overconfident that we can keep everything God told us to do and not to do? We cannot. What sums up those 613 as a whole is the Ten Commandments, and even among those ten, there is not one commandment that we keep perfectly for even a single day. The first through the fourth of the Ten Commandments are what we must keep with regard to God. They tell us to have no other gods before God, not to serve idols, not to take the name of God in vain, and to keep holy the Sabbath that God has given.

But the question is, in fact, whether we have the ability to keep that much. He said to have no other gods before Him, but if we like something else more than God, that is having another god. Even if we only think that way in our hearts, it is so. He said not to bow down to other things, but do we not bow and scrape before power, before material things, before the opposite sex? So already we cannot keep it. He said not to dishonor the name of God, but do we not cause the name of God to be reviled through our own wrongdoing? So we cannot keep this for even a single day. He said to keep the Sabbath holy, but from the standpoint of the law, can we keep the Sabbath? Then, the fifth through the tenth commandments are what we are told to do between one person and another. They say: honor your father and your mother, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, and do not covet. Dear fellow believers, can you keep those for even a single day? That is why, if we do not know the law well, we become overconfident. Boiling over with self-assurance, one says, *"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* and moreover, one comes before Jesus and takes such pride in oneself.

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Can one love God with all one's heart?

So Jesus asked back, *"What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" (Luke 10:26)*. The lawyer *"answered and said, '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)*. The lawyer told Jesus that it is written this way in the law, citing the word of Deuteronomy. Then Jesus said, *"You have answered rightly; do this and you will live" (Luke 10:28)*.

If one tries to keep the law with all one's life, the law said, first, that one must do it with all one's heart. Second, it said one must do it with all one's life, and third, it told one to do it with all one's strength. Dear fellow believers, there is no need even to go through several of them. He said that we must serve God with all our heart, but can we do it perfectly with all our heart twenty-four hours a day? When a person does one thing, he cannot do two. If one tries to keep the law, it said one must keep it with all one's heart, but one cannot do it with all one's heart, nor with all one's life; it told one to do it with all one's strength, but one cannot do it with all one's strength; and it told one to do it with all one's mind, but one cannot do it with all one's mind. Can we do even one of them? We cannot. What we do by instinct, we can do. Picking a fight or starting a quarrel for no reason to show off one's strength, because one has eaten a lot of food and is full and overflowing with energy—that, a person does of his own accord. But as to whether one can live that well for what is right, in order to keep the commands of God, or whether one has lived that well—one cannot live that way. And yet, while not living that way, one does not know that one is not living that way and thinks that one keeps it well. Having compassion on us, who are in sin like that because we cannot keep the law, Jesus had all

the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Since He bore those sins and received the judgment in our place, shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, what we must rely on is not the confidence that we have kept the law well, but the mercy that Jesus has shown.

Of course, we must try hard to keep the word of God. But since we cannot keep it, we must come before God and say, "God, I am insufficient." When one meets Jesus and sees that He is far higher than oneself, one must ask with a heart of respect, "Lord, You are truly a great Teacher. How can You live so well? You seem not to commit sin, and You seem to follow the will of God the Father; how can I, too, live like You?" Even though he should have asked like this, he acted with bravado, saying, *"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* So Jesus asked him again what was written in the law, and then told him to do it that way.

Then what was this man's thinking? It was that, as regards God, he had done it all. Since He said to do this, he thought that he must do it toward his neighbor, and asked, *"And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29)*. So Jesus, in order to give this man a realization, told one story as an example.

The priest and the Levite passed by on the other side

"Then Jesus answered and said: 'A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead'" (Luke 10:30). Jerusalem is a city on a mountain, and Jericho is a city on the plain far below. On that road going all the

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way down from Jerusalem to Jericho far below, a certain man fell among thieves and was almost half dead. He was stripped of all his clothes, beaten, and even stabbed with a knife, and was nearly dying, and the thieves took everything and ran away. Then a certain man came down from Jerusalem; it says that a priest came down.

As the priest came down in a dignified manner, pretending to be holy and wearing a long, flowing priestly garment, a sound was heard from down below. The sound of someone groaning and crying, “Help me!” was not ordinary. This area was a place where thieves often appeared, so thinking that this must surely be a man who had fallen among thieves, he quietly went near and looked, and the wounds from the robbery were very severe. The man was in a critical state, bleeding profusely and crawling on the ground, unable to move at all, with only his voice crying out, “Help me!” When the priest saw this, what did he think? He thought, “If I am not careful, I will be falsely accused; if I drag along that thing that is almost like a dead body, I will suffer a great loss; if blood so much as gets on my holy garment, I will ruin the whole garment; what a nuisance,” and pretending not to know, he turned his head away and went around by a side road.

Another man also came down from Jerusalem. This man was a Levite. A Levite is a person belonging to the tribe of Levi. Aaron, too, was one born of the tribe of Levi. This man, too, while coming down, saw the very same scene and, just like the priest, avoided him and went away. Both of these men were people belonging to the tribe of Levi.

The Samaritan showed mercy

Third, a Samaritan came. Samaria was a place that the Jews despised even within the nation of Israel. It was a place that Gentile armies had invaded many times, where people lived mixed with Gentile peoples and served many idols. A certain man from such a place, riding on an animal in the course of a journey, came upon the man who had fallen among thieves. As soon as this man heard the sound, he went near and looked, and the man, having fallen among thieves, was bleeding profusely and, unable even to raise his voice, was begging with hand gestures to be saved. He got down at once, poured on the wounds the oil and wine he carried with him, and bandaged them, then placed him on his own animal and took him to an inn.

An inn, in today's terms, is a place like a guesthouse or a hotel. It is a place that provides food and lodging for guests. The Samaritan had compassion on the man, treated him, and bandaged his wounds; but since he himself was on a journey, he gave the innkeeper two denarii and told him to take care of this man, to give him food and to treat him as well. And he said that if the money he had given was not enough, he would stop by again on his way back from his journey and pay what was lacking, and then he left.

There were three people who saw the man who fell among thieves: the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan. The question is which of these three showed mercy. *"Which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" (Luke 10:36)*. After hearing the story, who could fail to guess the answer? The lawyer, as a matter of course, gave the answer, *"He who showed mercy on him" (Luke 10:37)*. Then Jesus said, *"Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37)*.

Here we must know to whom Jesus spoke this word. In

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today's terms, it is a word spoken to religious people who believe in Jesus. Both the priest and the Levite were people associated with religious service under the Old Testament Law. The priests performed priestly duties, while the other Levites served in various responsibilities related to the tabernacle and the temple. We must know the intent of the word Jesus spoke to this lawyer. This lawyer was a man who thought that he had done many things well, had lived a good life in many ways, and kept the law well; but Jesus, giving one example, said that the priest ran away and the Levite ran away as well. In other words, it is a word spoken with this lawyer in view. It means: You say that you believe in God well, but do you not run away whenever the situation is unfavorable to you? You say that you were born into a family that believes in God and that you have kept the law well, but in fact, though you seem to do well as long as you suffer no loss, when it looks as though you will actually suffer a loss, do you not refuse to do it and run away? But what about the Samaritan? He unilaterally had compassion on the man, poured wine on his wounds, poured on oil, wiped them clean, and bandaged them.

In ancient times, wine and oil were sometimes used in treating wounds. The Samaritan used the oil and wine he had with him to care for the injured man's wounds and bandaged them. In this way, he did not turn away from someone in distress but showed him mercy through his actions.

Mercy is having compassion as if holding someone in the womb

Here we must realize something. What must we realize? We must realize who it really is that has shown mercy to you and me.

In fact, when we come to know the truth, you and I were born into this world as sinners and could not help but live committing sins, and we are robbed of everything we have by Satan the devil. Deceived by the word that we can avoid misfortune only if we pay money and perform some ritual, we are robbed of our possessions and our hearts are bound as well. It is the man who fell among thieves, robbed of everything like this, that the Samaritan saved.

Dear fellow believers, what is mercy? The word mercy is one commonly used in the world as well, and the meaning of the Greek word is to have pity, to have compassion. When a little baby is conceived in the belly, the mother holds the baby in her womb. She holds it, blocking all dangers and supplying all nourishment. A mother holding her own child in her womb—that is what showing mercy is. It is that kind of heart, that kind of meaning. It is to have compassion and to feel sympathy. So when we look at parents, do they not have compassion on their children? They love their children not only when they do well, but even when they do wrong they have compassion on them and tell them that they must not go on that way. Why is that? Because they love them, because they feel sorry for them, because their children are dear to them, they want them to do well. In particular, born-again parents, when their children go the way of destruction, are so distressed in heart that they are nearly at the point of death. It means that the Samaritan showed mercy with such a heart.

Jesus showed mercy to us

Who has shown mercy to you and me? Jesus has shown mercy. Because of the sin you and I inherited from Adam and

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Eve, and also because of the sins we have committed, we were to go to hell in the future; but because we, being like that, were so pitiable, Jesus came to this earth and showed mercy to us. Because you and I were to go to hell on account of sin, He had compassion on us and had your sins and mine transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John. To receive baptism is to have sins passed on to oneself. Through the baptism He received from John in this way, He had all our sins, the sin of all mankind, transferred to Him, and in place of mankind He went to the Cross, was nailed to it, and was put to death. While being despised, stripped of His clothes, and spat upon, He suffered and sacrificed Himself like that, bore our sins, and received the judgment for sins in our place, and He died and rose again, and in this way He showed mercy to us.

It means that He had pity and compassion on us and saved us. If we ask who, among the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan, was the one who showed mercy, it is Jesus. Jesus Christ is God. He is the One who made all things in this universe. To say that He came in the name of Jesus means that He came as the Savior. Having compassion on man, in order to save man from sin and to remove the sin of man, He put on the form of a human being and came to this earth, bore our sins, died in our place, rose again, and saved us.

Dear fellow believers, God had compassion on you and me and saved us. When we have compassion on another person, there is no wrong that we cannot cover over. Having compassion is the heart of a parent, and the heart of a parent is the heart of God.

It means that such is God's heart toward us. It means that He loves you and me and has compassion on us like that. We cannot resolve by ourselves the sins we have committed or the sins we have. So God had compassion on us and came Himself as a

human being, bore our sins by receiving baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again from death, and saved us. That is how He showed mercy to us.

Here, pouring wine and pouring oil on the wounds of the man who fell among thieves speaks of His having saved us through the water and the Spirit. Why did Jesus Christ die on the Cross? Because He put on human flesh and came to this earth to save us from sin and received baptism from John, He could be nailed to the Cross and die on it. Then who, fundamentally, is Jesus Christ? He is the One conceived by the Holy Spirit; He is God. Jesus Christ, who is God, became a man and came to this earth, bore our sins, received the judgment for our sins, and, in order to bring us to life from death, died and rose again and became our Savior.

Dear fellow believers, you and I have been saved because of the merciful love of God. We have nothing to boast of and nothing to show when we come before God. Do we really have only things we have done well, so much so that we could ask, saying, "*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" "I have done all of this, so what more shall I do?" If there had been no salvation of the Lord, we were people who would go to hell because of our sins. In fact, when the truth is known, one is a person who will go to hell, and yet, not knowing that one is a person who will go to hell, one does good deeds for others. Man is a person who will go to hell and who must receive compassion before God. But without knowing himself, he does good deeds for others and takes pride in that. Doing good deeds for others is a good thing, but what is more necessary is the heart and the faith that first know one's own state and one's own soul, have compassion on it, and ask for mercy before God.

Dear beloved saints, you and I are truly like beggars who have fallen among thieves, been robbed of everything we had,

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and have nothing; but we must believe that our Lord came to us, removed your sins and mine, poured out the Holy Spirit on us, made us children of God, and enabled us to live reigning as kings in the kingdom of God. We must give thanks for such merciful love of God. If we do not know the merciful love of God, our own righteousness comes out, we talk big, and we seize on the faults and weaknesses of others. Dear fellow believers, what is there to do that for? Because we are insufficient, God had compassion on us, came to us, and saved us; that is why we follow the Lord, and that is why we show mercy to others as well.

Those who have received mercy must show mercy

We must receive mercy. We must receive compassion before God. If we could do well, it would be a different matter, but in any case, only when we receive compassion can we have our sins washed away, go to heaven, and become children of God. If we do not receive compassion before God, we cannot enter the kingdom of God by any effort or by any good deeds. That is why we must ask God for mercy. We must ask Him to have compassion on us. Of course, we must do well. But even if we do ten things well, if we do one thing wrong, all those ten things we did well become void; so even while trying to do well before God, we must ask Him to have compassion on us. And we must believe that Jesus Christ, the Son whom God the Father sent, bore our sins, was hung on the Cross, and rose again from death, and thereby removed our sins. How greatly God the Father had compassion on us! He went so far as to give His Son to us. 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 gave His Son to us; this is to say how greatly He had compassion on us. We must believe that God has had compassion on us. God the Father revealed through His Son the merciful love with which He had compassion on us. *"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10)*. God loved us first. We must believe that love of God revealed through His Son Jesus Christ. By faith we are saved from sin, by faith we become children of God, by faith we are cared for, by faith we come to go to the kingdom of heaven, and on this earth, too, we come to receive blessing by faith. Only when we become children of God does God care for us. If we do not become children of God, He does not care for us. And even after we have become children of God, only when we show mercy to others does God care for us. It says, *"Judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy" (James 2:13)*. He told us to show mercy.

Dear fellow believers, even after being born again, we must show mercy. God has shown us His merciful love, and you and I must know and believe that merciful love through Jesus. We must become not only those who know it but those who believe it with the heart. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? Are you not grateful? Because He showed mercy and saved us, because He had compassion on us and saved us, because we received compassion and were saved, we are grateful. That is why we, too, must show mercy to others.

If one has become a child of God and yet does not show mercy to others, that person is a wicked person. He is the most wicked among the wicked. It is not that we have to do this, but that since we have received compassion from God, we, too, must show compassion. This is what is right. If we have become children of God by faith, we, too, must have compassion on

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others and show mercy. He said that if we do not, He will treat us as wicked people.

Dear fellow believers, the servant in the parable of the unforgiving servant had nothing with which to repay his debt to his master and had all his debt canceled; but when he went out, he seized by the collar a man who owed him a small debt, shook him, demanding, "Will you not pay back what you owe me?" and accused that man and had him put in prison. When that happened, what did the master say? He said, *"You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" (Matthew 18:32–33)*. It means that he, too, would do the same to him.

Dear fellow believers, a person who, after being born again and after believing in the love of God, does not live for this good work of preaching the gospel to others is a wicked person. Such a person is a wicked person even though he has received the remission of sins. God does not help such a person. Who is the most wicked? The person who, after being born again, does not think of the love he has received and lives only his own life, saying that since he himself has already made it, it does not matter whether others go to hell or not—that person is a wicked person. So it says in the Psalms, *"(Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers –ASV). But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1–2)*. It means that one does not walk in the counsel of the wicked. A person who, even after being born again, lives only for himself, saying, "I will live my own life; I will not do anything that brings me loss; I will live my life well by myself," is a wicked person. After being born again, the most wicked is precisely such a wicked person. A person who

has received merciful love and yet does not show merciful love is a wicked person and is regarded as the most wicked.

Why do I, too, after being born again, try to serve this gospel and serve the church even though it is hard? I, too, was a person who could have lived that way if I had decided to live only for myself. But knowing the gospel as I did, once I knew that other people were going to hell because of sin, I could not do so for conscience's sake. So I cut myself off from such a life and lived toward the gospel, and then I met you, preached the gospel to you, and established the Church of God like this, and so we are living inside the inn, protected within the mercy of God—all the while showing mercy for the sake of others.

The innkeeper here is also one who showed mercy. Spiritually speaking, it is the church. This word I am saying as I close the sermon is extremely important. We must be those who show mercy. We received the remission of sins by believing in the mercy of God; but if, after believing like that, we do not show mercy, that is to be a wicked person. A person who has received the remission of sins and yet tries to live only for himself is a wicked person. In the word of the Psalms, several kinds of people appear: the wicked, sinners, and then the scoffers, that is, the arrogant. To say, "I have received the remission of sins, so I will not go to hell; I am fine; do not interfere with me; I, too, know all about the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and I, too, believe, so do not hold on to me," is arrogance. Arrogance and pride are the same word. It is saying that one is fine as one is.

Dear fellow believers, it says, *"To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17)*. Is that right? If that person over there is drowning and dying right now, and he could be saved if we only stretched out a hand, took hold of him, and pulled him just a little, yet we know it and pass by, saying, "Oh dear, he is dying. Poor thing. Do your best with your

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own strength. I am busy, so I am going," and go away, are we wicked or not? Suppose you were the one drowning there. That we have received the remission of sins before the Lord is precious, but we have a great duty before the Lord. We cannot share out all of that love we have received from the Lord, but He told us, too, to testify of it. Those who have received merciful love must testify of merciful love and show it. That is why we are now doing this work.

Dear fellow believers, how great is the merciful love the Lord has shown to you and me! Do you and I have anything superior to put forward before God? Will we have any in the future? We do not. Since we have received merciful love before God, we have the duty to testify of merciful love. Just as the citizens of a country have the duties of citizens, those who have become children of God have the duty of heaven. We give thanks that the Lord has saved us with the merciful love of God, met us, cared for us, and blessed us, and we truly give thanks before God that He has enabled us to testify of and show merciful love in this way. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Do not miss the word in the place where you have welcomed the Lord

< Luke 10:38–42 >

“Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, ‘Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.’ And Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.’”

A heart that listens to the word of the Lord whom it has welcomed

There are times when, while serving a guest we gladly welcomed, our heart becomes heavy before we know it. This is because the heart that wanted to treat the guest well becomes filled with the things that must be done, and even the thought arises that the people with us do not recognize our labor. This

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kind of thing can happen in our hearts that serve the Lord, too. When we look at what happened in Martha's house, we come to know that, before asking what we have prepared, we must examine whose will we are listening to.

Martha welcomed Jesus into her house. In that house there was her sister Mary, and it is written, *"And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word" (Luke 10:39)*. In the same house, one person was busy with the preparations to serve, and the other was hearing the word before the Lord. What Mary was listening to was not a story that pleased her own thoughts, but the word the Lord Himself was telling her. In her sitting at His feet appears a heart that wants to listen to the One who teaches and to receive from Him.

We, too, while saying that we believe in the Lord, can put off hearing what the Lord says. It is to think that since we already know the word, now all we have to do is work hard. But if we leave the word, it is easy to forget what we must work for and what the Lord has given us. A heart that has welcomed the Lord must also give over to Him the place where the Lord will speak His own will. Before we try to please the Lord only with what we have prepared, we must receive by faith what the Lord wants to give us.

When busyness turns into resentment toward the Lord

Martha's preparations were many, and her heart was also distracted. The word says, *"But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me'" (Luke 10:40)*. Martha did not only ask for her

sister's help; she spoke as though the Lord did not care about her situation of working alone. She demanded of the Lord, whom she had meant to serve, that He now command her sister according to her own judgment.

It is natural for a person who labors to need help. As we hear this word, we must not think lightly of Martha's labor, or think that it is all right to turn away from the difficulties of a person who is working. However, one's own judgment cannot come before the word of the Lord merely for the reason that the labor is great. Martha judged the value of the word Mary was hearing from within her own busy situation, but the One who knew what was most needed in that place was Jesus.

We, too, when we count the time we have served and the things we have sacrificed, easily come to think that the Lord must grant our requests. We can also take issue in our hearts with other saints, saying that they do not do as much as we do. What is needed at this time is not proof that we have labored more than others, but examining before the word why the heart that had been turned toward the Lord tilted toward complaint. This is because serving is upholding the will of the Lord, and if we demand of the Lord that He do as we wish, the direction of serving is reversed.

The voice of the Lord, who called the worried Martha

Jesus did not raise Mary up and send her as Martha had requested. Rather, as it is written, *"And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things'" (Luke 10:41)*, He pointed out what was in Martha's heart. The Lord was looking at a person who was held

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by many things and troubled, rather than at how much or how little had been prepared. Martha thought that the Lord did not care about her situation, but the Lord spoke to her knowing even the worry of her heart.

When we hear this voice, we do not need to put forward our own labor any further before the Lord. Before we claim what we have offered, we must hear what Jesus has done for us. Because a sinner cannot remove the price of sin with his own deeds, the Son of God came to save us. What the Lord desires is not that we pile up service and prepare the qualification for salvation, but that we know the salvation the Lord has accomplished and receive it by faith.

At the age of thirty, Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River and bore all the sin of all mankind once and for all. Not only the sins we have committed as we have lived, but also the sins we are committing now and the sins we will commit until we die, were included in the sin of the world and were passed on to the Lord through that baptism. Jesus bore that sin and, by being hung on the Cross and shedding His blood and dying, received in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death. Therefore, our salvation does not depend on how much work we have done, but on the Savior, who bore sin and accomplished the death of redemption.

What had to be received before the table Martha set was this word of salvation. To know why the sinless Jesus died on the Cross, we must also believe that He bore our sins through the baptism He received from John. Nor is it that sin disappears only when we add our labor to the salvation the risen Lord has completed. When we accept this word of the Lord, our heart returns from the place of counting our own merits to the place of giving thanks for the grace the Lord has bestowed.

Choose the good part that will not be taken away

The Lord taught the worried Martha what she needed. *"But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42)*. It was not that Martha could satisfy the Lord only by increasing what she had to prepare. The Lord acknowledged the place where Mary was hearing the word as the good part, and said that it would not be taken away. This is because the many works we do for the Lord may pass to someone else if a person who does them better than we do comes, but the faith we have received by hearing the word no one can take away.

Here we must lay down the heart that thought it was fine as long as the preparations went well, even if hearing the word was pushed back. The service of making a place for others to hear the word and preparing what is needed is precious, but we who serve are also souls who must live by the word. If we labor to preach the gospel and yet do not learn the will of the Lord, what we preach and whom we labor for become blurred. Therefore, going to the place where the word is heard is not running away from serving, but setting our hearts straight so that we may undertake by faith the work the Lord has entrusted to us.

Nor must we boast only of the fact that we have heard the word and withhold the helping hand our neighbors need. A heart that has received the will of the Lord leads to the labor of helping others hear and believe the gospel. When the saints who serve with us are exhausted, we must look into their difficulties and share the work, and be considerate of one another so that each of us can also hear the word. When we serve in this way, the joy of enjoying together the grace we have received from the Lord comes before the competition to have our labor recognized.

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If the heart that gladly welcomed the Lord has become heavy amid preparations and worries, let us listen to the Lord, who even now cares for us with His word. The Lord is the One who came to us Himself to give life to us, who were to die because of sin, and gave His own life to accomplish salvation. When we first receive and enjoy that grace, our hands also change from the labor of demanding something of the Lord to the labor of serving with thanksgiving. In the place where you have welcomed the Lord, do not miss the word of the Lord, and I hope you will choose, like Mary, the good part He gives us. ✉

Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord was pleased when people heard the word of God

< Luke 10:38–42 >

“Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, ‘Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.’ And Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.’”

Martha’s busyness and Mary’s good part

This word, just as we have read it, is a word saying that the Lord was pleased when people heard the word of God. The word says, *“Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house” (Luke 10:38)*. Martha is Mary’s older sister. Jesus had entered that house and was being served, whether with food

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or with tea, and the younger sister Mary was sitting at the Lord's feet, listening to the word the Lord was speaking. At that time the older sister Martha was diligently preparing food in the kitchen to serve the guest. Since a guest had come, in human terms it was right to prepare food, and although it was also good for her sister to hear the word, it seemed right to her to prepare the food together and serve rather than to do it by herself, and so Martha probably said what she said. So she asked the Lord to command her sister to help her, since she was the one making the food. Then the Lord said, *"One thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42)*. It means that, having been invited into that house and having entered it, He regarded hearing the word of God as better than preparing a lot of food and serving. It is just as we know well.

The Lord had to speak only spiritual words

This word the Lord spoke is not a word He spoke in human terms, but a word He spoke only spiritually. In human terms, Martha's words are right. If a guest has come to the house, food must be prepared quickly and served, and when preparing that food, since doing it alone is hard, they must join forces and prepare it together. In human terms, that is right. But because the Lord was the One who would live a life of thirty-three years on this earth and go up, and because at the age of thirty He had begun the public ministry of saving people from sin by receiving baptism from John the Baptist and having all the sin of mankind transferred to Him, He absolutely had to speak only spiritual words. This is because there was an opportunity of exactly three years only. During those three years, He had to say all the words

we absolutely needed, the words He wanted to say, and then go. Therefore, although He could also have said, "What you are doing is truly right, too," He had to speak of the best thing—what was most essential now, and which of the two was more right. So what He said was, "Even just the one dish of food you are making is good, but this Mary has chosen the good part, so I will not take it away from Mary and give it to you."

The Lord was pleased with people hearing and believing the word of the Lord and receiving and enjoying all the blessings the Lord gives. It means that in the Lord's heart He preferred the spiritual things. That does not mean, however, that it is right, when a guest comes to our church today, for everyone to sit before him and try only to hear the word and not even prepare food. Doing so in order to serve the gospel is good, but it means that since Jesus had come into that house, hearing and believing the word of Jesus was more important.

Today's Christianity, which is tilted toward work

Even today, this word is a very fitting word for Christian believers all over the world. Christian believers all over the world are extremely busy doing the work of the Lord. They are tilted toward doing the work of the Lord. They are busy going to the mission field and serving, helping flood victims and refugees, and carrying relief supplies to disaster areas struck by the calamities of earthquakes and tsunamis to help. That, too, must be done, and that, too, is a good thing. If it is done for the Lord, it is a good thing. However, the Lord wants us, though that must also be done, to pay attention to one thing better than that, namely, to what the Lord says to us and to what the Lord says He has accomplished our salvation with. Also, we can all know

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that, since the Lord said to live by faith, to believe, and that we obtain salvation by faith, He wants us to concentrate on hearing, learning, and knowing what the meaning of those words is.

Today, Christian believers all over the world must concentrate on hearing the word of the Lord. They are too busy only with working. We, too, can put service ahead of hearing and believing the word of salvation, and claim our own rightness before the Lord. Service is also good, but there is work more important than such work, work that must be done first. It means that we must listen with a perspective on this point: with what gospel the Lord saved us, mankind—Christian believers and all the people of the world—whether He saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit or saved us only with the blood of the Cross. Also, what is the work the Lord is pleased with? Is He pleased that we hear the word of the Lord's gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the remission of sins by faith, and give thanks before God, or is He more pleased that we set aside the gospel of the water and the Spirit and just believe only in the blood of the Cross and go anywhere unconditionally, putting the name of the Lord forward, and diligently serve, sacrifice, and be martyred? God the Father sent the Son of God to this earth, and it is said that He is more pleased with our believing in what His own Son did and receiving the remission of sins. He said that He is more pleased with our believing in what the Lord did.

Then we Christian believers must think about what comes first now. Is believing in Jesus as the Savior unconditionally, serving unconditionally, sacrificing unconditionally, and preaching the gospel unconditionally doing well, and is it what the Lord wants? The Lord told us to receive salvation, said that He came to this earth as our Savior, and said that He came to this earth, received baptism from John the Baptist, was hung on the Cross and died, and rose again from death and saved us. But

some people cannot hear what comes first and hear only what comes after, so they hear only the word that the Lord came to this earth in a human body, was hung on the Cross, and shed His blood and saved us from all sins, and they serve. On which should we concentrate more? What is the Lord more pleased with? We must look at the word of the Lord and see what the Lord says. Right before this word, too, a word with the same meaning appears. It says, *"And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'" (Luke 10:25)*, and it says, *"He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?' So he answered and said, '"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."' And He said to him, 'You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.' But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" (Luke 10:26–29)*.

It means that we must listen carefully to and engrave on our hearts the word the Lord spoke when He went to the house of Martha and Mary: "Making food is also doing well, but Mary, who is sitting beside Me now and hearing the word I am speaking, has chosen the better part, and this is more right." What is the Lord pleased with? The Lord is pleased that we believe the word of the Lord and receive the remission of sins. The lawyer kept trying to do something to obtain eternal life, but what did the Lord say? He said, "Then do that work, and you will live." Then the lawyer asked who, then, his neighbor was, and the Lord spoke by giving an example. He said, *"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead" (Luke 10:30)*, and He asked, *"Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And*

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when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" (Luke 10:31–36).

The one who saved the man who fell among thieves was not a religionist but the Samaritan

Here the Lord asked who the neighbor of the man who fell among thieves was—whether it was the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan. Because this man was a lawyer and a teacher of the law, he came before Jesus and asked what he should do to obtain eternal life. So when the Lord asked what was written in the law, he said that he had kept all such and such things. Then, when the Lord told him to try loving his neighbor as himself, he said, "Who is my neighbor?" Can people who have a legalistic faith really save a man who has fallen among thieves like this? Can they save a person who is dying? Dear fellow believers, who saved the man who fell among thieves? Can a religionist save him? It means that it was not a religionist who saved him, but the Samaritan. This is speaking of a religious matter. The Samaritans were people with no religious connection at all. They were people of a region that was despised by the Jews. Although

Jesus came to this earth as the Savior with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, people rejected and ignored Jesus and all that Jesus did. They even rejected Him, saying, *"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46)*, and thought of Him as merely a fine young man. So the point is, can religionists really save the nation of Israel, and will they now save the man who fell among thieves? Can man save man? When a person is dying before God because of sin, dying because he has no ability of his own, can man save him? When a person is going to hell, who is the one who can save him from that hell? Is it man, or is it God? It is Jesus Christ, the Savior, who is God. It means that Jesus Christ alone is our Savior.

It means that Jesus Christ came to this earth, received baptism from John, died hanging on the Cross, and rose again from death, and saved you and me. It means that Jesus saved you and me and all mankind in this way and delivered us from hell, from destruction. But they pay no attention to that. Since the Lord has saved us, we must go to them and preach this gospel. We must hand out booklets and convey the news. Only when we preach what the Lord has done is it the spread of the gospel. But the question is whether, without doing that, serving alone is the only answer. We Christian believers must know what we have to do first before God. Only when we know do we do the will of the Father. It means that we must know what pleases God and choose what to do first. We must do the work the Lord is pleased with. Since the Lord saved us with the water and the Spirit, we must first believe that, and those who have believed it must preach it. Then how must we preach? Can we preach in this age by going and dancing? We must first preach the gospel in a way that fits this age, and then serve. Of course, they would have served in order to preach, and I fully understand. But the question is whether, before going out to do the work of God like

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that, they listened to the word of God. The question is whether they heard the word of God like Mary. The question is whether they paid attention to that.

Do not put forward your own rightness before the Lord

The point is, rather than paying attention to that, did they not instead put forward their own rightness, and how much they sacrifice and serve, as though they kept the law better than the Lord, as though they loved the Lord more? Then is the Lord pleased? Is it not wrong? The word says, *"They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3)*. It means that they do not know the rightness of the Lord, that is, the love of the Lord and the fact that the Lord saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and rather put forward their own rightness and insist more on saying, "I have served the Lord like this; I have given my life." It means that in order to insist on this, in order to put forward their own rightness more, they come even before the Lord and boast. Just as the lawyer came before Jesus and boasted of his own rightness, he tested Jesus, saying, *"Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25)*. It means, "I keep the law better than You do."

We, too, must guard against the error of putting forward our own sacrifice and service rather than the salvation of the Lord. It means that they come before Jesus and put forward and insist on their own rightness. It means that they are protesting. It means that they boast and insist before the Lord, saying, "Did we not lay down our lives before the Lord? We have given our lives; we

have given our youth." In a way, the Lord is receiving protests from these Christian believers. It is like protesting that since we have suffered like this for the Lord, He should give us that kingdom of heaven He has prepared for us. Does the Lord owe us a debt? Because the Lord saved you and me, we have no sin, and you and I have received the remission of sins by faith; if the Lord had not saved us with the water and the Spirit, could we receive salvation? It makes no sense. The host and the guest have been reversed. It means that it is exactly like a stranger acting as the master of the house. It means that they have no idea at all who must give thanks to whom, who must follow whose will, and who must please whom. Dear fellow believers, the Bible says that a servant, before his master, is only to say, *"We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10)*. When Christian believers say they have done something, that is naturally what they ought to do; but since they go and say they preach the gospel without even having received salvation, it means that this is not spreading the gospel, but rather blocking the gospel. It means that they are rather hindering the way of the Lord. We must know that fact.

Receive the remission of sins first, and then work

Dear fellow believers, do you think that if the guide of a church sends out many missionaries, that is doing well before God? First, he himself must receive the remission of sins; second, the saints must receive the remission of sins; and third, that work is to be done. And even when they go there, they must not do other things, but preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit first. They must not say any other word at all. Only then is one a leader. If one does not do that and does irrelevant things, one

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rather hinders the way of the gospel. We must do the work the Lord is pleased with, and the way of the Lord's gospel must be opened, but are they not blocking the way of the Lord? It means that this is what many Christian believers and pastors today are doing. It means that they are now doing exactly the same thing as Martha and this teacher of the law. They say, "What shall I do to obtain eternal life?" and "Have we not given this much to Jesus?" But what did the Lord say to the lawyer? Who did the good work, who saved this man who fell among thieves—it was the Samaritan. It was Jesus. Although Jesus came to this earth, people did not receive Him hospitably, but rejected Him. But in order to save you and me from sin, Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River and bore the sins of you and me. And bearing the sin of the world, He went to the Cross. He was nailed, shed His blood, and died, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. It means that we must first remember what the Lord has done. Only when we remember and believe what the Lord has done and preach it are we those who do according to the will of God and those who believe according to the will of God. It means that we must follow the will of the Lord first. First, second, and third, following the will of the Lord until we die is what we Christians must do.

I say to Christian believers all over the world. Do you know what the will of the Lord toward you is—the fact that He delivered you from the power of darkness and conveyed you into the kingdom of the Son of God, the fact that He conveyed you with the gospel of the water and the Spirit? The word says, *"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:13)*. It means that the Lord delivered you and me from the power of darkness, from the devil, and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of God. It means that with the gospel of the water and

the Spirit He removed our sins, died in place of our death, gave us new life, made us children of God, and made us enter the kingdom of God. It means that we must preach that fact. We must believe that fact, and that is a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand times better than doing much labor for the Lord—this is the word the Lord speaks to all of us in this passage. It is right for those who believe in the Lord to follow the Lord by believing in the righteousness of the Lord. I believe He also said that it is right for those who believe in the Lord, even those who have received the remission of sins, rather than putting following the will of God aside and unconditionally working hard and unconditionally being faithful in their own way, saying that it is for the Lord, to know the will of the Lord first and follow and obey in accordance with that will.

"Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her"

By all means, we must keep in mind this word He spoke: *"Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42)*. It means that even if we are a little insufficient, we need more the attitude of trying to accept first the will of the Lord—what the Lord says to us—the attitude of accepting the will of the Lord first and trying to obey it. I hope that God will make us ourselves into such people. ✉

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CHAPTER

11

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Speak to the Father with the prayer that the Lord taught

< Luke 11:1–4 >

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

The prayer the disciples had to learn

There are times when we have focused our hearts on prayer, but, not knowing what we should say first, we only repeat familiar words. Even after telling God at length about our pressing circumstances, we sometimes fail to look back on the relationship with God in which we prayed. One of the disciples of Jesus, too, asked Him to teach them to pray. This is because the disciple, who had seen the Lord praying, knew that what he needed was to learn prayer from the Lord rather than to have

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more words to pray.

"He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven'" (Luke 11:2). The Lord had us begin prayer with words that call on the Father rather than with words asking for something. If we put only our own circumstances in the first place of prayer, the desire to obtain an answer comes first; but if we come knowing God as our Father, we can entrust our circumstances to Him, who cares for His children. A child does not insist that he knows the situation better than his father and try to make everything move as he demands; rather, even while asking for help, he learns his father's will and follows that will.

Then how can we, who were in sin, call the holy God our Father? When Jesus received baptism from John, He had the sin of the world, including the sins of our whole lives, passed on to Him once and for all. Because He bore that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we had to receive, and He rose again from death and saved us. When we believe in our hearts this salvation that the gospel of the water and the Spirit conveys, we receive the remission of sins and come to the Father as children of God. It is not that we obtain the qualification of children by praying well; rather, we believe in the salvation the Lord accomplished and ask for the Father's help.

Seek the name and the kingdom of the Father

What a child who has called on the Father must seek first is that His name be hallowed. This does not mean that we add to God some holiness He lacks. It is asking that we, who have

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received the remission of sins and received the Holy Spirit, live as befits the people of God, so that those who see us come to know God, who removed our sins, as the One who is truly holy. If a person who has received the remission of sins insists on falsehood for his own benefit, the people who hear the gospel through him also come to suffer confusion. Therefore, we must not say that we exalt His name alone while hiding our shortcomings, but must pray that we may set our hearts and conduct right before the word.

The petition for the kingdom that follows also points in the same direction. We cannot leave our hearts to be ruled by our own cravings and seek the kingdom of God with our lips alone. This is because the kingdom of God first comes upon the heart of the person who has received the remission of sins, and is revealed in the church where such people have gathered. So this petition is to receive the word of the Lord and to ask that the gospel of the remission of sins be preached to others as well, so that they too come under the rule of the Lord. In another place, too, Jesus said, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. The word that says to seek first does not mean that we should hide the needs of our living; rather, it makes us look at even those needs within a life that serves the kingdom of God.

By examining our prayer requests, we can know what we most want to come to pass. If the desire to show ourselves off came first, we can admit that heart and ask for the faith and wisdom needed for the work of preaching the gospel. We must not think that, since we have already been saved, there is nothing more to learn; rather, we must share the word with the saints and look at the work we are to carry out together. Then the prayer for the name and the kingdom of the Father goes beyond an order

of words on our lips and becomes the direction in which we live our day. Ask for a way for those who do not yet know the gospel to hear the word, and pray that those who have already heard it accept the Lord's salvation in their hearts. When even the small service entrusted to us is connected with this desire, we no longer regard it lightly for the reason that it is work that is not very noticeable.

The bread needed every day

Even the person who seeks the kingdom of God first needs bread to eat today. So that we would not be ashamed of that need but tell it to the Father, the Lord taught us to pray, *"Give us day by day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3)*. The word that says to ask day by day contains the faith that today, too, we live by the Father's provision. It is not that we can live on our own today because we received help yesterday, nor does God's care become unnecessary because we have grown used to our life.

The person who asks for bread does the work given to him faithfully, and also asks the Lord for the strength to carry out that work. When the way to labor is blocked, he does not hide his circumstances but asks for help; and when he has been provided for, he does not think that he obtained it by his own ability alone. Also, the Lord had us pray asking Him to give not to "me" alone but to "us." When we remember the hardships of the saints who live together with us, our prayer does not end with our own table being filled, and we come to tell the Father also about the circumstances of those who need help.

Along with the bread of the flesh, we also need the word that gives life to our hearts. If we devote our hearts only to obtaining food, even though we sustain our bodies, it is easy to forget what

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we should live for. After preaching the gospel to the Samaritan woman, Jesus said to His disciples, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34)*. For the person who has received the remission of sins, hearing the word of God and doing the work of God become the bread he receives every day. Therefore, we must ask for opportunities to hear the word and for the faith to understand it, and serve the Lord's work according to the word we have received. That the petition for bread is placed after the petition that seeks the kingdom of God teaches us that our day is not separated from that kingdom. When we live relying on the Father's provision, even the needs of our living become not an excuse that makes us lose faith but a matter for which we ask for help.

The protection we ask for within the grace of the remission of sins

Following the needs of our living, the Lord taught the prayer concerning sin and temptation. *"Forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one" (Luke 11:4)*. When we face the wrongs of others, it is easy for us to make much of how we ourselves have been wronged. But when we look back at how our sins were remitted before God, we come to know that we must lay down the heart that would leave only the person who wronged us standing outside grace.

It is not that we buy the remission of sins with the price of having treated others generously. Since the One who bore our sins and received the judgment is Jesus, we cannot change the basis of the remission of sins into our own generosity. Nor does the Lord repeat the work of His baptism and the Cross every day

because we have said every day that He should remit our sins. Because the Lord removed the sins of our whole lives once and for all, we too treat generously, within that grace, the wrongs we have done to one another. When we offer this petition, we must not hide our own sins but rely on the remission of sins the Lord accomplished, and ask for help so that we may treat others in a way worthy of that grace. Wrongs must be set right, but we must not live held captive by a heart that hates the other person and wants to pay him back.

The person who has examined his own heart in this way also cannot vouch for himself that he has the strength to overcome temptation. We, too, can go through any kind of hardship while we live on this earth, and when the hardships of living or the wounds of relationships deepen, it is easy to put our own thoughts before the word. That is why we ask for protection in advance, so that we do not fall into a great temptation we cannot bear and go down the road of leaving the Lord. Learning to pray does not end with equipping ourselves with fine words. It is asking the Father, who has accepted us as His children, for today's bread and for the protection of our hearts, and receiving help to live for His name and His kingdom. Now, when you are at a loss as to what to say first, I hope you will follow this order that the Lord taught and go forward, entrusting your day to the Father. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Go to the Father like the man who went to borrow three loaves

< Luke 11:5–13 >

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

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The friend who went because he had nothing to set before his guest

If a friend comes to visit at midnight and there is no food to set out, we cannot show him hospitality with a glad heart alone. The man in the parable the Lord told went to another friend precisely because of that lack and asked him to lend him three loaves. He did not hide the fact that there was nothing in his house or turn his back on his guest; rather, he asked for help from the friend who had what he needed. Prayer, too, begins with knowing our lack. But since knowing our lack does not automatically make us pray, the Lord showed us the figure of a man who actually goes and asks.

The friend inside the house answers that he cannot rise and give, since the door is shut and his children are also in bed with him. To the man making the request, those words would have sounded like a reason to turn back. But the Lord did not end the parable there, and said, *"I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs" (Luke 11:8)*. Since the man's situation of having nothing to set before his guest remains the same, the need does not disappear because he has heard words of refusal once. He asked earnestly, hoping to obtain it from his friend, and finally received what he needed.

While hearing this parable, we must not think that God, too, gives reluctantly only when we pester Him to the point of being a nuisance. The Lord goes on to explain that the Father gives good things to His children. Even among people, one gives a pleading friend what that friend needs; how then could we give up in advance on asking for help from the heavenly Father, who knows us? The faith that comes to God does not begin with holding enough in one's own hands; rather, it relies on the One

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who will help right there in that place of lack.

Seek and knock even after you have asked

The Lord said to the disciples who had heard the parable, *"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9)*. Knowing the word that says to ask and actually asking are different. We may think we have prayed while only turning over the same situation in an anxious heart, but prayer is telling God that situation and asking for help. When we come forward relying on the promise we have received, even matters that cannot be solved by our own ability become prayer requests.

The word that says to seek and knock means not to turn back after asking. This is because telling Him once and then stopping is not the figure of the man who was knocking on the door at midnight. If we have asked for a way to preach the gospel, we must examine to whom we can preach the word, and ask again and again that He open the door of that person's heart. If we have prayed for the salvation of our family, even when the answer seems slow, we must keep knocking before that door. Also, we must not conclude that it is over because the way was blocked once, but must keep looking for a suitable way while asking the Lord for wisdom. This does not mean that we produce the answer by our own strength; rather, we keep asking in faith because we expect His help.

The Lord promised, *"Everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Luke 11:10)*. We do not believe this promise because the matter looks easy. We ask because the Lord, who told us to ask, is alive and has the power to help. If we pray only for what seems possible

in our own thinking, in the end our own judgment comes to set the range of our prayer. If it is a matter that accords with the Lord's will, ask for help even if it looks difficult; and when the faith you need is lacking, ask that He let you learn that faith, too, through the word. While asking and seeking, we come to know not only our own limits but also the Lord, who helps us in the midst of those limits.

The Father who does not repay with what harms His children

It is not only blocked circumstances that make it hard to continue praying. We sometimes shut our mouths because of a heart that doubts whether God will gladly hear our situation. So the Lord spoke, citing the relationship between a parent and a child. *"If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" (Luke 11:11–12)*. A fish and an egg are food a child needs, and a serpent and a scorpion are things that can harm a child. What is important in this parable is not attaching a hidden meaning to each object, but knowing what heart a father has toward the child who asks.

Even a person with faults wants his child to live and tries to give him good things. How much less would the heavenly Father take advantage of His child's petition to give him something harmful? The faith the Lord teaches relies on this goodness of the Father. Therefore, we must not judge that the Father has abandoned us because the matter before our eyes was not accomplished right away in the form we wanted. We gauge what is good by immediate benefit, but the Father knows what our

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circumstances and our faith need, both together.

The word that says to keep asking and the word that says to follow the Father's will do not contradict each other. Even while asking earnestly, we can correct wrong desires before the word, and we can leave the time and the method of the answer to the Lord. This is not an attitude of giving up expectation and resigning ourselves; it is an attitude of believing in the Father's goodness more than in our own thoughts. If we give thanks only when things work out and cut off the relationship when things do not go as we wish, then we have been setting our hearts only on the result we wanted rather than relying on the Father. Reading the Lord's promise again, I hope you will ask the Father, who cares for you even now, for what you need.

The Holy Spirit the Father gives

The Lord led the promise of prayer to the gift of the Holy Spirit. *"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)*. Even if we obtain many things, if we have not solved the problem of sin and live with no relation to God, we cannot say that we have obtained what we need most. While teaching us to ask for help in our living, the Lord lets us know the grace of the Spirit of God dwelling in us as the best gift. To give the Holy Spirit means precisely to remit sins, and the other things are what He gives, as something extra, to the children who have received the remission of sins.

But the Holy Spirit does not come upon us in exchange for the time we have prayed or the loudness of our voice. If we want to receive the Holy Spirit, we must first know through the word

how He remitted our sins, and believe it. Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River and bore on His own body once and for all the sin of the whole world, including all the sins we commit from the time we are born until we die. Bearing the sin that had been passed on to Him in this way, the Lord went to the Cross, shed His blood and died, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and accomplished perfect salvation. Peter, too, preached on the day of Pentecost, *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38)*. Receiving the remission of sins and receiving the Holy Spirit are not two separate things but one thing that happens at the same time. The faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not vaguely expecting that something good will happen; it is accepting the work of Jesus Christ, who saved us in this way.

Because the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart that has received the remission of sins, we do not try to buy the status of children through prayer, but ask the Father for help as His children. If you do not yet know this salvation, ask the Lord for understanding and listen to the word of the gospel. We who already believe must pray that others, too, may know the Lord and be saved, and ask for the strength and the way to preach the word to them. The good things the Father gives are not something that piles up in our hands and ends there; they are revealed also in a life that serves other souls. Like the man who asked for help because he had nothing to set before the friend who came at midnight, ask the Father for what you do not have. Do not turn back because of your lack; I hope you will believe in the Lord, who promised when He told us to ask, and receive His help today as well. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Ask ceaselessly, following the will of the Lord

< Luke 11:5–13 >

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

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Just as one gives bread to a friend who asks persistently

Today we have read the word of Luke chapter 11. The Lord spoke about the prayer He taught us. God wanted to teach us to pray. And through this, He is telling us, "This is how prayer is done, by faith." And He explains this part by giving an example. "Which of you, when a friend comes to you at midnight and says, 'I have nothing to eat, so just lend me three loaves of bread,' would say, 'Look here, my man, what time is it now? And my children and my wife have all gone to bed, so it is late this evening and I cannot give you any. Come tomorrow morning or do something like that.' Would you do that?" That is right. Given the circumstances, it is bothersome and one is in no position to give, but when a close friend comes and asks for help, how many friends would refuse it? No matter how late at night it is, if a friend comes and keeps knocking on the door and asking, saying that he has nothing to eat and asking to be lent some, would one not have no choice but to lend it, if only because of his earnest pleading? To the one who asks while pleading, one cannot but lend. How much more, then, when a child of God asks God, his own Father, would God not give? That is what it means.

"In the same way, I also say to you. Ask. Then I will give to you. Seek. Then you will find. Knock. Then I will open to you. I will surely give. If your worldly friend comes late at night and pleads earnestly, would you not give too, no matter how bothersome it is! When even you give, how much less could I turn away from the prayer you ask!" It means that when God hears a pleading prayer, He surely gives. That is the main point of the word we read today.

If there is something we desire in our hearts, we must first believe in God, have as our foundation the faith that He surely

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answers what His children ask for in prayer, and then actually pray to God, pleading with Him. To put it simply, prayer is begging. It is pleading for help. It is making a request. We must without fail have this kind of prayer and this kind of faith.

The foundation of prayer is the faith that we have been saved

Before we pray, we must first have the faith that believes the Lord gives. To be able to have such wholehearted trust and faith, too, there must be a faith that serves as the fundamental foundation, and that is precisely believing the fact that the Lord has become the Savior of you and me. We must have the faith that believes that the Lord had all the sins of you and me passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, that by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross He saved you and me with the water and the Spirit, that He became the shepherd of you and me, and that we have become His sheep and receive His guidance. Since Jesus rose again from death and is the living Savior who guides us even now, we believe in that Lord and ask for help. Just as one goes to a friend trusting him, thinking, "If I go to this friend, he will surely help me," we must believe in God and go to God. When this faith is in place as the foundation, we can offer pleading prayers to God, and God causes us to obtain what we have asked for. This is what He is saying.

"If you actually have this faith, ask. If you ask, I give. Seek. Then I will surely make you find. Knock. Then I will surely make it be opened. I will surely give, so ask believing. Seek believing. Knock believing." This is God's command and promise, saying, "I will surely help you."

It is truly important that we have faith in our hearts. We believe this word the Lord spoke here, without leaving out a single thing. If there is anyone who has no faith, let such a person pray to God and ask even for faith. If you ask earnestly, you can experience God giving it.

And you can join in when those who have gone ahead pray. Even if you do not have much faith yourself, if you pray together with them, your own wishes are also conveyed to God. Just as parents never fail to give to a small child just because the child cannot speak well, even if you cannot pray well and are clumsy, if you believe clearly and pray, the Lord knows that heart and answers. “The Lord is my God and my Savior. The Lord has saved me and is my Father. He is my Master. And because He said to ask, if I ask, He surely gives. If I pray with this faith, I will surely receive.” I believe that if you pray with even such a very small faith, you will experience your prayer being fulfilled.

The privilege of prayer given to the born-again

The most important faith for us saints is the faith that says, “We have been saved through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.” This faith must come first. Second, we must have the faith that says, “It comes to pass according to the word God has promised.” Having that faith is important. This is because the Lord has already spoken and given His promise.

In fact, we saints who have received the remission of sins are saints who have received very special grace. The saints who have received the remission of sins are special people who, because they believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, have been saved before God and become children of God. And they are the people of the Lord who have received a great

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privilege from God. Among those living on this earth, only those who have believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and been born again are the ones who have special authority. Because they alone are qualified to pray and have the privilege of receiving answers as they pray, anyone who wants to receive an answer from God must first of all believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and be born again. Since prayer is truly answered when we pray with the faith that God answers, it is more important for the born-again, too, not to pray halfheartedly trusting only in their privilege, but to believe that He surely answers.

When we do some work, we pray to God. What is important at this time is that we must pray truly believing the promise of God. If we believe the promise of God and pray, we experience having it fulfilled just so and receive blessings; but really, how much do you believe when you pray? How much you believe in your hearts is indeed the question, but since God has already given faith to you and me and has already given us the qualification to pray, we can pray by faith. If we pray properly with the faith that God gives what we have prayed for as He has promised, and if only we have the faith that believes, "The Lord surely gives," we surely receive its fulfillment. If the purpose is good and beautiful in God's sight, He surely answers it whenever it may be, so we need the faith that, whenever we receive the answer, we will surely receive it. It is good for us to have such faith.

We are trying to lead the souls of our families to the Lord. So we must first pray to God for them. Also, are there not things that you truly need in your hearts and in your lives? We must pray with one accord for the things you need. Let us put all such things forward as prayer topics and pray all together. Then God answers.

The Lord said, *"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9)*. That is to say, it means that He gives as we like. If we want something to turn out a certain way, we ask for it earnestly, and if we ask earnestly, He gives it as long as it is not something bad in God's sight. If what we desire is fitting in God's sight, He does it for us. Also, there are some things where the door is shut tight and they look utterly impossible. If that is truly God's will, if that is truly a work that pleases God, He accomplishes even that work that looks impossible. Believe that if we believe and pray, God our shepherd, who is mighty in power, accomplishes it. It means that God makes it be opened, lets us obtain what we like, and lets us find what we seek.

For this reason, in the lives of you and me, prayer is truly like breathing. But in the course of spreading this gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world, how much do we ask? How much do we seek? How much do we knock, asking for the way to be opened? Even though prayer can be one condition of how much or how little of God's blessing we receive as we live on this earth, there are often times when we neglect prayer. All we have to do is truly believe in our hearts and pray.

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"

We have no power at all, but God has much power. The Lord said, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. We often think, "If I pray and ask only for what is mine, my conscience bothers me a bit, so wouldn't it be better to work hard rather than to pray?" But since we are praying not for what we want only

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for ourselves, but for what is beneficial to the kingdom of God and beneficial to the spread of the gospel, it is right to pray with the faith that it must surely come to pass. If we pray with the strong petition that a work absolutely necessary for the gospel must absolutely be accomplished, God accomplishes it. It means that if we ask in that way, not only for ourselves but for the gospel, and if we ask not unconditionally for fleshly things alone but for spiritual things, God gives us what we ask for. So we must learn to pray first for His kingdom and His righteousness. Rather than praying only for ourselves, let us first pray for His kingdom and His righteousness, for the spread of the gospel to the whole world.

"Please let all those who hear the gospel be saved. Give them all understanding, and give us faith. Grant faith to my family and my relatives too, so that they may receive the remission of sins and live for the salvation of souls, which pleases God in this way. And Lord, I want to live for the gospel, but my flesh also has needs. I need material things, I need a good environment, and I need a job. I need material blessings. I also need a good environment. And I need faith. Also, keep me from all dangers. Give me more faith so that I can be of one heart in serving the gospel."

When we pray like this, God gives those things. He actually gives them all. Therefore, asking for what we need in our lives is precisely prayer. And we are people who can pray with faith.

I believe that although it cannot be done by my own strength, nor by the fleshly strength of our saints or the servants of God, if we believe in God and pray within the righteousness of God, within that will which pleases God, everything comes to pass. Because we have boldness, when there is some problem or the like, we come to pray with boldness according to this: "Is God pleased with this, or is He not pleased?"

When we pray earnestly, God sees whether it is beneficial to the gospel, and if it is something He is pleased to accomplish, He answers it all. I do not have the strength to accomplish that work, but God adds it to me. It means that God answers the prayers that the righteous ask.

The heart of the one who prays also has boldness because he refrains from praying for himself, for his own flesh alone, and works and prays with the heart that seeks to spread the gospel of the kingdom of God to the whole world. When you and I plead with God for help, we have the faith that can do so very boldly, without any anxiety of heart. If we ask very boldly with such faith and wait boldly, it comes to pass. This is faith.

In the lives of you and me, can our flesh do without the help of God? No. In our flesh, too, there must always be the help of God. Our flesh, too, needs to do well for the sake of the gospel. We have to eat something to stay healthy, we have to solve the problems of food, clothing, and shelter, and we also need a good environment and care. It means that at all times, just as what the soul needs is necessary, the things of the flesh are also necessary. Just as this and that are needed for the right work of the kingdom of God, so also this and that are all needed for the flesh of you and me. For this reason, we must first pray for the kingdom of God, live for it, serve for it, and live by faith. After doing so, we can pray for what the flesh needs. If, after seeking the righteousness of God, we also pray for the things of the flesh, God gives us this and gives us that, too. This is precisely the privilege given to us saints.

Just as, when the son of a king asks his father for something, the father rightly grants that request within his authority, so our God also fills us, who have become His children, with everything that God will give. When we, wanting to live before God according to God's will, say regarding the needs of the flesh,

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"Give us this, and give us that, and make this go well for us, and make that go well too," because we are truly children of God, and because, though we are lacking, at least in faith we lack nothing, our prayer reaches up to God. Also, God cares for us with love and answers us as we follow the example of the faith of the saints who believed before us and go forward praying together. So there is this reasonableness and logic in our praying, too. When we pray before God, it is not that we superstitiously and blindly say, "Though you are a god I do not know, I pray to you." Our praying is prayer that is truly valid before God.

For this reason, we must learn our prayer. The Lord said to us, *"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9),* but before praying this prayer, we must first keep our own faith. Because we have a deficient flesh, if we just leave it to drift as the flesh goes, it goes off endlessly to places that have nothing to do with God. No matter how close a person may be, with someone whose faith is different, the one who truly believes must first set a boundary line. It must not be that we get along well in the flesh with those who have not been born again; rather, as befits the born-again, we must think for God and unite our hearts together with the saints of God and the servants of God. We must have the thought, "I am a child of God. I am one of the people of God. And you are someone who needs to hear the gospel." We must pray that the will of God be done on this earth, in this world, in the whole world, and go forward in faith together with the church. If you do not know well what to pray for and have too few prayers to pray, I ask you to look at the prayer topics of those who have gone ahead and follow them. Even if, on our own, we truly cannot muster the faith, since it is truly fitting within the will of God, we must learn everything about praying always with the same heart. Starting from a small faith, we must learn, and

gradually learn to live in accordance with that will of God. That is how it is.

Prayer is asking for what is needed in life. Asking God for help is prayer. And when a child of God asks for help, God helps. On the part of us saints, there must first be faith. I believe that our saints and the servants of God have the faith that says, "This will surely come to pass."

Because we want to preach the gospel to young people as well and pray for it, this comes to pass. I believe that countless scholars, religious people, and many people in many countries will hear this gospel and surely receive the remission of sins. Why? Because we wrote the books with such faith. And since this gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth, it is only natural that people are changed. After people read our books, they turn around on their own with the spiritual realization, "We were believing in a mess. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is truly right!"

People who seek the gospel of the water and the Spirit are hearing the word of salvation. We preach the word, hoping that people in many countries will come to know the gospel. It is a thing to be thankful for that the people who believe the gospel and become the people of God are increasing. The spread of the gospel seems to be growing more and more fervent. Many changes have taken place in the people who have received and read our books. There are also people who testify that they came to encounter this truth while earnestly asking God. When we ask God, He lets us find in this way.

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The Lord alone is the One who can say, "Ask"

God gives to us who ask. Therefore, we must ask ceaselessly. "In this universe, ask of Me. I give you what you have asked for." Is there anyone in the world who has said such a thing? There is no one who can do so except Jesus Christ, who made all things in the universe, who made heaven and earth, and who saved us from sin. If it were you, would you have the power to say to people, "Ask me for whatever you need. I will give it all"? You have no desire to do so, and even less do you have the power to do so. Even parents often lack the ability to grant the requests of the children they have raised with love and devotion. But our God Jesus Christ, who saved us, who made the heaven and earth of this world, and who saved us from sin—our Jesus, who became our Savior, and that Jesus, who became our God—says to us, "Ask of Me, and it will be given to you. Seek. What you seek, I will give. Come and seek from Me. I will give. Knock. Then I will open to you." What a powerful word this is, and what a blessed promise this is! What a great promise it is that He tells us to pray! The only One who can do this is God. No one at all in this world can do this.

Did Siddhartha ever do that? "Believe in me. Then I will remove your sins." He could not do that. Rather, the Buddha said, "Practice asceticism, attain enlightenment, and be liberated. Free yourselves from your cravings by your own efforts and become gods. Become Buddhas." The philosophies and teachings of the world speak of examining oneself and of the duties to be kept between people. They spoke only of the things people should do well among themselves, saying, "Be loyal to your country, be filial to your parents, and keep faith between friends."

But what did our Lord say? He said to people, "Do you have sin? Come to Me. Then I will remove your sins. I have removed

all your sins with the water, the blood, and the Spirit, so believe. Believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins. Do you believe? Then you have received the remission of sins. And then, do you have anything you need? If you ask Me, I will give it." And as He said and promised, He gave to those who asked, in due season. And He continues to supply in due season. The Lord continually gives answers not only regarding salvation but also regarding what we need. What amazing power this is! What a promise of blessing this is, so befitting of God! We must believe this.

We must pray for the salvation of our families, we must also pray to receive blessings in your material things, in your health, and in your circumstances, and we must also pray to live our lives of faith well. Also, we too must live well, but because it is the will of God that the gospel be spread well to the whole world, we must pray for the spread of the gospel to the whole world so that the will of God may be well accomplished. God accomplishes His will through us, who have become His children and ask for help, and He also blesses us.

Pray ceaselessly until it is accomplished

We must learn these things from this word. In practice, how much do we pray? How much do we live asking God for help? Do we handle most things on our own, without asking for help in everything? In fact, what we can do by our own strength we accomplish easily by ourselves and handle well. Then, when something beyond our ability comes up, only then do we cling to God and pray. Do you have a greater aspiration that you truly cannot handle by your own ability, so that you have no choice but to ask God for help? Do you have a higher ideal? To

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accomplish it, there is no way but to pray and ask for the help of God. But in fact, whether we can do it or not, we must ask God; if God takes it away, even the ability to make a living disappears. Since we the righteous need the help of God every day, every moment we breathe, every minute and second, we must pray according to the word that says, *"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17)*.

We are living in this vain world. We are living in this world where truly evil people live. So we must pray to God to protect us. We must pray that He protect us from the hands of evil people and also protect us from evil spirits, and pray that He protect us from evil circumstances as well. The more we pray, the more God helps us. God answers our prayers. Therefore, we the righteous, who have been born again of water and the Spirit, come to live by faith day by day, every single day, without dying.

The born-again righteous must learn this kind of faith and learn to pray. I must learn, and you must learn too; that is how it is. God tells us to pray, saying that He will give, and yet how evil it is before God for us, on our part, not to pray out of laziness! God says He gives, but how much do we ask? How much do we ask and believe? Have you never prayed once and then said, "If it happens, fine; if not, fine"? And have you never prayed in the manner of, "Do it for me if You will, and if not, don't"? From now on, ask earnestly. That is faith, and that is the way prayer is answered.

We must truly pray ceaselessly until it is accomplished. Think of the man who went to his old friend and kept pleading. Like that man who kept pleading with his old friend until he got what he had to get, do we ask until what we truly need is accomplished? Let us think about it. And let us have faith in this regard. Those who pray in that way with the faith that He gives when we ask are those who have faith.

Do you believe? I truly do, too. So we must pray in everything. We must pray for the salvation of our families, we must pray for your future ahead, we must pray for our present serving of the Lord, and we must pray in order to live a life of faith and also to receive blessings in the flesh. We must pray hoping that material things, health, circumstances, and the things we truly have in mind will all be fulfilled. We must ask for help in both spirit and flesh. We must pray. And I believe that when we live a life of faith that prays every day, God will give us what we need in due season, each time. He surely helps. If you and I are righteous people who have received the remission of sins, if we believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit with our hearts and truly have no sin by faith, God certainly gives such blessings. We must live with faith.

Dear fellow believers, I hope that you will truly become people who pray. Those who work really cannot pray much. Since you and I do not have much time to pray individually, we must pray a lot when we are all gathered together. In fact, we must also pray a lot individually whenever we have time, but there are many times when we cannot pray individually. So we must have meetings often. And when we gather, we must be sure to pray without leaving it out. We must not think of prayer as a bother. When we gather, we must be sure to pray for the righteousness of God and for right things, and also, when we gather, tell God of our personal circumstances and ask for help. If there is something the church needs, we must ask for it, ask for the faith of individuals, and also ask for help for those who are following after us. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Ask, seek, and knock

< Luke 11:9–13 >

“‘So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!’”

Today I would like to preach the word about prayer. *“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Luke 11:9)*. The Lord told us that there are things a person needs, both spiritual and physical, as he lives.

“Ask, and it will be given to you”

Whatever that may be, the Lord tells us to ask for it. He promised through His word that if only we ask, the Lord gives us everything.

If we say we believe in God, we must rely on this word and ask God for the things we need, both spiritual and physical.

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I know that there are many things that we human beings need. There are all sorts of things. So the point is that our Father God surely gives when we, who have become His children, ask.

God promised that if we human beings ask God for anything, He gives what is best in His sight.

So *"ask, and it will be given to you" (Luke 11:9)* means that we should ask for what we need.

Each one of us must think about what it is that we need. Each one of us must think it over and ask for what we need. He says to ask, and then it will be given; the point is that we should ask.

"Ask." Dear fellow believers, what is it that you need? You must ask for what you need. Then God gives it.

Seek the lost souls

"Seek, and you will find" (Luke 11:9). It said that we will find. The Lord tells us to seek. Then, He says, we will find.

What can we seek? I know that there are many things to seek.

Spiritually, too, we must seek the souls that are to receive the remission of sins, the lost souls.

Also, we must seek what we need in our livelihood.

Our Lord gives when we pray and seek.

But the point is whether we believe in God.

God has promised. And we believe in God. Our Lord does for us according to such faith.

Knock on the door

"Knock, and it will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9). We must also look into what it is that we should knock on the door for.

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And we must knock for what we hope for before God. For the salvation of the souls of our families, we must knock persistently before the Lord. Saying, “Please save the souls of our families,” and “Lord, please open the door of their hearts,” we must knock on the door.

Also, we must knock on the door of preaching the gospel. Though they are not visible to our physical eyes, for the salvation of the many souls in various countries, too, we must knock on the door, asking Him to open the door for preaching the gospel to them, and praying, “Please open the door of their hearts.”

So, since the word says *“knock, and it will be opened to you” (Luke 11:9)*, we must first knock on the door with prayer, asking God to save those souls. Also for the door of the people to whom we are to preach the gospel, we must first pray before God and knock on the door before God with prayer, so that God Himself first knocks on their hearts with His own hand.

And we must knock on the door of the future. We know nothing about how our future will turn out. But knocking on the door of the future is the same as knocking on the door of faith. We must pray in faith for the salvation of souls, knock on the door before God, saying, “God, please protect us,” and also knock on the door of praying that God would bless us.

Though we do not know what lies ahead of us, we must knock on the door, asking that our God hold us fast, bless us, and enable us to follow the Lord to the end, until the day the Lord comes. We have not yet met the things that will come upon us in the future. Nevertheless, we look ahead to the future with the eyes of faith, hoping that God will bless us, that He will also protect us, and that He will give us faith; and we want to live, until the day the Lord comes, without letting our faith become

corrupted, preaching the gospel to the end and being together with the church, and then meet the Lord.

So we must knock on the door before our Lord for our own future selves and for souls. The word tells us to knock on the door. Just as the Lord said that if we knock on the door, it will be opened to us, we knock on the door with prayer, saying, "We believe in God. We believe that God will bring about what we have prayed for." If we knock on the door with prayer, then it will be opened.

The faith that believes in God

Looking at the word that follows, it says as follows: *"Everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:10–13).*

So here, the word that everyone who asks receives, that he who seeks finds, and that to him who knocks it will be opened means that we must pray and believe the fact that God brings it about. We can believe. We can believe that God brings about what we have prayed for. So we pray, and in the end we believe in God.

We believe that God will abundantly bring about what we have prayed and asked for before the Lord. This is precisely faith. We must pray and believe the fact that our Lord surely brings about what we have prayed for. When we believe in God, if we

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believe, with this faith of "God, we believe," the fact that God brings all this about, then God brings about everything we have prayed for.

If we only pray and do not believe, no work takes place. We must believe. The faith that believes that God brings about all that we have prayed for moves the hand of God, and that faith with which we believe in God moves God, so that He Himself brings about what we have asked of God.

That is the point of this word. And our God gives us what is best among the things we need, which we ask for, seek, and knock for.

He said that even among those who are fathers of men, where is there one who would give a serpent when his son asks for a fish, and who is there who would give a scorpion when he asks for an egg; how much more will the Father in heaven give good things to you; and He spoke this word: *"How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13)*. So God gives what is best to His children. Giving us human beings the Holy Spirit is the best thing. And not only the Holy Spirit, but all those things for which we pray for ourselves, both spiritual and physical, ask for what we need, and knock on the door toward the future—our Father God surely gives them. If we believe in God, He surely gives what we have prayed for.

Faith based on the word

God surely gives what we have asked for, sought, and knocked for. Therefore we must pray in faith. This is the word of God. As for what we must base our prayers on, we must pray based on the word of God, and we must believe in God based on

the word.

That faith is the true and right faith. Even if that faith is only as small as a mustard seed, God brings it about. So in our praying, we ask for what we need, we seek what we need, we pray in advance before God for our future, we knock, and by telling Him the desires we hope for, we receive the help of God in all things.

And God answers us with what is best among the things we have prayed for in this way. We must believe the fact that He answers with what is best. We believe in God. And our God gives people the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the gift He gives to those who have received the remission of sins by believing that the Lord had all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and shed His blood and died on the Cross. Since Jesus rose again from death and became our Savior, we believe in this salvation and come to God.

In other words, it is the promise that among the things we have prayed and asked for, He answers that prayer asking Him to save souls. *"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9)*. We must believe in God and pray, and live receiving the help of God in due season.

Let us live holding the faith that believes the promise concerning prayer, that God gives everything we have prayed for and gives what is best. If we pray in faith and believe in God, we live. Then the One who brings it about is God. The One who gives is God. Since He said *"ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9)*, it is the word of God that what we have to do is to pray. Do you have many worries, anxieties, concerns about the future, things you need right now, and things to seek?

Now, as for what we have prayed for, "God, please give, please give, please give"—because He said that He gives,

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believe based on the word of God, pray, saying, “Please give,” and believe the fact that He brings about what we have prayed for. If we pray and believe, God gives what is best. It actually comes to pass.

So when we hope for an answer to prayer, since we have prayed, we must expect it. When we expect it, God hears our prayer and gives us what is best. He actually gives what is best. He actually gives what is best to each and every one of us.

Is there perhaps anyone among you who prayed and thinks that the prayer was not answered? Dear fellow believers, God gives what is best. If you have your own standard, you do not know well what that good thing is. We must see that, leaving aside our own standard, God knows what is most necessary and what is best for me and for you right now, and gives it to us. And in the promise concerning prayer, the word that says He will *“give the Holy Spirit” (Luke 11:13)* is, in other words, the promise that He will save the souls we have prayed for.

So the Bible says *“seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33)*. It is telling us to ask for the sake of the preaching of the kingdom of God, and to ask for everything we need on this earth. Then God will answer. We give true thanks to our God. We give thanks that God gives us all these things. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

What the tongues spoken of in the Bible are

< Luke 11:14–23 >

“And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled. But some of them said, ‘He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.’ Others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven. But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls. If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.’”

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The slander that He casts out demons by Beelzebub

When Jesus cast out a demon that kept a man from speaking, the demon went out and the man who had been unable to speak spoke. Seeing Jesus perform this kind of miracle, people clamored, *"He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons" (Luke 11:15)*. Also, some tested Jesus and *"sought from Him a sign from heaven" (Luke 11:16)*; that is, they were telling Him to try just once to make a miracle happen in heaven right before their eyes, and asking whether He could do that. Jesus cast out the demon that kept the man from speaking so that the man came to speak, yet the people slandered Jesus instead.

The name Beelzebub means the lord of the flies. They slandered Him and fought with Him in that way, asking whether He had not cast out the demon by relying on the lord of the flies. So Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, *"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls" (Luke 11:17)*, and He also said, *"If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:19–20)*. He went on to say, *"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils" (Luke 11:21–22)*. This word means that when one is not strong, one has all one's goods taken away.

That the Lord cast out the demon from the man possessed by a demon that kept him from speaking—that is what today's word is about. At the same time, the Lord spoke to the effect that they should not slander Him and fight among themselves, that if they fight they will be ruined, that since what He had done had

already been shown to them, the kingdom of God has come to the person who believes in Him, and that they too could do the same by faith; and He summed it up, saying, *"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters" (Luke 11:23)*.

What I want to talk about with this word is tongues. This is because in this age the word of God is translated into the languages of other countries and preached.

The tongues at Pentecost were the languages of each country

When we look at the Book of Acts, on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples as they were gathered together, and they spoke in tongues, and those who heard those tongues heard them in the languages of their own countries. *"'And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.' So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'Whatever could this mean?'" (Acts 2:8–12)*. When Pentecost came, the disciples of Jesus spoke in tongues. They are said to have spoken in tongues, but those who heard them heard them in the language of the region where they themselves were born. For example, if a person from another country had been there, he would have heard it in the language of that country. What languages did the disciples of Jesus know? They would have known nothing but the language

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of their own country and the language used in that land. Yet as they spoke those words, their tongues twisted as the words came out, and the words of that country came out. When they themselves spoke, they were speaking the language of their own country, but the language of that country came out. So those who heard them said, "Oh, they are speaking in our language. Those people are uneducated, so how did they learn our language? Even I, who was born there, cannot speak it well." What is called tongues means regional languages. It means the languages of each country.

There are two kinds of tongues. One is tongues spoken to God with the heart; the speaker himself speaks in a language he knows, but the person next to him does not understand. The other is tongues spoken in the regional language of a particular country. There are tongues that can be understood and tongues that cannot be understood, but ordinarily, speaking in tongues cannot be understood.

"I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue"

It would be good if tongues could be understood when they are spoken; let us look at the word of 1 Corinthians. *"Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied;*

for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification. But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me. Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel. Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say 'Amen' at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Corinthians 14:1–19).

Let us read the last verse of this passage once more. *"Yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my*

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understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Corinthians 14:19). The Apostle Paul, too, prayed well in tongues. Since it is praying with one's own heart, the pronunciation does not have to be correct. There are times when we pray as if groaning, with sounds that do not form words, and such a thing is also similar to tongues, but tongues are a language spoken to God. God understands it and we ourselves understand it, but the person next to us does not understand it. Yet if someone, claiming that he knows how to speak in tongues, makes sounds that cannot be understood during the worship service, the person next to him does not understand, so what benefit would there be in it? Therefore, the word says that we should not try to speak in tongues, but should speak in tongues to God with the heart when we are alone and strive to prophesy. And Paul says plainly that in the church, speaking five words with one's understanding is better than speaking ten thousand words in a tongue.

It means that telling people what one has understood from reading the Bible in order to teach them, the five words that tell them that this word means such and such, is far better than speaking ten thousand words in a tongue. So it is not that tongues are useless, but that they are beneficial to the individual and not beneficial to the gathering. And in this age, people do not speak in tongues. Nor does God give them. This is because they are not needed in this age. What we must preach in words that people can understand is the fact that Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Because of those sins Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death; so we must preach the word so that those who hear it may understand and believe in this salvation.

In this age the gospel is preached through translation

The reason I read this word today is that in this age the word of God is translated into the languages of other countries and preached. If I go to a foreign country and speak in the tongue of that country, those who hear me may understand for a short while, but after a little while they forget it. Since tongues are regional languages, translating the word into the language of that country and making booklets to give to people is far better than speaking in tongues uselessly. God brought about the work of tongues on the day of Pentecost in the early Church and made the apostles speak in tongues, but in the days of the early Church there was no way to translate the word into the languages of other countries and make it into books. That is why God worked in the hearts of the servants of God and made them speak in the languages of those countries. But now He does not give it, because it is not needed.

I, too, am a person who actually spoke in tongues in the past, so I knew what tongues I was speaking. But many people who speak in tongues do not know themselves what they are saying, and others cannot understand them either. If you ask them what tongues they are speaking, they say they do not know. So I once told them to stop speaking words that even they themselves cannot understand.

Even today there are cases of laying hands on people's heads and making them speak in tongues, and we must be careful. This is because, just as sin is passed on through the laying on of hands, another spirit can also be passed on. If the guide speaks in tongues, the members of the church also come to devote their strength to speaking in tongues that cannot be understood. God is not pleased with doing so. Those who have not tried it may

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want to try it, but those who have tried it know that it is of no benefit to the person next to them. Moreover, since we have been born again, we have all the less need of such a thing.

The work of translating the word into the languages of other countries must be done while checking whether the content has been conveyed as it is and whether it has been changed into something strange. This is because if the content of the gospel is changed, those who hear it cannot reach salvation.

Preach in easy words that anyone can understand

If we check the translated books well and distribute them to people as paper books, e-books, and audiobooks, then, since everything we preach is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, will it not be conveyed to the other person? When the other person knows and believes this gospel, that the Lord had all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and shed His blood and died on the Cross, he receives salvation. This is because the Holy Spirit works together with it at that time. That is our purpose. Our purpose is nothing else.

My purpose is not to make my sentences eloquent or to use difficult classical idioms. If I think I have used a difficult word while preaching, I quickly say it again in easy words. This is because there are also people who are slow to catch what is said. If they fail to understand even three or four words during the sermon, everything preached in that hour is all for nothing. We must preach very easily and in easy words, and to foreigners, too, we must preach in very easy words. Only then can even the uneducated receive the remission of sins. If we speak in a learned way, only the learned understand and receive the remission of sins, but in this world there are far more uneducated

people than educated people. Even in a country like the United States, there are very many people who do not know English. There are also very many people who cannot read. We must preach it in an easy way. Then the Lord will be pleased.

Healing the man who could not speak is evidence that the Messiah had come

The Lord said, *"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters" (Luke 11:23)*. Why did the Lord heal the man who could not speak? He cast out the demon that kept the man from speaking in order to show that He Himself is the Son of God, the Creator, God, and the Savior—that is, that the Messiah had come to the nation of Israel. That is why this man came to speak. Then did this man believe in Jesus, or not? This man believed, thinking, "Ah, the Messiah has come. The Savior has come." But the rest of the people, when Jesus cast out the demon from the demon-possessed man, slandered and sneered at Him, saying that He was doing such a thing by relying on the lord of the flies.

So the Lord was saying that if they, too, fought and were divided among their own household, they would bring ruin upon themselves. Who is the most important One for the people of Israel? It is Jesus Christ. If they believed the fact that Jesus had come, they would receive salvation and also escape from that suffering. If they had believed well, Jesus could also have performed miracles and wonders and enabled them to live in plenty. If Jesus prayed just once, He could feed them all. But the Pharisees and the scribes did not believe, saying to Jesus, "You say You are the Son of God? I know You; isn't Your mother Mary and Your father Joseph? For You to say You are the Son

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of God, that is far too enormous a lie. I saw You growing up as a child."

Even though you have been born again, try preaching this gospel to the people of your hometown. The people of your hometown mock you and do not believe, saying, "I know you well; I even know which school you went to, and you say you have been born again? In the old days you used to go around with me and even got into fights, so however much you say you have been born again, is there anything that has changed now?" The people of one's own hometown absolutely do not believe. The people of one's own country do not acknowledge one. Just as He said, *"No prophet is accepted in his own country" (Luke 4:24)*, one absolutely does not receive a welcome. When you go to your hometown, too, people look down on you and make light of you, asking whether you are not so-and-so's daughter or so-and-so's son, and they sneer at you, saying that your family was terribly poor, so how are things these days, and asking whether you even went to school a bit. If you say, "This is how I am now," people do not believe you. Jesus, too, was treated this way.

The reason we preach through books instead of in person

Jesus cast out the demon because He had the power in Himself, but we do not even know the language of that country, so by what means can we teach those people? It is better to translate the word into the language of that country and hand them a single book. A single book can be read in no time, but if we try to convey it person to person, they disregard the gospel with whatever excuse they can find, saying, "We received the gospel first, and you come to us and teach us?"

With the gospel made into a book, a person has only to read it himself, but saying to people of other countries, “Do you have sin?” is not an easy thing. If it is done wrongly, it becomes an insult to the person. Then he says, “Are you a prosecutor? Whether I have sin or not, why do you meddle?” It is like that in every country. If you speak wrongly to a person you do not even know well, asking whether there is sin in his heart, you could be sued, and in these days you could even be grabbed by the collar. With this excuse he does not listen to what I say, and with that excuse he evades and refuses. But if I just hand him a single book, whether he likes me or not, he reads it if he wants to read it, and he does not read it if he does not want to. And yet the whole content is contained here in one book.

As you also know, how many people are coming to be saved even in distant countries by reading the gospel in books? Because I know this, I am telling you that the work of translating and preaching the word is more important than a person going there directly. I, too, have been to many countries. I go and greet them and say, “Let us believe in Jesus,” and if I go a little further I can talk about the word to some extent, but people do not readily give even such an opportunity.

The literature ministry is done by those who have the true gospel

The literature ministry is not something that just anyone does. It is done by those who have the true gospel. After checking whether the gospel is conveyed correctly, they bring it out as e-books and paper books. In these days, a way to preach the gospel in this manner has been opened. If we do so, the spread of the

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gospel will become far faster than it is now. Then the Lord is pleased, and the Holy Spirit who is in us is also pleased.

In the early Church God made people speak the languages of each country through tongues, but in this age He has made us preach the gospel through translation. Since everything we preach is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, when we translate it into easy words and preach it, the other person comes to know its content, believes, and receives salvation. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Will we slander the One who cast out the demon, or receive Him as the Savior?

< Luke 11:14–26 >

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

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he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.'"

The heart that turns revealed grace into slander

When a person who could not speak comes to speak, we can rejoice together that the affliction that had held him has been loosed. When Jesus cast out the demon that made a man unable to speak, the multitudes also marveled at that work. Yet, even after seeing the same work, some slandered Jesus, saying that He had borrowed the power of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons, and some demanded yet another sign. Even though grace had appeared before their eyes, they did not accept the One who had bestowed that grace.

This is not merely a problem that arose from a lack of evidence. If a heart that refuses to acknowledge Jesus is standing first, one comes to turn even what has already happened into some other meaning. The Lord saw through that heart and spoke as follows: *"But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls'" (Luke 11:17)*. The claim that He broke the rule of Satan by the power of Satan amounts to saying that Satan brought down his own kingdom by himself. The Lord made clear how self-contradictory their slander was through the parable of a kingdom and a house, which anyone could understand.

He also asked them what standard they applied to the works of the people they acknowledged. If they accepted the works of their own side while saying that only the works Jesus did came

from an evil power, that was not an attitude of examining things fairly. We, too, must look back on whether we push away the word simply because it does not fit our familiar thoughts. Only when we first examine what the Lord actually did and with what meaning He speaks, rather than whether it is a word that is comfortable for us to accept, can we turn back from the error of rejecting the grace of salvation while holding on to our own judgment.

The kingdom of God that has already come

The Lord did not stop at refuting the slander, but spoke of what this event reveals: *"But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20)*. Setting free a man oppressed by a demon was not evidence that Jesus received the help of an evil force; rather, it was a work that showed that the authority of God was breaking that rule. This is because the Lord's healing of the man who could not speak was a work to show that the Messiah, the Savior, had come to Israel. Therefore, what the multitudes had to see was not merely a marvelous phenomenon, but the authority of the Savior who was doing that work.

The kingdom of God does not begin only after people have agreed to acknowledge Jesus. Since the Lord was already doing the work of the kingdom of God in their midst, what they needed was not to put forward new conditions, but the faith that accepts the Lord. The man who could not speak was set free, but the people who were watching slandered Him or sought another sign. Today we, too, may wait only for some other evidence that we want, while the word of salvation is coming to our ears. However, if we seek only special experiences while not listening to the

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word that tells us how He has solved the sin of our hearts, we are turning away from the most important evidence the Lord has given.

Jesus had compassion on sickness and suffering, and He came to this earth to save people from sin. Therefore, what we must see in this event is not the fact itself that the demon went out, but the One who did that work. The text shows who Jesus is through what happened to this man. What we need, too, is not eyes that see amazing things, but the faith that knows the salvation by which the Lord has solved our sins. When we rightly know what He has done, we come to move forward from the place of merely marveling to the place of relying on the Savior.

The Savior, who overcomes the strong man

If an armed man is guarding his own house, a weak man cannot come and take away his goods. Saying that one stronger than he must come, the Lord said, *"But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils" (Luke 11:22)*. The Lord, who cast out the demon, is not One who joined hands with the evil forces, but the One who overcomes those forces. It was not that the oppressed man first became free by his own strength and then came to the Lord; rather, the Lord drove away the power that had been holding him.

In the matter of sin, too, we must know the fact that we cannot save ourselves. Even if we hide our past wrongs or resolve to live well from now on, we cannot erase even the judgment of the sins we have already committed. That is why Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John in the

Jordan River, and had the sin of the whole world passed on to His own body once and for all. Because all the sins of our whole lives were transferred to Him, the Lord, bearing that sin, was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, receiving the judgment in our place. And He rose again from death and saved us from sin and death. The power on which we must rely is not the willpower that tries to forget sin, but the power of Jesus Christ, who accomplished salvation through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

In the face of this salvation, we cannot remain only in the position of watching the Lord as onlookers. *"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters" (Luke 11:23)*. One may think that it is all right to have no faith since one does not slander what the Lord has done, but the salvation the Lord gives must be accepted with the heart. When we believe the fact that Jesus bore our sins and received the judgment for them, His salvation becomes our salvation. Also, we who have received salvation serve in the work of gathering with the Lord so that other people, too, may know this grace. This is not striving to draw people to our own side, but rightly preaching the Lord, who saved us, so that they may come to Him.

What a house put in order needs

The Lord went on to tell the story of a demon that went out and then returned. When that demon came back to the house where it had been before, it found the house cleaned and put in order. Yet that condition did not guarantee safety to the end. *"Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Luke 11:26)*. If we are

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satisfied by looking only at what left at first, we come to miss the importance of what we believe and live by after that. The fact that the outward appearance of the house had been put in order did not mean that it had also gained the power to guard the house.

It is necessary to correct one's life and to abandon wrong habits. However, if we make that the basis for the remission of sins, our hearts remain bound to our own efforts. Even a person who washes off the filth of his heart now and then through religious life cannot keep that condition, and, after feeling secure in his temporarily improved state, he can fall into a deeper fear than before when his faults are revealed again. This is because the human heart does not remain an empty house. It is one of the two: either one receives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit rules that heart, or an unclean spirit takes its place there again. When we hear the word with which the Lord warns us, rather than asking how we can adorn the outside more, we must examine what our hearts actually rely on. Believing in the salvation of Jesus and being satisfied that one's own condition has improved are not the same thing.

The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart that has received the remission of sins by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore, we must not conclude that the Savior has left just because a believer has revealed his weakness, nor try to fill our hearts with new experiences each time. Even when our faults are revealed, we must confirm through the word that the Lord bore even those sins and received the judgment for them, turn back from the wrong path, and receive the guidance of the Lord. Our safety does not depend on how neat an appearance we maintain, but lies in the Lord, who saved us.

The people who first saw this event could have rejoiced at the work of the Lord, but they could also have slandered Him and drawn back. We must not become people who overturn that grace

with our own thoughts. Believe with your heart in the salvation Jesus has bestowed, and live according to His word. What we must do before the Lord, who loosed the man who could not speak, is not to make up yet another reason to reject Him, but to receive Him, who rescued us from sin, as our Savior. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The blessing of those who hear the word of God and keep it

< Luke 11:27–28 >

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

The person who envied the woman who bore Jesus

While Jesus was speaking, a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and cried out, *“Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!” (Luke 11:27)*. This woman, who had been listening to the word of the Lord, thought how blessed the mother who bore and raised Jesus must be. She envied the person who was in a close relationship with such an amazing One. But the Lord, rather than accepting that admiration as it was, awakened her anew to who is a blessed person before God.

We, too, when we see someone’s faith, easily think first of the environment in which he has lived or of the people close to him. We suppose that because he grew up in a good family and

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learned the word, he must be different from us, or we think that a person who has long been together with people of faith has a special qualification. Having received such help is something to be thankful for, but that does not in itself become the faith of one's own heart. If we only envy other people's relationships and histories, we miss how we ought to respond to the word that is now being spoken to us.

The Lord's answer changes the idea that the way to obtain blessing is open only to a few people who have already been determined. This is because, although not just anyone can occupy the place of the mother who bore Jesus, the word of God can be heard and received now. The Lord did not try to rebuke the woman's admiring heart and silence her; rather, He taught her where the blessing lies that she, too, could actually enjoy. We must not stop at looking at the grace that others have received, but must examine whether we ourselves believe the word of the Lord.

The response to the word that comes before blood ties

Even so, there is no need to take this answer as a word that belittles the mother of Jesus. Mary, too, was a person who heard the word of God and responded in faith. When the angel announced the birth of the Lord, Mary answered, *"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38)*. She did not accept it because it was something familiar to her; rather, because God had spoken, she relied on that word and entrusted herself.

Therefore, even when we think of Mary's blessedness, we must not look only at her physical relationship with Jesus. What

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matters is how the person who has heard the word makes up his mind before that word. The woman in the text called bearing and nursing the Lord blessed, but the Lord spoke of hearing the word of God and keeping it as coming before that. The heart with which one faces the word before God is more fundamental than the conditions that people see from the outside and envy.

This fact is a comfort to us as well. We are not pushed out of the grace of the Lord because we heard the word late or because we had no environment in which to learn the faith. Conversely, we are not automatically saved for the reason that we have heard it for a long time or that someone close to us believes well. Before God, we cannot put forward another person's faith in place of our own faith. When we receive the word He is speaking to us now, applying it to our own sins and lives, a confession about the Lord who saved us arises on the lips that used to speak of other people's grace. The Lord is calling us to such faith.

The meaning of the words "hear and keep"

To the woman's words the Lord answered, *"More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Luke 11:28)*. Here, hearing does not end with hearing the sound and remembering the content. It is regarding the word of God as more right than one's own thoughts and accepting it, and keeping is holding in one's heart the word received in this way and following it. If one values it highly when admiring it but discards it when it collides with one's own thoughts, one cannot be said to keep the word. There is such a clear difference between praising the word and believing the word.

First of all, we must accept what God says about sin. While admitting that we have faults, we easily make light of the

judgment of sin with the thought that we are better than others. But if we could have become clean by ourselves, there would have been no need for the Lord to bear our sins. When we acknowledge ourselves as sinners, we do not misunderstand the exhortation to keep the word as a word telling us to build up by ourselves the qualification to be saved. This is because salvation depends on what the Lord has accomplished for us, before how admirably we have acted.

The center of the word God speaks to us is this. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had the sin of the world, including all the sins of our whole lives, passed on to Him once and for all. Because that sin was transferred to Jesus, the Lord bore the sin, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death and saved us from sin. We who hear the word of God must believe with our hearts this salvation that the gospel of the water and the Spirit conveys. The problem of sin is not solved merely by admiring that Jesus is a wonderful One; we must accept the remission of sins that the Lord accomplished as our own salvation.

The faith that keeps the word does not let go of that gospel even when one's own faults are revealed again. It is not treating sin as nothing serious, but acknowledging one's wrong and turning back before the Lord, who bore even that sin. Do not make the Lord's salvation into something that comes and goes according to your feelings, but rely on His work recorded in the word. There lies the ground on which we, who are sinners, can stand boldly before God.

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The blessing enjoyed by following the word heard today

Earlier, too, when Jesus heard that His family had come to see Him, He said, *"My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21)*. Closeness to the Lord does not lie in watching from the outside and knowing His name, but in the relationship of hearing and receiving His word. Therefore, do not think of the blessing of faith only as a special matter belonging to people far away. The same word of salvation has come to us as well, and the way to believe that word and live together with the Lord is open.

Now, the person who has heard the word must put that word first in his own life as well. When he wants to hide a wrong in order to win people's praise, he can think about what kind of heart the Lord is pleased with and set it right honestly. Even when he meets a difficult matter and wants to reach a conclusion by his own calculations alone, he can ask God for help and look for the way that accords with the word. Such a life is not paying a price to obtain salvation; it is the grace of salvation already received continuing on into our judgments and actions as well.

Do not keep away from hearing the word just because you discover shortcomings in that process. Rather, you must learn the word together with the saints and correct your own thoughts. If you nod your head where you hear it and then, after turning away, always live only according to your own thoughts, you miss why that word was given. The clearer our faith that the Lord has saved us, the more we can also believe and follow the word by which He guides us. A heart that knows grace and a life that follows the word are not two separate things.

The woman in the crowd spoke aloud of the blessedness of one person who was close to Jesus. The Lord showed that

woman, and us who hear those words, the way to enjoy blessing. Do not remain envying the circumstances of others, but receive with your heart the word of salvation you have heard now. When we believe what Jesus has accomplished for us and live keeping that word, we do not merely look from afar at blessed people, but come to enjoy for ourselves the blessing the Lord gives. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

A greater than Jonah is here

< Luke 11:29–32 >

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

The sign demanded again even after it had already been seen

There are times when, while saying that we will believe the word of the Lord, we think that something special must first happen to us. We say that if our circumstances change or something happens that we can confirm with our eyes, then we will surely be able to believe. But a heart that demands new evidence is not always a heart that seeks the truth. This is because there are also cases where one keeps changing the conditions for believing in order not to accept the word already given. Among the crowd in the text, too, there were people who,

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having seen Jesus cast out a demon, asked again for a sign from heaven.

To that generation the Lord said, *"This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet" (Luke 11:29)*. Even though the work of the Lord to save people had appeared before them, they were demanding that He pass a test they themselves had set. They were trying to sit in the seat of those who evaluate Jesus, not of those who would learn from and believe in Jesus. That is why the Lord did not try to obtain their faith by continually satisfying their demands.

We, too, must examine whether we have such a heart in us. If, when reading the Bible, we only reckon how much of our own wishes will be fulfilled rather than seeking to know the salvation the Lord accomplished, we depart from the center of the word. Asking God for help and putting forward that help as a condition for believing are different. The person who asks in faith requests help relying on the word of the Lord, but the person who puts forward conditions says that he will not accept even the word until the result he wants comes out. The Lord wants us to leave the seat of judging results and come to the place of hearing the word of the Savior.

The salvation that the sign of Jonah points to

Jesus said, *"As Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation" (Luke 11:30)*. Jonah was a person who went to Nineveh and preached the word of God, and the people who heard that word repented. The Lord, citing Jonah, spoke of how that generation ought to receive Him, the Son of Man. Rather than waiting for some amazing event

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that the crowd had separately decided on, they had to turn their hearts before the Lord, who had come among them, and His word.

In the Gospel of Matthew, more of the words with which the Lord explained this sign are recorded. *"As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40)*. The Lord spoke of His own dying and being buried, and of the work of salvation in which He would rise again. That the Lord, who is greater than Jonah, had come does not mean that one more wise teacher had appeared. The Son of God, who would save sinners, had come, and the time had arrived for Him to bear the judgment of sin in person.

The reason Jesus died must not be separated from His baptism. If the Lord had not received baptism from John, there would have been no reason for Him to die on the Cross, either. Through that baptism the Lord had the sin of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and included in it are all the sins we will commit throughout our whole lives. Because He bore that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place. Since the Lord rose again from death and saved us, the tomb was not the end where His work had failed. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that we must believe conveys in this way the Savior, who had our sins passed on to Him and was judged, the Lord, who overcame death and rose again.

If, even though the word testifies of this salvation before us, we say that we will believe in the remission of sins only when we have some other experience, we are not accepting what the Lord accomplished as sufficient ground. It is not that we are without sin only on days when our hearts grow fervent and become sinners again on ordinary days. The remission of sins

does not depend on changes in our feelings, but is based on the fact that Jesus bore all our sins and was judged. Therefore, we must find the ground of salvation in the word of the Lord and place our faith in Him.

The queen who came to hear wisdom

The Lord compared the attitude of that generation with the queen of the South. *"The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here" (Luke 11:31)*. This queen came from a distant place to hear the wise words of Solomon. Yet even though One greater than Solomon was now before these people, they demanded that He produce a sign rather than hearing the word and believing. The heart that wanted to hear, crossing a great distance, is contrasted with the heart that does not receive even the word given close at hand.

Being able to come into contact with the word easily is a great grace, but because of familiarity, we may also make light of its value. Thinking that we know it all for the reason that we have heard it often, we do not actually examine how that word corrects our faith. When we think of the queen who came to hear wisdom, we come to reflect on our own attitude toward the word as well. The Lord is not One who makes us wait because He lacks something worth showing us; He is One who asks whether we are unwilling to listen even though He speaks to us the word of life.

Therefore, when we hear the word, we must not try only to confirm the conclusion we have already settled on. We must look again at the parts we have not understood, and if our

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thinking is wrong, we must correct it according to the word. The confession that we exalt the Lord is revealed not only in calling His name loudly, but in valuing His word above our own judgment and actually accepting it. Since a greater grace has been given to us than to the queen who set out on her journey to hear the wisdom of Solomon, do not lightly let pass the opportunity to hear the word of the Savior.

Just as Nineveh turned when it heard

Jesus also spoke of the response of the people of Nineveh. *"The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here" (Luke 11:32)*. The people of Nineveh heard the preaching of Jonah and repented. If this generation, which faced the Savior who is greater than Jonah, rejects the Lord, it amounts to remaining more stubborn even after receiving more grace. The reason the Lord spoke of judgment was not to make people feel superior by finding the shortcomings of others, but to make those who are listening now know that they themselves must turn before the word.

Repentance is not merely a momentary stirring of emotion. It is acknowledging before God that one is on the wrong path and returning to the word by which God removed our sins. If we have placed the ground of salvation in our own good deeds or religious efforts, we must return to the place of believing in the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished. If we have demanded new evidence, regarding the work of the Lord as insufficient to solve our sins, we must lay down that demand and accept what the Lord has already done. Such turning does not mean that our

tears or resolutions wash away sin; it is placing our faith in the Lord, who washed away our sins.

Having read this word, we cannot say that only the people of that time were stubborn. Since the salvation of the Lord has been preached to us today as well, we have the responsibility to believe that word. We who have believed and been saved must, whenever the circumstances of our lives are shaken, hold again to the word we have already received rather than demanding that a new ground for believing be made for us. Also, to those who cannot yet believe, we must clearly preach what the Lord did for sinners rather than forcing experiences on them. The Savior, who is greater than Jonah, has spoken to us. Now, instead of piling up conditions about what more you must see before you will believe, I hope that you will hear the word of the Lord who saved us and receive it with your heart. ✉

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Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

What is the eye of the heart looking at?

< Luke 11:33–36 >

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

So that those who come in may see the light

Jesus did not hide the will of salvation in a place where people could not see it and then tell them to find it out. Even though He spoke of the kingdom of God and rescued those who were suffering, some people did not accept what had already appeared and demanded another sign. Before such people, the Lord spoke of the reason one lights a lamp: *“No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light” (Luke 11:33)*. Lighting a lamp and putting it on a lampstand is for showing the light to those who come in. If people do not see the

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light even though it is shining, one cannot blame only the position of the lamp.

This word makes us, too, look back on the heart with which we listen. If we sit before the word of God and yet pick out and accept only the passages that fit our own thoughts, we may not rightly know who the Lord is even after coming into contact with much of the word. This is because we lend our ears to the promises that would exalt us while pushing away the word that corrects our judgment. The light that the Lord shines is greater and clearer than any religious comfort fabricated into the form we want. To receive that light, we must leave the place where we only checked whether what we expected had appeared, and listen to what the Lord is saying now. We must not judge that the word itself is dark just because the picture of ourselves revealed through the word is uncomfortable.

The people who slandered Jesus also saw the works the Lord had done. However, because they had set up their own conclusions first, they could not acknowledge the grace of God in those works. Through their example we can see how great a hindrance to accepting the word a heart that has already decided its answer before listening is.

The eye that sets the direction of the whole body

The Lord continues His word from the lamp to the eye: *"The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness" (Luke 11:34)*. The eye is not an organ that produces light, but an organ that receives light and lets us see things. If the eye does not function properly, it is hard to make out the path one is walking on even if there is light all

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around. Likewise, the judgment of the heart and the direction of life differ according to what one believes and accepts. Here, the word about the eye is not a standard for evaluating physical eyesight or disease; we must examine the matter of with what heart we receive the truth revealed before the Lord.

A person who believes in his own righteousness, looking at the things he has done well, considers himself worthy of being saved, but when his wrongs are revealed, he loses even that confidence. Since he has placed the basis of his judgment in himself, his thoughts about salvation also waver every time his condition changes. But a heart that accepts the word admits that sin cannot be removed by human conduct and looks to the righteousness that God has fulfilled. This is not an attitude of taking one's own wrongs lightly, but accepting the fact that, because sin actually exists, one needs the Savior who has solved that sin.

If we understand the word that the eye is good as a demand that our hearts must always be at peace and our thoughts perfect, we come to look at ourselves again. Where the eye of faith must turn is not to our own perfection, but to Jesus, who saved sinners. Therefore, the growth of faith does not lie in evaluating ourselves more highly. It lies in rightly knowing, in the light of the word, the problem of sin that we once thought we could solve by our own efforts, and in placing the basis of our salvation in the Lord. The clearer this basis becomes, the more we can abandon the attitude of hiding and boasting and stand honestly before God.

Examine what you believed to be light

Therefore, the Lord warns as follows: *"Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness" (Luke 11:35)*. Even the thoughts we are convinced are right must be judged by the word. A religious life kept for a long time or the pride of being better than others cannot take the place of the light of the heart. If we rely on such things, it is easy to think, even while hearing the word that gives the remission of sins, that we already know it well enough. The Lord's warning is not meant to lock us in endless self-doubt, but is a word that makes us turn back from the error of thinking we are safe while relying on what cannot be relied on.

The salvation that God has made clear to us is based on the work that Jesus accomplished. When He was thirty years old, Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River, and at that time all the sins of the world were passed on to the Lord once and for all. Those sins include not only our past sins but all the sins of our whole lives. Bearing those sins, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death. When we look to this salvation that the gospel of the water and the Spirit makes clear, instead of weighing how bright our own righteousness looks, we come to rely on the fact that the Lord bore our sins and finished the judgment. Since the basis for the remission of sins lies in the work of the Lord, there is no need to replace that basis with something else even when our own faults are revealed. We admit and correct our faults, but we accept salvation on the word that the Lord has fulfilled.

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A life that moves according to the light of the word

A heart that accepts the light is not satisfied with offering only one part of life to God. *"If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light" (Luke 11:36)*. The Lord speaks of the whole body becoming full of light, just as the bright light of a lamp shines on a person. It is a word that makes us look back on the attitude of saying with the mouth that we believe, while refusing to accept the word at all in our actual judgments. A person who has received the remission of sins through the gospel also comes to learn the direction of his life from the Lord, who saved his heart. This does not mean that he must live without a single mistake. When a mistake is revealed, rather than hiding it, he acknowledges it before the word and again walks according to the will of the Lord.

Whether we are judging wealth, dealing with people, or choosing the work entrusted to us, we must not close our hearts as though these were areas unrelated to the gospel. If we have come to know that our judgments that put only our own interests first are different from the word, a change in our lives begins with admitting that fact. We can lay down the heart that tried to defeat the other person and think that that person, too, needs the grace of the Lord. The faith that the Lord has saved us extends in this way even to the attitude with which we treat others and the direction in which we fulfill the work entrusted to us. It is not ending with knowing much of the word, but accepting that word in today's choices.

Then the people around us, too, come to know that we are not people who boast of our own righteousness, but people who have received the grace of the Lord. Through our lives it is revealed where the reason lies that we can rejoice in the gospel

while admitting our faults, and serve the Lord while yielding our own benefit. These fruits, too, cannot be counted as a price for obtaining salvation. This is because they are the grace that first shone on us continuing into our lives.

Since the Lord has clearly shown us the way of salvation through His word, there is no reason for us to turn away from that word and merely wait for a stronger light to appear. When our thoughts differ from the word, let us correct those thoughts, believe in Jesus, who accomplished the remission of sins, and receive His guidance. Just as the lamp on the lampstand shines on those who come in, let us allow the word of salvation the Lord has given to light up our hearts and the path we will walk. ✉

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Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

Before washing the outside, lay the inside before God

< Luke 11:37–41 >

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

The standard of judgment revealed at the table

A Pharisee invited Jesus to a meal at his house. The Lord accepted that invitation and went in and sat down, but the eyes of the man who had invited Him rested on what the Lord did before the meal rather than on the word the Lord preached. *“When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner” (Luke 11:38)*. He thought it strange that Jesus did not wash His hands. The reason the text records this scene does not lie in teaching hygiene before meals. It is to reveal, through the word of the Lord, how the man who was judging another by visible actions regarded the state of his own heart.

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It is easy for us to read this man's judgment as if it were someone else's affair. But it happens to us, too, that when we see a person who keeps familiar religious forms well, we think that his faith must also be right, and when we see something different from those forms, we immediately conclude that it is a wrong faith. If so, we lose the opportunity to examine what meaning the form itself has and what that person's heart believes. The Pharisee welcomed the Lord into his house, but he had not gone so far as to prepare himself to receive the Lord's judgment. This is because he was watching whether Jesus acted according to the standard he himself had set. At this table we come to see that even in a place where one has welcomed the Lord close, one's own thoughts can go ahead of the word. We who hear the word must have a heart that tries to accept what the Lord reveals of ourselves, rather than a heart that wonders whose fault we might find.

What cannot be covered with a clean vessel

The Lord did not simply let what he thought strange go by, but spoke, distinguishing the outside from the inside. *"Then the Lord said to him, 'Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness'" (Luke 11:39).* There was the labor of wiping the outside of the cup and dish, but their hearts were full of greed and wickedness. Just because one has put in order the part that is seen by people does not mean that even the inside, which is before God, becomes clean. Rather, if one trusts in a clean outward appearance, the excuses for not admitting the sin of the heart increase. This is because, with the thought that one is

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keeping this much, one lets the cravings that arise within oneself pass as insignificant.

Greed goes so far as to regard other people as a means of obtaining what will come back to oneself. Wickedness can also hide the hatred harbored in the heart and the intent to harm behind plausible words. Even if one is accustomed to worship and polite in speech, these problems of the heart can remain as they are; therefore, one cannot rightly judge one's own faith by the standard of examining the outside alone. Before asking how we appear to others, we must examine what we want before God. If we are dressing up an appearance of serving God with a heart that seeks to gain people's respect and protect our own benefit, becoming more skillful at that dressing up cannot be the solution. We must turn back, starting from admitting the sin that the Lord exposes as greed and wickedness. That admission is not a matter of listing words that put oneself down, but of honestly laying before the word the heart one has been hiding.

God, who made the outside, made the inside also

The Lord awakens us to the fact that even the inside, which people cannot see, belongs to God. *"Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?" (Luke 11:40)*. Since God, who made the outside, also made the inside, we cannot leave our inner being as a private realm unrelated to our outward appearance. People can give a good evaluation by looking only at what appears in actions, but before God one cannot hide the sin of the heart. Therefore, faith is not made up of a skill for managing the evaluations of others. We must acknowledge the fact that God, who made us, knows us, and receive the remission of sins that He gives.

If, even after realizing the sin of the heart, we try to cover it by piling up more good deeds, we still remain at wiping the outside of the cup. This is because we cannot remove through almsgiving or service the judgment of the sins we have already committed. God did not tell us to keep sin covered, but sent Jesus Christ and had Him bear that sin. Through the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the Lord had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and all the sins of our whole lifetime were also included in them. Bearing those sins, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death. To believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is to believe in Jesus, who accomplished this salvation, instead of relying on efforts to make our hearts look clean.

For a person who has received the remission of sins through this faith, the cleanness of the heart is not a self-evaluation but grace that the Lord has given. That does not mean, however, that it is all right to live harboring greed. Because he has come to know the love of the Lord, who bore his sins, the reason to turn away now from the attitude of defending and hiding those sins becomes clear. It means not changing the ground of salvation to one's own efforts even when one's conduct falls short, but correcting one's heart and actions according to the word the Lord has given. The remission of sins and the change of life are not in competition with each other; rather, they are in a relationship in which the direction of life changes in a heart that has received the grace of the Lord.

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Open to your neighbors the hand that used to clutch

The Lord, who exposed the greed inside, also spoke of the direction in which that heart must be changed and show itself. *"But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you" (Luke 11:41)*. He tells them to leave behind the attitude of storing up only for themselves and dressing up a piety to be seen by others, and to help those in difficulty with what they have. Here, if we read almsgiving as a price paid to buy the remission of sins, we return to the error of ignoring the inside and making only the outside clean. The Lord did not determine how much sin would disappear for how much one gives. By telling people full of greed and wickedness to give out what is within, He corrected a faith that had separated the heart from action.

Almsgiving keeps us from stopping at saying that there is love in our hearts. This is because, in order to actually share what is needed, we must lay down the thought that regards our possessions as being only for ourselves. We must look back on whether we can attend to another person's needs even if he does not recognize our labor, and whether we are not using the work of helping as an opportunity to exalt our own name. If our confession that the grace we have received is great is sincere, that heart must also carry over into caring for the difficulties of those beside us. There is no need to turn away even from the small help now entrusted to us for the reason that we cannot help everyone at once. What is important is to attend to our neighbors' needs within the circumstances the Lord has given us and actually to share. What has been shared in this way becomes not a merit to boast of before people, but help that a person who was loved first extends to his neighbors.

What surprised the Pharisee at that table was the unwashed hands, but what the Lord revealed was a heart in need of washing. Let us, too, not miss our own inside while examining the outward appearance of others. Let us believe in Jesus, who accomplished the remission of sins through the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, and, following that grace, lay down the heart that used to clutch. Then the heart laid before God and the hand opened toward our neighbors will not tell different stories. ✉

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Sermon 11 by Paul C. Jong

The justice and love abandoned while offering the tithe of herbs

< Luke 11:42–44 >

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

What was missed while counting even small things

The thought that we have kept something without omission gives us reassurance. The moment we regard ourselves as having done all the prescribed things, we may no longer ask why we must do them. Jesus revealed exactly that problem in the Pharisees, who tithed mint and rue and all manner of herbs. *“But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Luke 11:42)*. There was the labor of counting out and offering even

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small herbs, but they abandoned justice and the love of God. The Lord's rebuke did not mean that they should put less devotion into it. He was correcting the error of ignoring the very will of God while performing the act of offering to God.

Justice and love cannot be replaced by the size of what we have offered. If we loosen principles in matters favorable to ourselves and strictly demand them of others, that unfairness does not become justified on the grounds that we have offered our gifts without omission. Also, if we say that we love God but do not accept the word of salvation that God has given, it amounts to trusting our own religious life more than God. The Lord said to do this and not to abandon that either. Therefore, we cannot treat all responsibilities lightly on the grounds that love is important, or regard it as all right to have no love on the grounds that we have fulfilled our responsibilities. The labor we offer before the Lord must come from a heart that respects His will. If, while calculating our conduct in detail, our hearts are far from God, we must first look back on that relationship.

A heart for which the best seats became its joy

Where the heart that should be turned toward God had leaned becomes clearer in the next word. *"Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces" (Luke 11:43)*. The Pharisees delighted in the best seats in the synagogues and in greetings in the marketplaces. They wanted their position to be shown as high both in the place of worship and among people. It is not that the Lord forbade the very act of someone showing respect. He rebuked the fact that obtaining that respect had replaced the joy of faith, and that the

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heart that wanted to be treated with honor had become the purpose of serving God.

Such a heart can grow without our realizing it as the work we are entrusted with increases. Beginning from the thought that since we have labored we should be recognized, we come to hate those who do not recognize us and to think that things will not get done where we are not present. Then even the position of serving the community becomes a means of proving our own importance. Rather than rejoicing that others carry out well the work they have been entrusted with, we come to worry that our own place may shrink. If we look for such an appearance only in others, it amounts to avoiding the rebuke of the word. Since we ourselves also like praise and wish to be treated well, we must honestly examine before the Lord what we are now rejoicing in.

The office entrusted to a person who serves the Lord is not evidence that he has become a higher person, but a position in which he has received a more concrete responsibility. One must not stop at having another person do the work one has been entrusted with, but must help that person carry it out according to the word. The work of preparing what is needed together and looking after difficulties does not require a high seat before people. Watching that person grow in faith and come to rejoice in the work of the Lord, we can give thanks together. Even if few people recognize us, if we remember the grace we have received from the Lord, even the reason for serving will not disappear. When we look back on whom we have been a help to rather than whose greetings we have received, our gaze moves from our own place to our neighbors.

The danger of a grave that is not seen

The Lord revealed the true state of those who were being exalted with an even more solemn parable. *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them" (Luke 11:44).* People walk over it without knowing that the place is a grave. Because it is hard to recognize the danger from the outside, they approach it without any caution. This word shows how different an outward form that receives people's respect and one's actual state before God can be. That the Pharisees received good treatment did not mean that they were guiding people rightly. Rather, those who followed them, trusting their outward appearance, could accept even their wrong faith.

Because of this, hypocrisy does not end as a matter of one person's reputation. If a person who teaches the word puts his own honor and benefit first, those who learn also come to know that as the goal of faith. How much one is recognized by people becomes more important than what grace one has received from God, and one comes to think that if one's visible labor is great, it is all right to cover the wrongs of the heart. The Lord declares woe because He does not regard even such influence lightly. We need not unconditionally suspect a person who is respected, but neither should we decide that his words are right merely on the basis of the fact that he is respected. Before the word, we must examine whether that teaching leads people to believe in Jesus or to rely on human righteousness and status. We who teach, too, must think responsibly about what faith those who follow what we have recommended will come to stand upon.

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The righteousness of God to be accepted instead of one's own righteousness

When people boast of their own piety, what they miss most greatly is the salvation God has bestowed. Paul spoke as follows of the error of trying to establish one's own righteousness: *"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3)*. If one tries to establish by oneself the way to be accepted before God, one comes not to submit to the righteousness God has already accomplished. Just as the tithes or the best seats of the Pharisees could not resolve the sin of the heart, our labor and reputation cannot be the ground of the remission of sins, either. What is needed before the Lord, who spoke of justice and love, is not putting forward our own achievements even more, but the faith that accepts the will of God, who saved sinners.

God did not save us by way of turning a blind eye to sin. Because the righteous God does not leave sin as it is, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, and all the sins of our lifetime were also included in them. Bearing those sins, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. Here the righteousness of God, who judges sin, and His love, which saves sinners, appear together. A person who believes in this Jesus through the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not claim salvation by what he has offered, but receives the remission of sins through the work the Lord accomplished. Therefore his self-boasting diminishes, and his gratitude and love toward God grow.

A person who has been made righteous by grace has no reason to abandon justice, nor any reason to lower others. Because he knows that he, too, was a person who needed the same remission of sins, he tries to act rightly toward his neighbor and to preach the gospel to him as well. Let us not reassure ourselves with what we have already offered, but examine whether our hearts today are following the word of the Lord. Let us lay down the heart that sought a place of recognition, believe in the righteousness God has accomplished, and practice justice and love. When hands that faithfully carry out small responsibilities and a heart that loves God go together, our service goes beyond people's praise and is directed toward the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 12 by Paul C. Jong

Open the door of salvation with the key of knowledge

< Luke 11:45–52 >

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

The lawyer, who took the rebuke only as an insult

When Jesus exposed the wrongs of the Pharisees, one of the lawyers stepped forward. *"Then one of the lawyers answered*

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and said to Him, 'Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also'" (Luke 11:45). He understood that the words of the Lord applied to them as well, but rather than asking what they had to correct, he protested that they had been insulted. A man who claimed to know the word well was defending himself before the Lord, who was preaching that word. If one worries about one's position being damaged before weighing what is right and what is wrong, it is difficult to accept the opportunity to set one's wrongs right even when it comes. This lawyer's response shows that having learned much and having a heart that obeys the word are not necessarily the same.

The Lord did not withdraw His rebuke in the face of that protest, but made clear the responsibility of the lawyers. "*And He said, 'Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers'" (Luke 11:46)*. They loaded other people with burdens hard to bear, while they themselves did not lay even one finger on them. Their teaching did not become a work of helping people, but became a work of merely listing demands. Letting someone know what he must do and helping him to carry it out rightly are different things. If one is lenient toward oneself while applying heavy standards to others, then no matter how strict one's words may be, it cannot be said that there is true service in them.

We, too, must not think that, because we came to know the word first, we have gained only the right to make demands of others. As much as we know ahead of others, we must obey first and look at where those who are lacking are having difficulty. If we only keep telling a person who is suffering because of sin that he must try harder, we can harden in him the wrong idea that he can wash away sin by his own strength. We must help him acknowledge the sin that the law reveals and come to the Lord,

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who has solved that sin. If our words of teaching have increased but people's hearts are growing farther away from the way of salvation, we must look back on the foundation on which our teaching stands.

Building tombs and receiving the word

The rebuke that follows concerns the tombs of the prophets. *"Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs" (Luke 11:47–48)*. Doing the work of commemorating the prophets does not mean that one is also accepting the word that those prophets preached. Honoring prophets who have already died and listening to the word of God that now exposes one's own wrongs are different things. Behind the outward appearance of building tombs, the Lord saw a heart that approved of what their fathers had done. While putting the killing of the prophets aside only as a past that had nothing to do with themselves, they themselves were in fact going against the words of the One who had been sent.

We, too, can respect the deeds that our predecessors in faith left behind. But if, while exalting their names, we do not obey the God of whom they testified, the act of commemorating becomes a decoration that covers our present disobedience. It is not hard to speak well of the faith of old, but accepting that word when it now bends our will is another matter. This is why the pride of having kept old traditions cannot be grounds for rejecting the rebuke of the Lord. If we truly value the word, we must not avoid that word even when it sounds unfavorable to us.

We cannot replace the obedience we must render today by honoring the people of the past.

The present responsibility for which God holds people accountable

The Lord said that the rejection of those whom God sends would continue, and He made clear the responsibility for it. *"Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation" (Luke 11:49–51).* That He mentioned the blood shed from Abel to Zechariah reveals that going against the word of God was not a trivial misunderstanding. God does not forget the blood of those who were killed, and He does not leave opposition to the word covered over with a religious pretext. Even the position of knowing the law does not exempt them from that responsibility. Rather, if people who claim to teach the will of God persecute those who have been sent, that contradiction is revealed all the more seriously.

We must not use this word as grounds for laying guilt on all people merely because they are descendants of a certain nation. The Lord is calling to account the people who are now going against the word and approving the deeds of their fathers. What we need, too, is not to condemn the people of the past from a distance, but to examine our present attitude. If we hinder those who accept the word and push the truth away to protect our own

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authority, we will repeat today the wrong of that time. We must know how fearful a life is in which one builds tombs and says one respects the prophets, and yet blocks the words of the One who has been sent. We must not regard the fact that God has been speaking for a long time as permission to reject His word.

Not as those who block but as those who open

In the last rebuke, the direction of the preceding wrongs is clearly revealed. *"'Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered'" (Luke 11:52)*. A person who has the key of knowledge must help people to know the will of God. But the lawyers did not go in themselves, and even hindered those who wanted to go in. The fact that they knew much did not lead to the work of saving people. If one puts one's own interpretation and authority first and thereby hides the word of salvation, teaching becomes not a help that opens the door but an obstacle that blocks the way. When we teach the word, too, we must examine whom we are leading the listeners to rely on.

Making the way of salvation clear is not mentioning only the name of Jesus while keeping hidden how He solved sin. Jesus bore all the sins of the world once and for all by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, and all our sins spanning our whole lives were also passed on to the Lord through that baptism. Bearing that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and thereby received in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death. The remission of sins is given to those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. Only when we preach the salvation that the Lord has accomplished

can the listeners believe in Jesus without making their own labor the price of salvation. Making the object of this faith clearly known comes before boasting of having acquired more knowledge.

Also, the person who teaches must himself believe this gospel. If he himself does not rely on what he tells others, he cannot escape the rebuke that he does not go in himself either. A person who has received the grace of the remission of sins rejoices when others believe in the same grace, and does not see that faith as a threat to his own authority. Let us examine whether we are not standing in front and blocking the way on the path of coming to the Lord. Let us not take rebukes only as insults, but turn back before the word, and instead of adding burdens to people with the knowledge entrusted to us, let us open the door of the salvation that Jesus has accomplished. ✉

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Sermon 13 by Paul C. Jong

A heart that holds fast to the word and a heart that nitpicks at words

< Luke 11:53–54 >

“And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him.”

The questioning that grew even fiercer after they heard the rebuke

Having heard many of the words of Jesus does not mean having accepted those words. The scribes and the Pharisees who appear at the end of Luke chapter 11 did not try to correct their wrongs even after hearing the rebuke of the Lord. *“And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things” (Luke 11:53)*. When the Lord came out of that house, their questioning grew even fiercer. The record that they cross-examined Him about many things does not mean that they were learning diligently. Instead of acknowledging the wrongs that the Lord had exposed earlier, they went in the direction of

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assailing the Lord and questioning Him pointedly. While there are people who hear the same word and correct their own thinking, there are also people who try to defend their own thinking by attacking the One who spoke.

They had already heard the rebuke concerning their having abandoned justice and love, and their having loaded people with burdens and blocked the way of salvation. Therefore, what they had to do now was not to find the parts that were wrong in the words of the Lord, but to acknowledge that their own image was revealed in that rebuke. But if they did so, they would have had to lay down the attitude they had insisted until then was right. When one tries to show that the other person is in the wrong rather than to correct oneself, questions do not become a channel for learning the truth. We, too, can stand at the same crossroads when we feel uncomfortable while hearing the word. We must not push the word away merely because of a feeling of discomfort, but must examine whether the thinking we are trying to defend really agrees with the will of the Lord.

Why they waited for words to come out of His mouth

The next verse makes clear what their questions were aimed at. *"Lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him" (Luke 11:54)*. They tried to catch the words that came out of the mouth of Jesus. Rather than waiting to see what the word was teaching them, they waited to see what words they could use as grounds to find fault with Jesus. This is different in direction from the attitude of wanting to know the will of God. No matter how long one listens, if one's purpose is wrong, one comes to use the word

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one has heard only for self-defense. In this scene we see that a person may ask questions not because he cannot understand the word, but because he does not want to accept it and is looking for something to pick on.

That said, having doubts or asking questions is not in itself an act without faith. At the beginning of this chapter, too, one of the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. A question that admits what one does not know and seeks to learn becomes a way of accepting the teaching of the Lord. On the other hand, a question that has decided in advance that the other person is wrong returns to its own conclusion no matter what answer it hears. When we ask questions while reading the Bible, we must look back on whether we are ready to correct our own judgment, too, before the word. We must not treat a question that seeks to know the meaning clearly and a question that seeks to tear down a truth one does not want to hear as the same thing.

Also, we must not use this passage to block every question about those who preach the word. At the center of the passage is Jesus, who is attacked for having displeased people. Since we ourselves, who preach the word, must also be judged by the Bible, we must not take this scene as a guarantee that all our teaching is right, but must correct what we have preached wrongly when it comes to light. If, on the grounds of guarding against an attitude that opposes the Lord, we make even human authority absolute, it rather becomes something that covers the word of God. Rather than trying to defeat the person who asks questions, we must rightly know the will of the Lord together with him.

Accept Jesus, of whom the Scriptures testify

When we think about why the people who knew the Scriptures went against the words of Jesus, we come to realize that we cannot judge faith by the amount of knowledge alone. In another place, too, Jesus spoke of the relationship between the Scriptures and Himself. *"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39)*. If a person who says he searches the Scriptures rejects Jesus, of whom the Scriptures testify, then the knowledge he has studied has failed to lead him to life. We must not use the word only as material to support our own thinking, but must see in whom that word testifies that we should believe. We must turn from the position of examining Jesus and accepting Him if He meets our standards to the position of hearing the salvation of Jesus and believing.

What the Savior accomplished is not a religious achievement that satisfies our pride, but the salvation in which the Son of God bore our sins, which we cannot remove by ourselves. It is not at the moment we begin to believe that our sins are moved; rather, when Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, all the sins of the world were passed on to the Lord once and for all. Since the sins of our whole lives were also passed on to the Lord through that baptism, we believe in Jesus, who has already borne our sins. Therefore, the Lord's shedding His blood and dying on the Cross was His receiving in our place the judgment for that sin, and the Lord rose again from death. Before this gospel of the water and the Spirit, what we must believe in is not the rightness of our own judgment or our good works, but Jesus, who bore sin, received the judgment, and rose again.

Since the basis of salvation lies not in our always having been right but in the Lord's having remitted our sins, if we

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believe in this salvation, admitting our wrongs does not become a matter of losing everything. Wrong thoughts can be corrected, and one can take responsibility for wrong actions. There is no need to attack even the word in order to hide them. Receiving the rebuke of the Lord and believing in the grace of the Lord are not opposed to each other. The more honest we become before the word that exposes sin, the more clearly we come to know why the salvation of the Lord, who bore that sin, is necessary.

From the place of hearing to the place of following

The answer needed by a person standing before the Lord does not lie only in words that exalt Him with the mouth. *"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46)*. If one calls Him Lord yet has no intention of receiving His words, that calling and the direction of one's heart are at odds with each other. Doing the words of the Lord does not mean building up actions perfect enough to obtain salvation. It is entrusting even the judgments of one's daily life to the Lord, in whom one believes as the Savior, and following the way He teaches. If He has said that our own righteousness cannot be the basis of the remission of sins, it begins with abandoning that righteousness; if He has said to believe in what the Lord has accomplished, it begins with receiving that salvation in the heart.

When our greed or hypocrisy is exposed while we are hearing the word, let us not turn the subject to the greater wrongs of other people. Let us acknowledge our problem that has now been revealed before the Lord, and examine what we must change according to that word. Even if it is a thought we have already declared right before people, once we come to know that it differs from the Bible, correcting it is the right path. Then,

rather than fearing losing face, we come to value the truth of the Lord more. In this way, the faith that believes the gospel leads us from the attitude of defending our own judgment to the end to the attitude of learning by following the word of the Lord.

That day the scribes and the Pharisees waited for the words that came out of the mouth of Jesus, but they kept their hearts closed to accepting those words. Our purpose in hearing the word today must be different. Let us not nitpick at words to defend our own rightness, but hold fast to the word of salvation and believe in the Lord. Let us live as people who learn from Jesus, gladly receiving even the word that exposes our wrongs. ✉

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CHAPTER

12

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

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Abandon hypocrisy and confess the Lord before people

< Luke 12:1–12 >

“In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, ‘Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the

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Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.'"

The Lord, who knows what is hidden in the heart

In a place where tens of thousands had gathered so that they trampled one another, Jesus first told His disciples to beware of hypocrisy. At a time when it was easy to be captivated by the fact that many people had gathered, the Lord made them examine the inside of a person who believes in God. This is because gaining people's recognition and believing rightly before God are not the same thing. Just because others say that our faith is good, the sin in our hearts does not disappear, nor do we come to believe what Jesus has done.

The leaven of the Pharisees was something that replaced the word of God with the teachings of men while making people put on an outwardly godly appearance. If one follows such teaching, it is easy to hide what one's own heart is like and to dress up only the behavior that is shown to people. This does not mean that speaking politely and behaving decently are wrong in themselves. The problem lies in dressing up only the outward appearance as godly while leaving sin as it is in the heart, and in relying on that appearance while not receiving into the heart the Lord who has remitted sin. Just as the Pharisees came to be like that by putting the teachings of men before the word of God, we who hear the word must also not merely look for the hypocrisy of others, but must examine our own hearts, which we are unwilling to lay before God.

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The Lord said, *"There is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known" (Luke 12:2)*. Because the day will come when even what was whispered in inner rooms is revealed, we cannot feel at ease just because we have escaped people's eyes. God knows all the sins we have hidden and the thoughts by which we consider ourselves righteous. Therefore, we must lay down the effort to look like people of good faith without admitting our sins, and must confirm through the word how the Lord removed those sins. Instead of devoting our hearts to avoiding the exposure of sin, we must open our hearts to the Savior who gives the remission of sins.

The One to fear and the One to rely on

If we are bound to people's evaluation, our faith, too, is easily shaken when we meet opposition. Jesus, calling His disciples friends, told them not to be afraid of people who, after killing the body, can do no more. However great the authority people have may appear, they cannot govern eternal life and judgment. The One we ought to fear is God, who has authority even over the judgment after death. This is because God is not One who speaks only well of our condition, but One who surely judges the person who leaves sin as it is. Therefore, what a person who fears this God must strive for most on this earth is to receive the remission of sins. If we deny the salvation that this God has spoken of in order to be recognized by people, we are refusing the way of eternal life in trying to obtain a moment's security.

Yet along with the word to fear God, the Lord also made known the heart of God, who regards His disciples as precious.

Not even one of the five sparrows sold for two copper coins is forgotten before God, so would God forget the disciples who follow the Lord? *"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:7)*. It is not that the hardships that come upon us are invisible to the eyes of God. God, who knows even the hairs of our head, also knows our fears and weaknesses that we cannot fully express in words.

Believing in this care does not mean that disciples will have no persecution or physical death at all. The Lord told them not to be afraid even while speaking of people who can kill. This is because the threats of people cannot go beyond the rule of God, and they cannot take away the saved life as they please and put it into hell. Therefore, the more our strength falls short, the more we must not merely struggle to become bold on our own, but must ask God for help. It is to do what we must do by faith today while relying on the One who regards us as precious.

Who is the Savior we believe in and confess

"Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God" (Luke 12:8). To confess the Lord does not stop at saying that we know the name Jesus. It is to believe in the heart and to make known that Jesus is the Savior who has remitted our sins and our God who is alive even now. What we are to set before people is not a boast of how righteously we have lived, but the salvation the Lord accomplished for sinners. Since it says, *"With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10)*, we must know clearly what we believe and confess.

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At the age of thirty, Jesus, by receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, had the sins of all the people of the world passed on to Him once and for all. Not only the sins of revealed actions but also the sins of the heart hidden from others are included in them, and not only the sins committed in the past but all the sins we commit throughout our whole lives in our weakness were passed on to the Lord at that time. Because He bore those sins, Jesus received in our place the judgment for sins that we had to receive, shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. This is exactly what we are to confess before people. It is to say that the Lord took away all our sins, and that therefore we have no sin.

It is not that we say we have no sin because our deeds are perfect. We confess that we have received the remission of sins because we believe the fact that the Lord has removed all sins. On the contrary, if, in order to suit people's thinking, we say that Jesus left some sin behind, that is precisely denying the Lord before people. Even so, we must not immediately conclude that the weakness of being shaken for a moment by fear is evidence of not having been saved. Even for Peter, who had denied the Lord three times, the Lord let him confirm his faith again. What is needed when we have fallen is not the hypocrisy of hiding our own failure, but confessing our faith while looking again to the Lord, who bore even those faults.

The heart that accepts the testimony of the Holy Spirit

The Lord warned, *"Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes*

against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven" (Luke 12:10). Even a person who spoke against Jesus because he did not know Him can hear the word, turn, and believe in salvation. But when the Holy Spirit testifies of the salvation that Jesus accomplished through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, if someone knowingly goes against it and opposes those who believe in that salvation, he is rejecting the very work of God that gives the remission of sins. Saying that some sin still remains among the sins that had been passed on to the Lord through His baptism also limits the work the Holy Spirit has done; therefore, we must not reduce that word with our own thoughts, but must believe it as it is. This warning is not a word meant to silence a person who asks in order to learn the truth. If there is something we do not yet know, we must not hide it by pretending to know, but must examine the word and know clearly what the Lord has accomplished.

The help of the Holy Spirit is with us even when we are dragged before people in authority while testifying of the Lord. The disciples might fear what words they should say to protect their own lives, but Jesus said that even then He would not leave them on their own. *"The Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say" (Luke 12:12)*. Because the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the heart that has received the remission of sins, teaches us the words we need, we can rely on the promise of God rather than on our own eloquence. This does not mean that we have no need to hear the word at ordinary times; it means that we should believe the word we have heard and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit even in difficult places.

When we stand among many people, how we appear in their eyes easily takes hold of our hearts. But the Lord, who at first told His disciples to beware of hypocrisy, at the end promised the help of the Holy Spirit. Let us not try to hold on to people's

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evaluation by dressing up our outward appearance, but let us hold on to the Savior who knows our insides and who bore all our sins. I hope that you will accept the word before God without hiding anything, and live confessing that Lord before people as well. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The leaven of the Pharisees

< Luke 12:1–12 >

“In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, ‘Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.’”

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Who the Pharisees were

Looking at the word of Luke chapter 12 verses 1 through 12, I would like to examine what God is saying to us through this word and share His grace. First, let us look from chapter 11 verse 43. *"Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them" (Luke 11:43–44).* When a lawyer said that by saying these things He was insulting them too, the Lord declared woe to the lawyers as well. He said that they loaded people with burdens hard to bear while they themselves did not touch them with one finger, and that they built the tombs of the prophets while approving of the deeds of their fathers who had killed those prophets. And He said, *"The blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation" (Luke 11:50),* and He said, *"Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered" (Luke 11:52).* When the Lord came out from there, the scribes and the Pharisees assailed Him vehemently and cross-examined Him about many things, and they lay in wait for Him, seeking to catch something out of His mouth.

In this way, the Lord said that woe was upon the Pharisees and the lawyers. The word Pharisee means the separated ones. When the nation of Israel was invaded by many nations, those who refused to let the Hellenistic culture come in were the Pharisees. They strove to place religion at the center of the life of the people, and among them there were also a great many great scholars of the law and persons of noble character. Strictly

keeping the law recorded in the Pentateuch of Moses and strictly keeping ritual purity were the characteristics of this sect.

When we look at the Bible, the nation of Israel became a vassal state of Rome, and Rome adopted not its own culture but the culture of Greece. Because it adopted the Greek language as its language as well, the New Testament was written in Greek. However, saying that even though they had become a colony, they could never yield their culture and religion, a sect of separatists, namely the Pharisees, came into being. They regarded the law that appears in the Pentateuch of Moses as extremely important. Saying that the law of Moses was the most correct religion of this nation, they were the ones who interpreted and explained the law and made the people live according to the word of God. In particular, they were the ones who insisted in detail on the holy life that appears in Leviticus, namely, not eating what has no scales but eating only what has scales, how to walk and how to keep the Sabbath, the six hundred and thirteen provisions of the law that say "do this" and "do not do that," and kept and spread them very strictly. And beside them were the lawyers.

They had yet another characteristic. It is that they placed the oral tradition handed down by word of mouth in the same position as the authority of the Bible and acted according to that authority. To give one example, there was a time when Jesus was invited to the house of a Pharisee and went there with His disciples and ate food without washing His hands. Seen in the light of the Jewish law of purification, for Jesus to eat food without washing His hands was, to them, an extremely unclean act that departed from the word of God. So the Pharisees did not believe even though Jesus Christ said that He was the Son of God, and the lawyers did not believe either. On the contrary, putting forward the fact that they lived good lives and lived

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according to the word of God, they took the lead in nailing Jesus to the Cross and killing Him, and when the Apostle Paul preached the gospel, it was precisely these Pharisees who seized Paul and flogged him and opposed the spread of the gospel.

If we say that the Pharisees who appear in the Bible had a good side and a bad side, the bad side is that because they lived such righteous and good lives themselves, they did not accept Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and did not accept as it was the work that Jesus Christ did. Even today there are people who do not accept Jesus as the Son of God. They are thinking that the Messiah will newly come from heaven in majesty. But Jesus already came to this earth two thousand years ago, and by receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, He bore all the sin of mankind once and for all and fulfilled all righteousness, and on the Cross He finished it all once and for all. We receive the remission of sins by believing that Jesus Christ has already removed our sins. If we know the work that Jesus Christ did, we can receive the remission of sins by faith.

We have not made the sacrificial rites of the nation of Israel or those perfect words concerning God a part of our daily lives. Because we have not made them a part of our daily lives, in order to understand this Bible we must know the history of the Bible accurately, and we must know verse by verse what appears in the Old Testament and know in detail what is said in the New Testament. Only then does faith come into our hearts.

Where the lawyers went terribly wrong was that, together with the word of God, they placed the teachings handed down orally by the teachers of the law in the very same position as the Bible and served them. What the Bible says was important, but what their elders had handed down to them as tradition was in fact the same as the Bible. So they regarded a person who ate without washing his hands as unclean and filthy and as a person

who did not believe in God. The law handed down by the elders made them roll up their sleeves and wash up to a designated part when eating food, and they regarded a person who did not keep this as a sinner who did not believe in God.

But Jesus, who came to this earth, gave thanks together with His disciples and ate food without washing His hands. When the Pharisees, who had rolled up their sleeves and washed and come in, looked, neither Jesus nor His disciples had done so. So they said, where are there people as ignorant as those, He does not even live according to the word of God and yet says that He is the Son of God, it is blasphemy, crucify Him, let His blood be on us and on our children. So our Lord said that all the things they had done would be required of this generation. When Jesus was on this earth, He said that not one stone of the temple in Jerusalem would be left upon another and that all would be thrown down, and after Jesus Christ died on the Cross, in A.D. 70 the Roman general Titus came and completely destroyed the nation of Israel. The temple that had been built so grandly was overturned down to its very foundation and even its stones were all pulled out and scattered, and the people of Israel were all scattered throughout the whole world.

If we are not careful, we too can easily come to have this Pharisaic faith. Why is that? It is because the Christian faith is the word, yet each denomination can place on top of that word the oral traditions it has kept and handed down and believe them as if they were the Bible. We must not believe like that. Today no one at all is upright. Only God is good and only this word is right; no person and no denomination can say that it is the same as God. Therefore, we must humbly examine word by word what the Bible says, read together what this word means and trace its context, and so know it and abide in what is certain. At first it seems frustrating, just as one cannot be full with the first

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spoonful, and it seems frustrating because no one shouts to receive the Holy Spirit like fire; but if we read verse by verse centered on the word every time we worship, and think and learn, then in one year we can know a great deal of the Bible, in ten years we come to know that this is what the Bible is, and in thirty years we become people who can talk about the Bible to some extent.

If one learns the Bible, even for just a single day, through a person who has perfectly received the remission of sins, one can also be perfectly born again oneself. Nicodemus was born again on the very night he came to find Jesus Christ. Being born again does not require a long time.

"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy"

Now let us examine together the word we read today. In chapter 12 verse 1, our Lord says, *"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Luke 12:1)*. What is hypocrisy? The Pharisees were so-called believers in God and people who claimed to live according to the word. However, they were people who did not know the basic meaning of what the word says and believed it literally, who went about diligently and zealously and lived very noble lives. Their faith was only an outer shell, and they were godly in appearance, but in reality they were exactly as the word says, *"Having a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Timothy 3:5)*. They were people who did not truly believe in Jesus Christ and people who did not fully believe in God.

For example, in the Ten Commandments He said, *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8)*, but

nowhere in the Bible does it say that if one walks a few steps with a needle stuck in one's clothes, it is a violation of the law. Yet the Pharisees, in order to keep it more strictly than the word of God on their own, made a law that if one walked a few steps with a needle stuck in one's clothes, that was carrying a load and a violation of the law, and said that one had broken the Sabbath. But when our Lord told us to keep the Sabbath holy, since rest means resting at ease, He meant that we should keep in our hearts the fact that Jesus Christ would remove all our sins. It is not something bound to a date.

I, too, lived a life of faith for a long time in a denomination that kept the law strictly. In the old days we did not ride in cars on the Lord's Day, and if we rode in a car on the Lord's Day it was a great sin. Because God had said not to make servants, oxen, and sheep work on the Sabbath but to let them rest at ease, we said that in order to keep it according to the law we must never do so, and we lived that way. But when I came to know the Bible, I found that Jesus had said, *"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)*. This word means that the gospel by which Jesus Christ removes sin exists for man, and not that man exists for that law.

So this means that we should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Leaven is passing on by word of mouth what is not the word of God. That is precisely leaven, and it is hypocrisy. How is it today? Holding the Bible tightly against one's left breast and greeting with a smile whenever one meets a person, and sitting down and standing up very nobly when one goes to the chapel, but thinking of other things when listening to the word and not even understanding what the word is, and then, back at home, showing one's true colors before one's family

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only to change one's face again the moment church members come—this is precisely hypocrisy.

If one does not know and believe in one's heart the fact that Jesus Christ has removed all one's sins, one cannot help but fall into hypocrisy. When one goes to the chapel, everyone is holding a Bible and greeting one another with "Deacon" and "Elder," so one imitates only what is visible to the eye, and when one returns home, one's true colors all come out. A person who has not been born again can neither truly love nor believe in God. Only the outer shell is showy.

That is why Jesus, seeing a fig tree that had only luxuriant leaves and no fruit, cursed that tree. *"Found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, 'Let no fruit grow on you ever again'" (Matthew 21:19)*. That does not mean that He cursed that one tree. The fig is the tree of the nation of Israel. An ordinary tree blossoms and bears fruit as the flowers fall, but the fig blossoms on the inside. A new shoot comes up between the branches and takes the shape of a small fruit, and when autumn comes and it receives the sunlight, its tip turns yellowish and the end opens slightly, and if you pick the fruit and look inside, red flowers are in full bloom. That is the fig. The reason our Lord cursed the fig tree that had only luxuriant leaves is that people who believe in Jesus Christ and yet have not truly had the flower of faith bloom in their hearts, people who have not received the remission of sins from within and do not have the Holy Spirit within, are people without fruit. Such people, like the fig tree without fruit, are cast away before the Lord on the last day.

Among the so-called believers in God, concerning a person who has only luxuriant leaves, whose career alone is splendid, whose going about and serving alone are splendid, but who has neither met the Lord within himself nor has the Holy Spirit, the Book of Romans says, *"If anyone does not have the Spirit of*

Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:9). We must keep this word in mind and humbly listen to and learn from the word how, then, the flower can bloom in our hearts. I hope that you will all become people in whom that seed is planted and the flower blooms within, so that although on the outside you may seem similar to other people, in your hearts the flower blooms and the Holy Spirit dwells.

There is nothing that can be hidden before God

Let us look at verses 2 and 3. *"For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops" (Luke 12:2–3)*. Even if people hide things, they cannot hide them before God. Before people one can smile, and one can live godly in appearance. But one cannot hide or deceive one's own heart from oneself. If one cannot even deceive people, how much less can one deceive the living God. If one says that one believes in Jesus while having sin in one's heart, there is no way that it will not be revealed.

When a person comes to stand before the judgment seat of God on the last day, the person who died with sin in his heart even though he believed in Jesus will truthfully report what is inside him just as it is. While we are on this earth, the Lord receives sinners and calls them to receive the remission of sins. But when one dies and stands before the judgment seat, the person who has not received the remission of sins, the person who has sin, cannot escape the judgment of God and cannot deceive his own heart. The Lord sits and divides those who have been born again to the right and those who have not been born

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again to the left. “Do you have sin?” “Lord, I am a sinner.” Then that person goes this way. “Do you have sin?” “Lord, I am lacking, but the Lord has removed all my sins. My deeds are lacking, but there is no sin in my heart. This is not because I lived well, but because the Lord bore all my sins for me.” Then He looks to see whether that person’s name is in the Book of Life and sends him that way. This is what the word that there is nothing covered that will not be revealed means. People think that while on this earth, saying that they believe in Jesus Christ, they can deceive themselves as much as they like, deceive others, and even deceive God. But although one may be able to hide the sin in one’s heart by turning it into doctrine on one’s own, when one goes out before the presence of God, one cannot hide it.

When a person who has sin bows down to pray before God, what comes to mind first of all? Sin comes to mind first of all. Even if he does not remember all the sins he has committed until now, what he thinks is a great sin comes right to mind. A sin committed ten years ago still comes to mind now, and he sheds tears, saying, “Lord, wash away this sin,” and after crying for a long while, his feelings become refreshed. But he goes back again. The next day, when he begins to pray in order to ask for something, that sin comes to mind again. Why does it come to mind? Because it has been engraved on the tablet of his heart. That sin is recorded in the book of God’s judgment and that sin is recorded in his own conscience as well, so these two come to mind in exactly the same way. So he starts out to pray for something and spends ninety-nine percent repenting of sins, and at the end finishes by saying, “God, give me this. I believe”—this is the prayer of a person who has not been born again.

A person who has not been born again cannot hide here. He wants to pray boldly before God, but a person who has sin in his heart cannot pray boldly. What is inside him is surely revealed

before God. A person who has received the remission of sins in his heart has no sin. But a person who has not received the remission of sins has sin recorded on the tablet of his heart even though he believes in Jesus. This is how the person who has received the remission of sins and the person who has not are divided.

Long ago, the evangelist Moody said that he had no sin. Spurgeon, who was called the Prince of Preachers, also said that because Jesus Christ had removed all sins, even if he wanted to have sin, he had none. He said that even when Satan the devil attacked the weak parts of his flesh, because he was lacking but the Lord is perfect, because he was weak but the Lord is strong, and because Jesus Christ, the King of kings, had come to this earth and borne once and for all all his faults, the sins he had committed, and even the sin he had inherited through Adam, the sin within and the sin without, and had been judged at one time and had risen again at one time and was before the throne of God, even if he wanted to have sin, he could not have any. Those who have met Jesus Christ cannot have sin even if they want to have sin. Those who cannot become sinners even if they want to become sinners are the people who have been born again before the Lord.

You will know the story of the Ugly Duckling. It is the story of a baby swan hatched among ducks that was hated by the ducks, until one day it met a flock of swans on a lake and went in among them, and then it was no longer hated and lived happily together with them. For those who have truly received the remission of sins, I cannot tell you how good the Church of God is. There is no place as beautiful as the Church of God. If one comes to the church of those who have received the remission of sins and lives together with them for just one month, one comes to know that this is the real church, the church according to the Bible.

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Do not hide sin in your heart, but receive the remission of sins through the word

If there is sin in the heart, one is a sinner, and if there is no sin, one has received the remission of sins. Who is there without sin, and who is there who does not commit sin? But the person who has received the remission of his transgressions and whose sin has been covered has no sin, because Jesus Christ took away all his sins and removed those sins. Dear beloved saints, I hope that you will not hide yourselves.

Long ago, I hid for ten years. I believed the doctrine of the denomination to which I belonged so thoroughly that I believed, whatever happened, that I was born again and one of the chosen people. Why was that? Because many works took place through me. I did not believe in Jesus from the beginning. When I turned twenty, I came to know Jesus and came to believe in Him, and at that time, whenever I went into the chapel, I would begin to grow hot from the top of my head, and my heart was so joyful that I could not bear it. I quit smoking and drinking; I felt as if a fire were burning inside me because I wanted to preach the gospel; tongues burst out of me, and I saw visions. But what happened? I had believed in Jesus for ten years, yet there was sin in my heart. I spoke in tongues well and healed people's illnesses and did this and that, but inside me the sins I had committed were recorded just as they were. I thought it was all right even though I had sin, and I thought that even though I had sin, I would go to heaven because I believed in Jesus.

But the Bible says, *"Knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned" (Titus 3:11)*. The Bible is saying that a person who himself says "I am a sinner," a person who has sin in his heart, is a sinner. I thought that even though I had sin in my heart, I would go to heaven because I believed in

Jesus, but the more I looked at the Bible, the more there were parts I wanted to skip over. Whenever the word *"if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:9)* came up, I would just skip over the Book of Romans. Seeing that I spoke in tongues, it seemed that I had the Holy Spirit, but inside I was full of sin, so I skipped over it because it gave me a headache. Whenever the legalistic and works-based parts came up, I liked them all. Even the word *"The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17)*, I thought, meant that He merely counts us righteous because we believe in Jesus, and that there could not really be a righteous person; and I memorized only the word *"There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10)* and did not even think of reading the rest of Romans chapter 3.

While living a life of faith for a long time, I knew that there was sin in my heart. Then I came to know through the word of God how my sins had been removed, and I was born again through the word. I came to know through the word of the Bible the fact that Jesus Christ had taken away not only my past sins, the sins before I believed, but even my future sins, having them transferred onto His head once and for all with the baptism He received from John, and had borne them on His back. I came to know the fact that Jesus Christ came to this earth and bore once and for all not only my sins, but also the sins of my children, the sins of my mother and father and grandfather and grandmother, and all the sin of mankind.

Having first received the remission of sins myself, I began to preach the gospel. In the old days, even though I believed in Jesus, I was in anguish. But after I met Jesus through the word and was born again of water and the Spirit, a smile came over my face even when I did not try to smile, and I was so glad and joyful that I wanted to preach the gospel. In the old days, to give a single sermon, I would spread open dozens of books and patch

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together a little from this commentary and a little from that, and the final conclusion was always, "Let us repent of our sins and live according to the will of God." Everyone would say amen, and when they went out, they were the same as before. Even while believing in Jesus, I kept weeping and weeping, saying, "Lord, I am a sinner." Who told us to believe in Jesus and grieve? The Bible says, *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18)*, so how did believing in Jesus come to be like this? The prayer of a born-again person is different. Just as a little child talks before his parents, he makes detailed requests—Lord, have You not made me Your priest? Hold up Your people and keep the families of the brothers and sisters who have received the remission of sins—and when he finishes by saying, "Thank You for hearing my prayer," his heart becomes at ease.

There are many people who have received the remission of sins through the word. There are many people who, having believed in Jesus for ten years without meeting the Lord, were born again through the word. What is this? It is because I was born again that the other person can also be born again. Long ago, when I had not been born again, what I always taught was the law, works, and rituals, but now I teach what the word is saying. The Lord said, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32)*. Even if one learns one letter a day, if one learns it accurately, one finally comes to the knowledge of the truth; but the person who learns while being deceived becomes just as the word says, *"Always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7)*. Dear beloved saints, you must never hide what is in your hearts. If there is sin in the heart, one is a sinner. I hope that you will know this.

Since He said that what has been spoken in the dark will be heard in the light and what has been spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops, there is nothing that will not be known. Even if we hide things, God knows them all, and even if people hide things from one another, when people meet, what is in their hearts is reflected to one another. They know it all; it is only that they know and do not speak. Why do they not speak? They do not speak because they are persons of character before God. If there is sin in your heart, do not hide it, but ask, "I have sin; is this right or not? It is distressing." If you say with your own mouth that you are a sinner, it is all unraveled by the word and you are born again. If it does not work after hearing once, attend worship two or three times and listen to the word, and as what you wrongly learned in the past is unraveled one by one, you come to receive the remission of sins.

There is nothing at all that will not be known. Do not think that only you know what is inside you. God knows it, and the people around you all know it too. In particular, the born-again servants of God know it clearly even without a word being said. But because the servants of God are persons of character, they do not speak of it, and they leave the person alone until he confesses it with his own mouth.

"Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell"

Let us look at verse 4. *"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do" (Luke 12:4)*. Our Lord, while on this earth, treated us like friends. Then who is the One we ought to fear? We must fear God. There is nothing to fear in people. People

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have a brief connection with us only while we live on this earth; once we leave this earth, we have nothing to do with people and come to stand before God. This means that rather than those who kill the body, we should fear God, who has the authority to judge forever in hell the soul and body of the person who has not received the remission of sins. *"But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!" (Luke 12:5)*.

There are people who eat a good dinner and fall asleep saying, "See you tomorrow morning," and in the morning, even when shaken awake, they do not get up, and their bodies have gone cold. The doctor comes and sees that it is a heart attack. That is the end of it. When our Lord takes a life away, a young person or an elderly person alike goes, and if one dies with sin, one stands before the One who has the power to cast into hell. Therefore, the One we must fear on this earth is God. The wisest person is the one who seeks God, saying before God, "What shall I do with this sin? If there is a way to receive the remission of sins, I must receive it; God, teach me that way." If one seeks and seeks like this, God causes one to meet the righteous, causes one to receive the remission of sins, and gives one the blessing of becoming a child of God on this earth. God gives such blessings to those who seek Him, to those who do not deceive their own hearts, to those who fear God and do not deceive their own consciences.

I hope that you will not deceive your own hearts. I hope that you will not think of deceiving God. A person who has not received the remission of sins surely has sin. Is it right to believe in Jesus and have sin, or is it right to have none? It is right to have none. If someone has paid off all of another household's debt on credit and drawn a line through it in the credit ledger, must it be paid again? It need not be paid. If we have sin, then

we are debtors before God, people who have gone against the law, people who have failed to act rightly, people whose consciences are wrong. The Lord said, *"Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28)*, and the Bible says, *"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15)*. God calls a person a sinner just for what he has done in his heart, so have we never done such things in deed to our families and to our neighbors on this earth? If we have, then that person is a sinner.

We must receive the remission of all those sins. Only when we have perfectly received the remission of sins can we stand before God. Then who goes into hell? God has removed the sins of all the people on this earth. It is not that He removed the sins of some and did not remove the sins of others. God has removed the sins of all the people in this world. Then who goes to hell and who goes to heaven? The person who knows fully through the word and accepts that word, the fact that while removing all the sins of this world, our Lord also perfectly removed all of that person's own sins and even removed the future sins he will commit because he is weak—that person becomes righteous. When Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all with the baptism He received from John, the sins we commit throughout our whole lives were all passed on as well. Because we believe in our hearts that Jesus paid the price of those sins in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, we say that we have received the remission of sins even though our deeds are lacking.

God calls that person righteous and calls him a child of God. A child of God has no sin. A person who is not a child of God has sin. When He said, *"Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16)*, it was a word spoken also with deeds in view, but in substance it means that we should receive the remission of sins in our

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hearts. Only the righteous go to heaven. Do you know how many times the word "righteous" appears in the Bible? It appears hundreds of times. Psalm 1 says, *"For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Psalm 1:6)*, and so divides the righteous and sinners clearly. *"(Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers –ASV). But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1–2)*. This means that the righteous meditate on the law of the LORD day and night, but sinners know roughly and believe roughly and sit in the seat of scoffers.

To think, "God has removed sin, they say, but what has He removed? Is Jesus really the Son of God? Isn't He just one of the sages of the world? How can one say there is no sin when one commits sin? How could He have taken all of it away? Having thought it over, I don't think so," is to sit in the seat of scoffers. The righteous do not sit in the seat of scoffers. The righteous who have received the remission of sins cannot sit in the seat where one says, "Lord, I am a sinner. Wash me." When someone leads in prayer on behalf of all and attaches every modifier, saying, "Holy, merciful, omniscient and omnipotent God the Father," and then at the end says, "A sinner full of sin dares to pray in the name of Jesus Christ," the righteous cannot say amen to that. Isaiah said, *"But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2)*, and James said, *"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16)*. It is said, *"Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3)*; it is said, *"Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations" (Genesis 6:9)*; and it is

said, *"And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6)*. There are people who have no sin in their hearts, saints who have the very same flesh yet have received grace before God and been made sinless. If such saints go in among the crowd of sinners and say amen to the prayer, "Lord, I am a sinner," what is that? Since amen means "I agree, so do I," it is saying, "I, too, am a sinner."

To say, "Lord, I am a sinner. Wash away my sins," while believing in Jesus is the same as saying that since Jesus could not remove all my sins long ago, He should come down again, be born once more in the form of a man, bear sins again at the age of thirty, and die again on the Cross. That is why we pray, "Do not let us nail Jesus to the Cross again." Once God the Father has sacrificed His Son one time, that is enough; He does not do it twice. *"Where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18)*. Yet if a person insists with his own mouth to the very end that he is a sinner, God makes that person belong to the congregation of sinners, just as He said, *"Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous" (Psalm 1:5)*. When one goes there and looks, the person one thought must have gone to heaven is there. He says, "I believed well, so I don't know why I came here; it is unfair." He is a person who believed only with his mouth and did not believe with his heart. Today many people believe only with their mouths and only with their ears, saying, "I believe, I believe." If one has sin, one need only receive the remission of sins through the word; does sin disappear because someone strains himself? Where in the Bible does it say that sin disappears because one offers prayers of repentance? The Bible says, *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19)*.

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The work of removing sin belongs to God alone; sin does not disappear because a person strives. The word repent means to turn back. It means that no matter how hard we try and no matter how well we try to live, it does not work, and the person who has sin, no matter how cleanly he lives, is still a sinner and can only go to hell. Therefore, we must receive the remission of sins by believing the fact that Jesus has removed all our sins, and if we do not accept that salvation, we cannot escape judgment. One comes to know this, asking, "Lord, save me. Lord, how did You remove my sins?" and accepts the fact that Jesus has removed all of one's sins, and so receives the remission of sins. We must fear the One who, after He has killed, also has the power to cast into hell. We must fear God.

On this earth one can talk big. The rich talk big to the poor, and even among those who believe in Jesus, there are people who talk big, saying, "I will go to heaven whatever happens; I belong to such and such a denomination, I have believed since my mother's womb, I have done this and that for the Lord, and I have received tongues, so isn't this the evidence that I have been saved?" They have sin, but on this earth they talk big. But just die. Can you talk big when you get there? Before the holy triune God, sinners cannot even dare to lift their eyes and look, and they can only go into the burning fire.

The place into which the person enters who, though lacking, believes in his heart the fact that Jesus Christ has removed all his sins, and how Jesus removed sin through the word—that is heaven. It does not work for us to believe with our mouths or to know with our ears, and it does not work by knowing only with our heads. Sin is in our hearts, and it is said, *"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10),* and it is said, *"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans*

10:17). We must come before Jesus Christ with our hearts. We must tear open the skin of our hearts, and if there is sin secretly inside us, we must bring it out just as it is. God said, *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*. When a person brings out what is in his heart and comes before God, saying, "God, I have brought this. I have nothing else to say. I have sin. You said the wages of sin is death, so by Your law I go to hell. Lord, I am a sinner. Save this sinner," God truly does not despise such a person but saves him.

We believe with our hearts and come to righteousness. Since it is said, *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24)*, when we come before God we must come from the depths of our hearts and bring out what is inside us. Do not take the name of the living God in vain, and do not treat Him with contempt. On this earth we live only for a short while and go, but that world is eternal. The Lord said, *"In that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left" (Luke 17:34–35)*. They are the same family, a husband and wife who lived together, so why does one go and one remain? Because he deceived his own heart with his heart.

All our sins were passed on to Jesus through the baptism He received from John

What do Moody, Spurgeon, and the other world-renowned evangelists say? They say that there is nothing for us to do. They say that we are human beings who have fallen into the water and cannot possibly get out, so if we only come to know through the word the fact that God has saved us and accept it as it is, anyone

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receives the right to become a child of God. *"As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12)*.

But in order to accept that, we must know how our sins were passed on to Jesus Christ, and we must accept as it is the fact that Jesus had to shed His blood for us. Jesus Christ came to this earth in the form of a man in order to save us, and He received baptism from John in the Jordan River in order to save His people from their sins. He received baptism in order to bear all our sins and fulfill all righteousness. *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. All that righteousness was precisely the process of the event of the redemption of Jesus Christ. That Jesus Christ received baptism from John in the Jordan River before dying on the Cross was the righteous act of God for bearing all the sin of us mankind. Just as sins were passed on to the lamb when hands were laid on the sacrificial offering in the Old Testament, when Jesus bowed His head and received baptism from John in the Jordan River, all the sin of mankind was transferred to the head of Jesus, and because that sin was so heavy, He bore it on His back. That is why John the Baptist, who gave Him baptism, testifies, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. This means that He takes away the sins of all the people of the world, leaving out not a single person and omitting no one.

How were our sins removed? Our sins were removed because Jesus Himself bore our sins. Our sins are not something we ourselves pass on; John the Baptist, the representative of mankind and the high priest, transferred them to Jesus on our behalf. Accepting what God has done exactly according to the script He promised in the Bible—that is precisely the remission of sins.

You were born from your mother's womb and committed sins while living until you were ten years old. Even if it was committed in childhood, sin is sin. Were those sins passed on to Jesus Christ? They were passed on. The sins committed from age eleven to age twenty are also sins committed in this world, so they were passed on to Jesus Christ. The sins committed from age twenty-one to age thirty, whether committed in deed or committed in the heart, are all alike sins committed in this world, namely the sin of the world, so they were passed on to Jesus Christ. All the sins committed, knowingly or unknowingly, from age thirty-one to age fifty, and from age fifty to age seventy, are also sins committed in the world, so they were passed on to Jesus Christ. Then do we have sin? We do not. Jesus took away not only our sins but also the sins of our children. Jesus took away the sins of all the people in this world. Do not think of us with the eyes of human beings who live seventy or eighty years. Hebrews says that God, who lives forever, made eternal atonement for the sin of this world once and for all. *"With His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12)*. I hope that you will believe this fact.

Confess before people that you have no sin

When we look at verses 6 through 9, after saying that although five sparrows are sold for two copper coins, not one of them is forgotten before God, and that even the hairs of our heads are all numbered, so we should not fear, He says as follows. *"Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the*

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angels of God" (Luke 12:8–9). The Lord, who came as the Son of Man and received baptism from John in the Jordan River and Himself bore our sins, sitting on the judgment seat, is saying that if we deny on this earth the fact that He bore all our sins in the Jordan River, He too will deny us before His angels. And He says that if we confess before people that Jesus has taken away all our sins, He too will confess us.

We go to heaven by believing in Jesus Christ on this earth. But on this earth, before people, we must clearly confess, just as it appears in the word, that Jesus took away our sins in this way and that therefore we have no sin, that it is not that our deeds are perfect but that we have no sin because the Lord took away all our sins, and that this is how we believe in the Lord. Jesus says that we must confess this before people as well. If one knows the remission of sins only vaguely and, being ashamed, does not even confess it, but says, "I don't know. Jesus could not take away all my sins," the Lord says, since you deny Me, I will deny you too; since you are ashamed of Me, I am ashamed of you too; do not come to where I am.

We absolutely must know this. Some people, even though they know the gospel, say that they are ashamed to speak of this. They are ashamed, saying, how can one say that one has no sin? But what is clear is that we must not be ashamed that Jesus Christ removed our sins for us. God loved us and removed our sins, so what is there to be ashamed of in that? If we have received love before God and come to know that truth, it is something to be truly thankful for and something to tell those who do not know. *"Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13–14)*. The majority of people go by the broad way, and a very small number of people go by the narrow

way. Even so, even if we are not recognized before the world, we must confess before people and before God that we have no sin, that we have met the Lord and the Lord has removed all our sins, so we have no sin. Only then are we recognized before God as well.

Some people only know it and do not confess it. They keep it only in their mouths, thinking, so that is how it is, and never swallow it down. That is a serious matter. We must examine before the Lord whether the word is so or not so. Though we are lacking, we have nothing to be ashamed of before God. Before people we may be lacking, but we openly make known before people the word we preach. If anyone can see that it differs from the Bible, we do not say it, and if anyone can see that it does not differ from the Bible, I hope you will know the fact that it is the truth. Since it is said, *"Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand" (Matthew 5:15)*, one lights a lamp in order to shine on and reveal it to all the people of the world. We are the light of the world. The person who has received the remission of sins brings it out openly.

Today some people hold meetings and shout, "Receive the Holy Spirit! Receive the fire!" But the Bible says, "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38)*. It is saying that if only we receive the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit comes within us as a gift. Since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit who is holy, He cannot enter a heart that has sin, and He can enter the heart of a person who has received the remission of sins. To a person who does not know the Bible, a wrong teaching may not be exposed, but before a person who knows the Bible, that wrong is exposed. One cannot read out the word of the Bible and then say something irrelevant. One must speak accurately of what is in the word. Only then do

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the saints hear it once and hear it twice, and when a question arises in their hearts, they ask again and are told again, and in this way they come to know the truth step by step, and through that truth all the sins in their hearts are remitted.

The sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit

Let us read verse 10. *"And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven" (Luke 12:10)*. When a person who believes in another religion says that he would rather believe in his own religion than believe in Jesus, or when someone says that people who believe in Jesus tend to lie, so he believes in his own god, and asks how Jesus could be the Son of God, such things are said out of ignorance, so if they come and hear the word, they can by all means receive the remission of sins.

Then what kind of person does not receive remission? The word that he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not receive remission means that he who blasphemes what God has done does not receive remission. Jesus, who is God, came to this earth, born as a man from Mary, in order to save people. At the age of thirty, He bore all the sins of human beings by receiving baptism from John. The word baptism means to be passed on, to be transferred, to be washed, and to be buried. The sins of our hearts are washed away through sin being passed on to Jesus Christ. And through Jesus Christ bearing all our sins and dying on the Cross, we come not to be judged.

He who blasphemes the work that Jesus Christ, who came to this earth by the Holy Spirit, did at the age of thirty—that person does not receive remission. Saying how could Jesus have taken

away all sins, how could He have taken away all the sin of the world, that He took away the sins of some and did not take away the sins of others—that is blasphemy. Jesus bore the sins of all the people in this world. Saying, as countless people wrongly understand, that God determined to save some and determined to curse others, and that He took away the sins of some and did not take away the sins of others, is blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. God is a righteous God, so how could He take away the sins of some and not take away the sins of others? *"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 loved every sinner, whoever he may be in this world, embraced them all, and bore all their sins. Degrading the power of God and the love of God, and the fact that Jesus Christ removed sin, and limiting the love of God—that is the sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.

Let us suppose that a certain saint heard that there were two hundred children in a certain orphanage, and roughly matching the shoe sizes by grade, bought two hundred and thirty pairs of shoes, with some to spare, and visited them. But suppose that among those children there was a child who did not believe it, saying, surely he could not have bought all two hundred and thirty pairs, he probably bought only a hundred and thirty pairs, how could he have bought them all when they cost so much money, and who, even when the shoes came around to him, said, "You wear them yourself. I don't need to wear them." Whom is that child blaspheming? He is blaspheming the saint who bought the shoes.

Jesus made eternal atonement for all the sins of this world once and for all. *"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12)*. Having accomplished eternal atonement and

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sat down at the right hand of God, He no longer does the work of removing sin again. He has done it all, yet people gather among themselves and, as I said a moment ago, speak in the dark, in inner rooms, in the ear. They say, did Jesus really take away all sins? He must have taken away the sins of the elect and not taken away the sins of those who are not elect; how could He take them all away? Even if I were God, I would not take away the sins of people who live like that; He may have taken away the sins of people like us, who shed tears before Jesus and try to seek the truth, but would He have taken away the sins of people like those? This is what they say. So people, with their own thoughts, have limited the power of God, the love of God, and the salvation of God. That is the sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.

What else is blaspheming against the Holy Spirit? It is saying that He could not take away all of one's own personal sins, that He took away original sin but did not take away actual sins. This is the sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. Our Lord came to this earth and took away all the sins of human beings, every one of them. This means that the Lord bore, with room to spare, the sins we commit throughout our whole lives, the sins of our children and the sins of our parents, the sin of Adam and the sins of his descendants, and even the sins of the last baby to be born on the day this earth comes to an end. That is the love of God and the salvation of God.

Therefore, he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit does not receive remission. For that person there is no remission. Even though Jesus has taken away all his sins, he says, "Lord, I still have sin, so what did You take away? If You had taken them away, would there be sin in my heart? How could You have taken away all the sins I will commit in the future? How can You take away sins that have not even been committed yet?" Do you

not even know the word "advance"? An advance is receiving in advance what is to come later. Jesus Christ came to this earth two thousand years ago and bore once and for all, in advance, all the sins of this world, the sins of people of old and the sins of people yet to come. He took them all away. This is precisely salvation. Jesus Christ bore all our sins while receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River. He bore at one time all the sins of this world, the sins of all the people who will be born in the future and of the people of the present. And He shed His blood while dying on the Cross. *"It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11)*. Because the life of a person is in the blood, He made atonement for our sins with that blood.

I hope that you will not limit what the Holy Spirit has done. I hope that you will not blaspheme it. Among the people who hear this gospel, two kinds of people appear. There are the people who hear the gospel and accept it and receive the great blessing of entering the eternal kingdom, and there are those who, like Esau, reject this and strive to receive the remission of sins by their own efforts and their own zeal. If one does not accept as it is this fact that God has done, but strives by one's own efforts, a curse comes upon it.

I hope that you will not blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. This word is a frightening word. I cannot tell you how frightened I am of this word. To look at people who speak in tongues and blaspheme it is not the sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. Blaspheming against the Holy Spirit is going against, blaspheming, and saying that He could not take all of it away—the work that Jesus, who is God, came to this earth and did, namely, the fact that when He received baptism from John He bore all our sins and died on the Cross and rose again and ascended, the fact that He has removed our sins. If you do not know, say that you do not know. I hope that you will say that it

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is a fact that He took them all away, but that you do not know how He took them away and so wish to know a little. Never say definitively that He did not take them away. For if you say that He did not take them away when He has taken them all away, there is no way to receive the remission of sins before the Lord.

I want every one of you to receive the remission of sins. If you do not accept it, God will bring in anyone from outside and preach the gospel to them, so that they accept it and they receive the blessing that you were to receive. God is well able to do so.

Now let us look at verses 11 and 12. *"Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say" (Luke 12:11–12).* This word means that the people of the world reject those who have received the remission of sins. Because those who have not received the remission of sins are ninety percent and those who have received the remission of sins are not even ten percent, they, holding political power and denominational power, can reject those who have received the remission of sins. It means that even if such people drag us away, we should not worry about what we will answer, for the Holy Spirit will teach us at that time what we ought to say. The Holy Spirit within us gives us what to say. We come to experience such things. If only we have heard the word, later we have something to say. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Even wealth to use for many years cannot protect the soul this night

< Luke 12:13–21 >

"Then one from the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' But He said to him, 'Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?' (And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth –ASV). Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?" So he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'"

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The heart that must be examined before the inheritance

A man who came before Jesus asked Him to command his brother to divide the inheritance with him. Because what he needed right away was to receive his own share, he wanted to use even the authority of the Lord to settle that matter. But Jesus said that He had not come as a judge to divide the property of brothers. Before calculating who should have how much, He brought to light the heart of the person looking at wealth and the matter of life. We, too, while thinking only about what we can get from the Lord, may fail to hear the very salvation the Lord wants to give us.

"And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). The Lord did not merely weigh the rights and wrongs of that one man, but told those who were listening to beware of all covetousness. Covetousness is the craving to forcibly pull toward oneself what God has not granted as one's share, and it is being unable to be satisfied even with what one already has and having one's heart captivated by getting more. Even before one gets the goods into one's hands, that heart drags along our thoughts and judgment. It makes us consider lying justified for the sake of what we want to get, or think nothing of it even after causing harm to our neighbor. Therefore, it is not something to regard lightly just because it has not shown itself in action.

That said, this does not mean that working or preparing for one's livelihood is all covetousness, so we can gratefully enjoy what the Lord has given, care for our families, and seek what we need. Only, we must abandon the thought that if our wealth becomes abundant, even our life will become secure. This is

because money that can buy food cannot remove sin or give eternal life. The word of the Lord does not make us compare the amounts we have, but makes us ask where we are placing the security of our hearts.

The rich man who entrusted his soul to the wealth piled up in his barns

Next, Jesus told the parable of a rich man whose ground yielded plentifully. Since his problem was not a lack of crops but a lack of room to store them, he thought it would be solved if he pulled down his small barns and built greater ones. Up to this point, he looks like a person who plans his livelihood well. But his thinking went beyond the matter of storing crops and reached the point of deciding even the future of his own soul. *"And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry'" (Luke 12:19).*

He regarded himself as being able to live for many years because he had goods to use for many years. Having calculated the amount of his wealth, he counted as his own even the time that had not yet been given to him. God, who had given him life, and the day he would stand before God were not in that plan. A person can tell his soul to be at ease, but since he is not the master of that soul, he had no authority to put his soul at ease as he said. Since it is God who breathed the breath of life into the nostrils, it is also God who takes that breath back. The reason the Lord called him a fool was not that his farming had gone well, but that he relied on wealth and forgot God, the Lord of life.

This heart does not arise only in people who have much property. The heart that puts off seeking God, saying it will do so once it has just a little more than now, is holding on to the

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same object of reliance. Nor does being poor automatically make one rely on God, nor does being rich make everyone live like this rich man. What matters is whether our possessions are serving our lives, or whether we are serving our possessions. If we take wealth as our master, increasing it becomes the purpose of life, and the word of the Lord, who gives life, keeps being pushed back.

The salvation that is needed even this night

"God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'" (Luke 12:20). The rich man spoke of many years, but God spoke of this night. The gap between the time he had planned and the time God called him could not be filled with wealth. The word that asks whose the goods left behind at that time will be shows that what we now hold on to as our own cannot remain beside us forever. Since it says, *"As it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27)*, before the One who takes life back, whether we have met God and received the remission of sins matters more than how much we have gathered.

We, too, cannot escape the judgment for sin with money, nor can we exchange many good deeds for eternal life. Even if we strive to abandon covetousness, we cannot erase by ourselves the sins we have already committed. God sent Jesus Christ to save us who are like this. Just as in the days of the Old Testament sins were passed on by laying hands on the head of the sacrificial offering, Jesus, by receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, had the sins of all the people of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. Because He bore all the sins we

commit throughout our whole lives, from birth until death, including the covetousness hidden in our hearts, this is not a salvation limited only to the sins we count and know.

Jesus, who bore all those sins, by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, received in our place the judgment that we sinners were to receive, and He rose again from death and became the Savior who gives us eternal life. Having sins passed on to Him through His baptism and dying on the Cross because of those sins are the salvation of God for making us live. The person who has accepted this salvation in his heart does not stand before God putting forward what he has piled up in his barns or his own conduct, but stands relying on the righteousness the Lord has accomplished for him. This is because the remission of sins is not something we obtain by giving God a price, but something we receive by faith as the work the Lord has accomplished for us.

Therefore, there is no reason to put off salvation until later. Even if we say we will believe after gathering more, wealth cannot take the place of faith. We must confirm and believe from the word we have heard today that all our sins were passed on to Jesus and that the judgment for those sins is also finished. Even on the day the life of the body ends, what protects us is not the property we have left behind, but the Savior who rescued us from sin and rose again.

A life that is rich toward God

"So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). At the end of the parable, the Lord asks together for whom we are laying up and how we stand toward God. A life that is rich toward God is not a secret for

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obtaining more worldly property. It is to know through the word who God is and how He removed our sins, to lay it up in our hearts, and to live relying on God by believing in that grace. If we have that faith, we no longer see what we have only as something meant to satisfy ourselves alone. We become able to use what God has entrusted to us where it is needed and to benefit others as well.

Even after we have received the remission of sins, covetousness comes to our hearts. That is why we must not make the faith that the Lord bore even this sin an excuse for permitting covetousness. The more we regard as precious the grace by which He remitted all our sins, the more we must not give our hearts again to the craving that cannot make us live. Lay down the thought of taking what belongs to others, work honestly, and if there is something you need, tell it to God. If we give thanks while thinking of the grace we have already received, we can also examine before the word the thought that we can feel secure only by having more.

The wealth and time given to us can also be used to help our neighbors and to preach the gospel. It is not that we buy salvation through that work, but that we let others also hear the salvation we have already received. Even when the day comes that everything we have piled up disappears, the life the Lord has given is not in vain. Since even wealth to use for many years cannot protect our souls this night, I hope that you will not pour all your heart into building bigger barns for yourselves alone, but will believe in God, who gave you life, and use righteously what He has entrusted to you today. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Take heed and keep yourselves from all covetousness

< Luke 12:13–21 >

"Then one from the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' But He said to him, 'Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?' (And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth –ASV). Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?" So he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'"

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How should those who have received the remission of sins live

In this age, when the world is changing greatly, I know that it is the grace of God that we have been able to live a life of faith until now. We have received the remission of sins and are living a life of faith. Truly, there is no judgment for us before God; we have been saved from judgment and have obtained eternal life. By believing in our hearts that our Lord has saved us through the water, the blood, and the Spirit, we have come to righteousness, and having come to righteousness, we have escaped judgment. *"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10)*. Now we have become God's own people. Now, before God, there is neither judgment nor sin for us. Then, we who have received the remission of sins must know how we should live, and I know that we must act wisely in faith.

Looking at the word we read today, a certain man asked Jesus to have the property divided for him. Usually, if you ask what older and younger brothers fight over, they often fight over property. They fight even while their parents are alive, but after their parents pass away, it is worse. So it is a good thing to divide the property properly while the parents are alive. But I do not intend to talk about dividing property today; the purpose lies elsewhere. Just as the certain man who came before Jesus did, people think that if only Jesus would tell them to divide the property and share it, then they would divide it and share it, whether the older brother or the younger. But the Lord said, *"Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" (Luke 12:14)*, and said that He had not come to this earth for such a purpose. And He said, *"Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness" (Luke 12:15)*. We have been saved. Dear fellow

believers, do you have sin? You have no sin. Is there judgment? There is no judgment either.

Then what is the greatest problem for us in living a life of faith? It is covetousness. Then does this mean that we should throw away all the things of the world? That is utter nonsense. God has saved us. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus bore all our sins, and by receiving judgment on the Cross and shedding His blood, He saved us from all sins and from judgment. So we have been saved by faith. Because God has saved us in advance, we have the basic score. If we have been saved, we have earned the basic score of sixty points before God. Since we start out with sixty points already earned, we have passed for a start and have become the people of God. But from here on, problems arise. We must go up from sixty points, but how many things there are in this world that bring craving into our hearts! Especially in this present age, is it not even more so? It is no longer a matter of solving the problems of food, clothing, and shelter; now it is an age of living while enjoying pleasures. That is why this world is so splendid and so good that even if we try not to be covetous, we cannot help being covetous. There are so many things to covet, and there are a great many things that make craving well up of its own accord in our hearts. But the Bible says to drive away covetousness. Of course, after we have been saved, we must basically enjoy what the Lord has given us.

"Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness"

Covetousness is when the craving to covet is so strong that one wants to make everything one's own. This word says to remove this covetousness. The greatest enemy in living a life of

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faith is covetousness. If our life of faith does not go well even though we have been saved, it is because of covetousness that it does not go well. What God has given us, we take all of it by faith and have all of it. But trying to take what is not ours—something other than what God has given as our portion and what our parents have given as our portion—is covetousness. Men and women alike are unable to live a life of faith because of covetousness for the opposite sex, covetousness for wealth, or covetousness for honor. After we have been saved, this is the biggest problem.

Even if we are not covetous, the Lord gives to us abundantly. What comes after we have received the remission of sins is not a curse. The remission of sins is the blessing of God. A person who has received the remission of sins from God cannot but be blessed both in spirit and in body. Because that is something by which one comes to be blessed of its own accord, having received the remission of sins is precious. For the person who has not received the remission of sins there is a curse, and for the person who has received the remission of sins there is blessing. But if you and I, who have received the remission of sins, set our hearts on covetousness, then because of this, problems arise in our life of faith and our faith does not grow. If we have indeed been saved but are just so-so, it is because there is covetousness in our hearts.

If a perfect score is one hundred points, we earned sixty points when we were saved. The remainder is forty points, and if we incline our hearts even a little toward God, it becomes sixty-one points. If we are in the sixties or seventies, we are average, and our faith can be regarded as fairly all right. But if covetousness comes in, instead of going up from sixty points, we eat away these sixty points. If we incline our hearts more toward the world than toward the blessing of salvation the Lord

has given us, it becomes fifty-nine points. If we want to have the things of the world, it becomes fifty-eight points. What God has given to us, we may have all of it, and we must take it by faith without fail. But if covetousness comes in, which tries to force what belongs to others into becoming our own apart from what He has permitted, then even if we do nothing, the score keeps dropping, and later it drops all the way to fifty points. Then, although salvation does not disappear, because we do not have the basic score of faith, we become unable to live a life of faith, and we come to say that the Lord's having saved us is tiresome and to ask whether that is all there is to the story of having received the remission of sins. Because we start by cutting into the basic score, we are not thankful for having received the remission of sins. Having received the remission of sins is only in our heads, and we are not thankful in our hearts. What is it that makes our faith retreat and keeps us from living a life of faith well? It is covetousness.

You and I have been saved. Jesus Christ came to this earth and bore all our sins with the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross in our place, and received judgment on our behalf, and so we have been saved. Then why are we unable to be thankful, and why are our hearts not bright? Whether in our life of faith or in our life in society, why are we unable to be thankful? It is because covetousness has come into our hearts. That we are unable to be thankful for the salvation God has given us, and unable to be thankful that He has given us not only eternal life but also all the physical things so that we can live on this earth, is because there is covetousness. The Bible speaks of *"covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5)*. Among those who live a life of faith, the greatest of sins is covetousness. If there is covetousness, the life of faith does not work. I hope you will know that, because of covetousness, your

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life of faith and mine do not work, we cannot be thankful for what God has given, and we come to be unable to be thankful even for what He will give by faith in the future.

Covetousness eats away the basic score

Covetousness, too, is sin. But it is easy for us to say in our hearts that, since Jesus has taken away this sin as well, there is nothing to make a big issue of. But that is not so. The Bible says to take heed and drive away covetousness, and in Colossians it says, *"Put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness" (Colossians 3:5)*. People do everything because of this covetousness. What is frightening to us born-again people is this covetousness. The most fearful sin is covetousness, and it is because of covetousness that the life of faith does not go well. The reason the life of faith of brothers and sisters who have received the remission of sins goes into the negative is that covetousness comes into their hearts and they desire and demand other things. Born-again people, even though they know that covetousness is sin, think that this sin is not such a big sin. But for a born-again person, covetousness is the greatest sin among the sins of this world. We must know this.

Let us say there is a bowl here. The Lord has filled this vessel sixty percent with blessing, and the remaining forty percent, the things of the flesh, the Lord has also given in full. But if the things of the world gnaw into that sixty percent and it is taken over, the life of faith does not work and we do not receive blessing from the Lord. If our faith does not grow, if our hearts are not clean and clear before God and we do not live cheerfully, it is that covetousness has come into our hearts. Knowingly or

unknowingly, we are living amid a great deal of covetousness. There are people who, though rich, live very poorly, and there are people who live always gasping for breath. If they only managed well what God has permitted them, they could live very comfortably and well; but because they are covetous and try to have more, they end up losing even what they have. We saints, too, if we are thankful within the bounds that God has permitted and manage it well, can live very thankfully and happily. Why do we live in distress and hardship? It is because, when covetousness came into our hearts, we accepted that covetousness, and from that time on there has been hardship.

I believe that the biggest problem of people who live a life of faith is covetousness. There are some born-again people who, saying that it is not sin, take money in whatever way they can. Of course, there is no sin. Dear fellow believers, do you have sin? No, you do not. Those who still have sin must first hear in great detail what the sin of man is and what the remission of sins is. Those who have received the remission of sins must drive away covetousness.

Take by faith what God has permitted

Then what kind of covetousness is it? Is it saying that we should throw away everything God has given us? No. What God has given, we must take all of it. Then what is it? It is what is beyond our share. For example, it is when one man tries to take two women, or when someone makes what is not his property his own. If God has given something as our own, we must take it by faith without fail. But trying to make something one's own by forcing it through strange schemes when the other party does not even intend to give it—that is covetousness. Looking at the

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Bible, David was the youngest, Abraham was not the firstborn, and between Esau and Jacob, it was Jacob who received the blessing. It is God who gives the blessing; it is not something that comes about by a person forcibly pulling it toward himself.

What God has given us, we must take by faith and enjoy. But trying to forcibly pull toward ourselves anything other than what God has permitted is called covetousness, and that we must drive away. When Satan the devil breathes such things into our hearts, we must say no, no, and drive them away. Satan the devil breathes covetousness into our hearts, and breathes covetousness into the hearts of the servants of God as well. Spiritual covetousness would be fine, but fleshly covetousness we must drive away. We must drive away what eats into our sixty percent. This is what Satan the devil brings equally to all the saints, to all the servants of God, to the old and the young, to anyone at all. We must not tolerate the covetousness that comes into our hearts. Because we have received the remission of sins, we could tolerate it, but even so we must drive away covetousness. As for what God has permitted, we must take it tenaciously. But trying to take what God has not permitted—that is precisely sin and craving. God gives us many things.

We think that covetousness is absolutely not sin, and we usually tolerate covetousness readily. But before God this is something very big. Because we tolerate it readily, our faith has taken many minuses, and later, because of this covetousness, we come to ruin and disgrace. Let us think about it. Why is it that we do not advance well in faith, and why is it that living a life of faith is such a headache and so hard? Is it not because of covetousness? The servants of God, too, have a hard time because of covetousness. But the point is, the problem is that while people treat it as a very great sin if a person has killed a person, they do not think that way about the covetousness that

has come into themselves. But Jesus said that covetousness is the greatest sin. It is because God said, *"You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3)*, and covetousness is idolatry.

What is the greatest problem for a born-again person is covetousness. For me, too, the greatest problem is covetousness, and for you, too, the greatest problem is covetousness. If only we abandon this covetousness, there is nothing to be a problem for us. A born-again person lives happily if only he abandons covetousness. How happily he lives within the bounds that God has permitted! If we abandon covetousness, we see new things, we have things to ask of God by faith, and we have the faith that believes in the fact that if we ask, God answers. So the point is to abandon covetousness. Since Jesus, who rose again from death, has given us eternal life, when we think of the blessing of salvation we have already received, we can lay down the heart that says we will be at peace only if we have more wealth. We have only to believe in the Lord who has saved us and enjoy with thanksgiving what He has permitted.

There is no one who is without covetousness. If we go deep into our hearts, there is the desire to make things our own even though they are not ours, and to make all the things of the world our own. But do the things of the world become ours just because we are covetous? No, they do not. We might ask whether having covetousness in the heart counts as sin, but Jesus says that it is sin. It is that because of it, faith does not work. Even though we know it will not work, our hearts want to have it; but merely having it in the heart is sin. Even in the world, they say that if one does not abandon covetousness, many illnesses arise in the body. That is a matter of consequences; fundamentally, we must not have covetousness, and we must know that it is sin. Even though there are many things I would like to talk about today, this is what I want to talk about. I want to tell you that

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covetousness is sin and that we must drive away covetousness. The longer we have believed, the more we must drive away covetousness. Especially for the servants of God, it is an even bigger problem. Because they have no sin, when covetousness comes in, they swallow it all just as it comes. The problem is that they do not know that it is wrong. The brothers and sisters, too, when they first receive the remission of sins, ask whether this is sin or not; but when a long time has passed since they received the remission of sins, they become accustomed to it and say that even if they commit sin, it is not sin. That is covetousness. That is a frightening thing, and if I become accustomed to it, I, too, could become like that.

As I have lived a life of faith, I have found that the biggest problem was covetousness. When I quietly observe the brothers and sisters, too, the greatest problem is covetousness. Does a person who has received the remission of sins agonize over sin? Clearly, he has no sin. Then what does he agonize over? He suffers because of covetousness; because of it he cannot come before the Lord with a bright heart and his heart is dark; and because of covetousness he leaves Jesus and leaves the church. In fact, even without covetousness God gives many things, but with a covetous heart alone one can never achieve anything. One is only filled with craving and perishes together with that craving; nothing comes about because of a covetous heart. Things come about because God permits them. Just because one has a covetous heart, is all that covetousness fulfilled? It is not fulfilled. Even though we know it will not be fulfilled, because we are human we hold on to it, thinking that we must have at least this in order for our hearts not to feel empty; but we must abandon this. We must abandon covetousness.

Those who are rich toward God

Looking at today's word, to the man who asked Him to tell them to divide the wealth between brothers, Jesus said, *"Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15),* and told a parable. A rich man whose ground had yielded plentifully said that he would pull down his barns and build greater and store all his crops and goods there, and then: *"And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:19–21).*

This means that no matter how much covetousness we have in our hearts, if there is no richness toward God in our hearts and we do not love God, then no matter how much wealth we have, we cannot use it unless God permits. He says that no matter how much craving a person has and no matter how much of that craving he fulfills, he can never possess it unless God permits, and He tells us to abandon covetousness. He is saying that even if you are not covetous, He gives you all that you need to eat and drink and everything you need in spirit and in body. So we must fill our hearts abundantly with the things of God. For the one who is rich toward God, God can permit and fill him with the things of the world as well, but the one who is poor toward God becomes poor in the things of the world as well. It is truly so. If one has no faith toward God and does not follow by faith, then no matter how much craving one has and no matter how many things one wants to have, one cannot have them. But if one has the faith that believes the word of God, has received the

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remission of sins, knows that following God is right, and lives by faith, He lets one have many things of the world as well.

I hope you will know that the things of the world do not become ours just by our having a covetous heart. That is why we do not need to have a covetous heart, and we must drive it away. If everything became ours according to our covetousness, we would have to be covetous; but because things do not become ours just by our being covetous, He tells us that it is rather when we drive away covetousness and have the faith that believes in God that we can obtain the things of the world. It is not non-possession or the ideal of honorable poverty like that of Gandhi, who gave up everything. Taking and using all that God has given us, giving thanks and glory to God, and eating, drinking, and enjoying it—this is the faith of Christianity. Buddhism gives up everything in order to attain nirvana, but Christianity is not like that. It is eating, drinking, enjoying, and prospering with everything God has permitted. This is the difference between Buddhism and Christianity. Our Lord says that the one who is rich toward God is rich in the world as well and receives many things from God, but the one who is poor toward God, even if he covets many things of the world and has gained much, loses it all and cannot use any of it himself. God says to the servants of God and to you: drive away the covetousness in your hearts and have much faith toward God, and then He will give you many things.

We must know Christianity well, and we must not fill the vessel of our hearts with much covetousness. A person who has been saved has the basic score of sixty points. From there we must go up to seventy points, and if we go up to eighty points, the things of this world, too, are filled for us to the measure of seventy or eighty points. Abraham had good faith, and it says, *"Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold"*

(Genesis 13:2), and of Isaac also it says, *"The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous" (Genesis 26:13)*. A person of truly good faith God makes rich, and He never leaves him in poverty. God looks after the life of a person who has been born again, believes and follows the word of God, and is together with the church. Even if his descendants should beg for food and fall, God raises those descendants up again. Richness of faith is richness in the world. So, in this world of faith, we must abandon and drive away worldly covetousness and live by the faith that believes in God.

Let us take what God has permitted us. And let us not be robbed of it. But let us not have a covetous heart that keeps trying to have what God has not permitted; let us drive it away. They say that it is truly good when one drives away covetousness and empties one's heart. Covetousness comes into the hearts of born-again saints, and into the hearts of the servants of God as well. Because of this, our faith does not work; our believing does not work. It is not because of something else that faith does not work. It is not that faith does not work because we have not been saved, nor is it because our faith in the Lord has been shaken. We have faith, we have been saved, and our faith is good right now. Then why does it not work? It does not work because we have accepted a covetous heart. Let us drive away covetousness. If there is anything in our hearts that we personally must drive away, let us drive it away and live in the faith that believes in the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The treasure we lay up in heaven, believing in the care of the Father

< Luke 12:22–34 >

"Then He said to His disciples, 'Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not

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grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'"

The care of the Father, who gave us life

When we think about what to eat today and what to wear tomorrow, there are times when our hearts are completely gripped by the problems of daily living. Even though we believe in the Lord, since what we need right now is before our eyes, we are afraid that we may not be able to provide it. Jesus, telling such disciples not to worry, first reminded them of the fact that life is more than food and the body is more than clothing. This does not mean that food and clothing are not needed; it means that God has already given the life and the body that these are to take care of. If we look only at the means of maintaining the gift while forgetting the One who gave the gift, our hearts grow more anxious as what we have decreases.

"Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?" (Luke 12:24). Ravens neither plow the field nor build storehouses, but the reason there is food in every field they fly down to is that God has placed it there beforehand. The only labor a raven does is to go about looking for that food. Since the disciples are beings more precious than such birds, they must tell their needs to the Father and believe in His care. Believing this word is not an attitude of leaving undone what must be done. It is to know the fact that our labor is small and what God has prepared beforehand is great, and to do our own share of the work, without having our hearts captivated as if our whole life depended on its outcome. Even in

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our thoughts of taking responsibility for our livelihood, we must remember that we are not the masters of our own lives but people who receive care.

What worry cannot do, and the glory with which He clothed the grass

When worries multiply, it feels as though we could solve our problems better if only we worried more. But the Lord asked whether anyone by worrying can add even one cubit to his stature. Repeating our difficulties in our minds does not mean we can control even the things that are beyond our ability. Only when we admit this limit can we let go of the hand that was clinging to our worrying selves and ask God. Looking concretely at what we need and preparing it, and agonizing while trying to rule by ourselves even over the tomorrow we cannot know, are two different things.

The Lord told them to look at how the lilies grow. The lilies do not weave cloth for themselves, yet even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these flowers. *"If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?" (Luke 12:28)*. The Father, who so clothes even the grass that blooms today and will be gone, cannot but know the needs of His children. The rebuke of having little faith is not a declaration that He will abandon the disciples who have become worried, but a word that makes them see again under whose care they are. Our little faith is that, although we have received salvation by faith, in the matter of eating and living day by day we do not easily trust the Father. Therefore, rather than

struggling to hide our worrying hearts, we must set those hearts before the Father and rely on the promise of the word.

Living by faith does not mean that every day will be abundant or that hardships will end at once. If we measure the love of God only by our circumstances, on the days when we are in need, it will seem as if the Father has grown distant. But the Lord does not tell us to believe only after we have become well-off; He tells the disciples who have needs right now to trust the Father. Asking for the help we will receive today and caring for one another's lack are also things to be done by that faith.

The seeking of those who have received the kingdom of God as a gift

Amid a world that chases after what to eat and drink, where should the hearts of the disciples turn? After saying that the Father knows our needs, Jesus commanded them to seek His kingdom. If we put off the work of God until our livelihood is completely stable, there will be no end to the thought of arranging more secure circumstances. To seek the kingdom of God does not mean to give up making a living; it means to believe in that righteous work by which God saved sinners, and to regard as precious the work of spreading that gospel to other people as well.

"*Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32)*. Since the will of the Father, who wants to give us the kingdom, comes first, we must not try to prepare the price of entering that kingdom with our own labor. Because a sinner cannot come to God by his own strength, Jesus came to this earth to accomplish salvation. When John declined to baptize Him in the Jordan River, the Lord said,

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"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15), and through that baptism He had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. The sins we commit from the time we are born until we die, and even the sins we will commit in the future, are not left out of that sin of the world. Bearing the sin that He had thus borne, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment for sins that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and completed salvation.

What we must believe is not our own pious feelings or the merit we will build up in the future, but the work of Jesus Christ, who remitted all our sins through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. Because that kingdom is a gift given through Jesus, whom the Father sent, paying the price of sin, we who have received the remission of sins are not people preparing the price of entering the kingdom, but people serving with gratitude the kingdom we have already received. Even if we are a little flock, this grace does not become small, so there is no reason to be weighed down by the number of people or the wealth we have. When we look to the kingdom the Father is pleased to give, even in the heart that clutched only to protect its own living, a place for other souls is made.

With wealth that will disappear, lay up treasure that will not disappear

Jesus did not tell them merely to regard wealth lightly in their hearts, but told them to sell what they have and give alms. *"Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys" (Luke 12:33)*.

If we look only at the wealth before our eyes decreasing, sharing looks like a loss, but the Lord speaks of that work as a treasure laid up in heaven. If we can help people in need and serve the gospel with wealth that a thief can take and a moth can destroy, we are using what will disappear for the work the Lord regards as precious. This is not a demand to buy the remission of sins with offerings or alms, but an exhortation for us who have received grace to change the attitude of clutching wealth as if we were its masters.

If we turn the word to share into merely a good thought in our hearts, the neighbors who actually need help still remain empty-handed. On the contrary, if we decide that one is saved only by giving up all possessions in a fixed way, we end up trading people's property for the kingdom the Lord gives. We must take on the responsibilities needed for living while looking at what the Father has entrusted to us, and set aside a share to actually share with neighbors in need and with the work of the gospel. Even a person who has no property to sell has possessions. Since these are his own body, time, and strength, even though each person's circumstances and assigned work differ, he can offer for the gospel what he used to spend only for his own satisfaction.

The word that where the treasure is, there the heart is also makes us look back at what we live fearing we might lose. If we do not forget the Father even while spending our day for food and clothing, in that day there comes room to believe the word and to look after our neighbors. Ask the Father, who knows not only today's needs but even our weakness, and examine where the Lord would be pleased to have you use what you have received. Let us live believing in the care of the Father, who gave us our lives, and laying up the treasure that remains in heaven with wealth that will disappear. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Devote yourselves to spiritual work

< Luke 12:22–34 >

“Then He said to His disciples, ‘Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’”

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Fleshly thoughts and spiritual thoughts

As we live our lives, there are times when we feel physical fatigue. When we leave home, there is hardship, and we also grow tired. Even at such times, fleshly thoughts and spiritual thoughts rise up together in our hearts. In this way, our hearts sometimes waver between spiritual work and fleshly work.

In these last days, our Lord says that the people of God, if they are not careful, will fall away from faith because of the worries of life about what they will eat and drink. Truly, in these last days, I think that because there is so much worry in our hearts about how to live because of the problems of life, we will end up losing our faith if we are not careful. At such a time, I speak to you while thinking about how we should live in these last days, how we must live by faith, and—since it is utterly impossible by the law—how we should live by faith. You and I must have the spiritual thought of preaching this gospel and saving souls. It means that if we do not have spiritual thoughts, we will surely fall into the worries of life, its snares, and anxieties and cares. If we want to live spiritually, if we want to live by faith, we must think about spiritual work. It means that we must think about the things of the Spirit, such as to which soul we should preach the gospel to save that soul, and to whom we should preach the gospel so that he may receive salvation. If we do not think about such things, because a person has flesh, he sinks completely into the flesh, and there is nothing much to him. I know that all of us, if we are not careful, will become like that.

The closer this end draws, the more we must live with faith. Even though we are weak and lacking, we must always set our hearts more on the work of saving souls with faith. We really must think well. It is a matter of whether we will think spiritual

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thoughts or think fleshly thoughts. If we think fleshly thoughts, we sink completely into fleshly thoughts, but if we change our thinking and think spiritual thoughts, we immediately come to have a spiritual heart and do spiritual work. Everything depends on how we think. Because this generation is difficult and hard, and because we ourselves are people who have the flesh and also have a soul, everything depends on how we think. If we think about the things of the Spirit, we come to think thoughts and do work that save souls; but if we think about the flesh, there is no end to thoughts about what to eat, what to drink, and how to live. If we think about the things of the flesh, there is no end to them, and if we think about the things of the Spirit, there is no end to them either. But we must think about the things of the Spirit. We often fall into the flesh as well. However, falling into the flesh must last only a moment, and being immersed in the Spirit must go on for a long, long time. Even if, to make matters worse, we have fallen into the flesh, we must immediately think about the things of the Spirit and go forward toward spiritual work. We are not people who can always think only of the flesh just because we have thought about the things of the flesh; we are people who, if we think about the things of the Spirit, can immediately think about the things of the Spirit. Therefore, we must direct our very thinking so that we think about the things of the Spirit and think about the work of saving souls.

"Consider the lilies"

Our Lord said, *"And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in*

all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Luke 12:25–27). It means that the glory of Solomon was less than a single lily. It means that no matter how luxuriously Solomon lived in this world, God made a single lily in the field more glorious. It means that although the lily did not make thread or weave, and did not labor to weave the fibers within it, God planted that lily and gave it the power and blessing to bloom, and so that lily bloomed. While saying that all the splendor Solomon wore on this earth was less than a single lily in the field, our Lord said that as you live in this world, you should not worry and be anxious over the things of the flesh, but should think about spiritual work. *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).* In this way, our Lord told us to think about spiritual work.

The born-again can do both spiritual work and fleshly work

We must think about spiritual work. And we are people who are able to think about spiritual work. We who are born again can think about both kinds of work and can do both kinds of work. We can do fleshly work, and we can also do spiritual work. A person who has not been born again cannot do spiritual work and can do only fleshly work. But a person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the water and the blood of Jesus Christ can do fleshly work and can also do spiritual work. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and bearing those very sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, received the judgment in our place, and rescued us from sin. Since Jesus, who rose again from death, has given us new life,

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we are not people who will remain only within the worries of the flesh, but people who will preach this news of salvation to other souls. That is why, although we do fleshly work, we must think about spiritual work and do spiritual work. There are some people who, because they perhaps think about fleshly work and their thoughts keep falling into the things of the flesh, think, "Ah, I am completely hopeless. I am a fleshly person. I can do nothing but fleshly work." But that is not so. If we think about spiritual work, we immediately become spiritual, and if we think in a fleshly way, we immediately become fleshly. It happens that quickly, again and again. So we, who can do both, must think about spiritual work very often. We must think about preaching the gospel to students and neighbors and about serving the gospel by offering material things. When we think about such things, our thoughts become bright and our souls become bright, and we become very spiritual people. Our hearts become filled with a spiritual mind and become glad and joyful.

We are people who have the flesh, but we are not confined only within the flesh; we also do the things of the Spirit and are active in the spiritual world. However, it means that no one—neither you nor I, nor any of the servants of God—can always do only spiritual work throughout his whole life. One moment we sink into fleshliness, and the next moment we sink into spirituality, and in this way there are frequent changes. So we must wake up again and again. We go forward both thinking about the work of God and doing the work of God, and also, because there is the church, even if we as individuals are people of the flesh, when we come to church and hear the word, we become spiritual people. This is because the Holy Spirit speaks through the church, so when we hear this word, a spiritual heart arises in us and we do spiritual work. You and I live our whole lives going around in that cycle. It is not that fleshly people

always do only fleshly work and spiritual people always do only spiritual work. The servants of God are like that, you are like that, and all are the same. The only difference is whether we think a great deal about spiritual work or not.

We must meet the Lord while preaching the gospel

So how should we live in this last age? Let us acknowledge before God that you and I are people who do both kinds of work. After acknowledging this, how should we live? In this world, in which not much time is left, we must devote all our strength more to the work of preaching the gospel to others, think about spiritual work, and do spiritual work. How shall we preach the gospel to them? Even when we talk to people, they do not believe. But we must do it more. Then what shall we do? We do it more. Before the economy of each country becomes too difficult, and before the age in which we can work in this world passes, we intend to translate literature into the language of each nation, send missionaries to each country, and preach the gospel to them. We must do such work. While doing such work, you must do the work of preaching the gospel to the members of your families, to the souls in your area, to the students at school, and to those at your workplace. We must meet the Lord while doing such work.

Although we live in this difficult age and, because we have the flesh, do the things of the flesh as well, we are also people who have a spirit and so can do the things of the Spirit; therefore, while doing the things of the Spirit—though we do both kinds of work—we must still live thinking very often about the things of the Spirit and doing the things of the Spirit. Living that way, we must not deny the Lord but believe in Him to the end, must

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not leave the church to the end, and must not leave our brothers and sisters to the end. Saying that someone leaves the church means that he leaves his brothers and sisters. Leaving the church does not mean leaving this building; it means leaving the people of God who gather in this building, the servants of God, and one's own household. That is precisely what leaving the church is. Until the Lord comes, without leaving the church and without leaving our brothers and sisters and the servants of God, living together with them, carrying on our lives in society and also being supplied with what the flesh needs, doing spiritual work together though we are lacking, and desiring to do more spiritual work, we must meet the Lord while doing the work of preaching the gospel and saving souls.

We just need to live that way in this age and then go. We do not know how much time is left. Dear fellow believers, do not think, "I am good only at spiritual work." And do not think, "I have nothing to do with spiritual work; I have received salvation, so I am good only at fleshly work." Because God has given us both the spirit and the flesh, we do both kinds of work, of the spirit and of the flesh. The brothers and sisters who do only fleshly work become disappointed and think, "I am absolutely hopeless," but that is a devilish thought. We Christians are people who can do fleshly work one moment and do spiritual work the next. This is the power of God. We born-again people are very fleshly people and yet very spiritual people. The Apostle Paul also said so, and that is why the Apostle Paul, too, was able to serve the gospel his whole life. Therefore, it is the power of God. We must throw away the thought that we are truly people who do only spiritual work and have no fleshly work, and we must also throw away the thought that we have nothing to do with spiritual work and do only fleshly work. We must know that we are people who, whenever we think about the work of

God, do spiritual work; who, whenever we join our strength together with the church, always serve the gospel and do the spiritual work of saving souls; and who, whenever we sink into our own thoughts and are alone by ourselves, always do fleshly work. That is why we unite our hearts and join our strength through the church to do the work. In fact, it is not that we become spiritual people by struggling to become spiritual alone; rather, when we serve the gospel and do the work of saving souls together with the church, all of us become spiritual people. It means that even if we are not spiritual people, when we serve the gospel and do the work of saving souls, we become spiritual people.

If we know too little about ourselves, we cannot follow the Lord, and if we know too little about the Lord, we have no choice but to sink into ourselves. Only when we know ourselves, know the Lord, and know the word of God do we avoid going off to one side only and becoming fanatical. Only then can we believe in and follow God well and do the work of God.

Preaching the gospel is the food of our souls

The work of God is the food of the spirit for us. By doing the work of God we eat food, and by doing the work of preaching the gospel and saving souls we eat the food of our souls. When our Lord came to this earth, He said to His disciples, *"I have food to eat of which you do not know" (John 4:32)*, and He said, *"My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:17)*. Jesus preached the gospel to the woman at the well and went into Samaria and worked there, and about preaching the gospel in this way, He said, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34)*.

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The food of the heart of a born-again person is preaching the gospel of God and doing the work of God. The food of our flesh is things such as bread, meat, or tea, but as for the food of the spirit, it means that doing the work of God—especially, among the works of God, doing the work of preaching the gospel—becomes the food of our spirit. Spreading the gospel is the food of our spirit. When we preach the gospel to others, the other person also receives the remission of sins, but our own souls become very full. We feel warm and comfortable, and being glad and full, we gain strength. Dear fellow believers, when you preach the gospel, you gain strength. So when you are spiritually hungry and have lost strength in your heart, take hold of anyone at all and preach the gospel to him once, whether he listens or not. Then you will gain strength. If you do not preach the gospel, you become hungry, grow faint with hunger, and collapse. When things are too hard, take hold of anyone at all and preach the gospel to him. Even if the other person does not want to listen, it is a matter of not losing the heart to preach the gospel that when Jesus received baptism from John, He bore all our sins. That soul will be fed up and say that he hopes never to meet such a person again, but we cannot live without that soul, because we are hungry. For us righteous people, the work of preaching the gospel that gives life to souls is our food and our meal. I cannot tell you how good it feels, how full we become, and how much strength we gain when we preach it. That is why the Apostle Paul said to Timothy, "*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2)*. The words "in season and out of season" mean to preach to all people, whether the other person believes or not.

Who knows whether that person will believe or not? When we preach to him once, he does not believe. When we preach to him twice, he still hardly believes. When we preach to him three

times, we usually get nothing but curses. When we preach to him four times, we become like complete enemies, and whenever that person sees us, he runs off somewhere and is gone. If he meets us face to face ten steps ahead while walking down an alley, he vanishes into a side alley, and even while coming up the stairs, if he sees us, he turns right back. Even so, though a month passes, a year passes, and ten years pass, and though he hates us for a month, hates us for two months, and hates us for a year, we must keep on with a heart that says, "Please, just believe this gospel." We keep on eating our food. This gospel is our food, the gospel is our life, the gospel is our joy, the gospel is our heaven. Keep preaching it.

In a certain church, there is a sister whose husband did not believe even though the gospel had been preached to him for over a year. While listening to the word, he would shut the Bible, get up, and walk out. But not long ago, when he was asked whether he believed the gospel, I heard that he said with his own mouth that this is truly the gospel and that he believes it. I thought that this man, who had not believed for a long time, had finally received the remission of sins too.

This gospel is a joy to us. The Lord is our life and joy, and the gospel the Lord has given is also life and joy to us. The Lord, of course, is life and joy. But the salvation the Lord has given us—this gospel of the water and the blood, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in which Jesus received baptism from John and removed all our sins, and was nailed to the Cross and received for us all the sins and punishment of you and me—is truly our life and truly our joy. This gospel is the food and joy of you and me and the life of all souls. We must preach it to others. When we preach it, we gain strength. Whether they listen or not, we just do the work. To someone who refuses to listen no matter what, we just ask in passing, "Do you have sin?" In any

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case, it means that we must preach the gospel, whether we preach it in one second, in two hours, or over a year. Only then does it become food for our hearts, and we live. Therefore, you and I must be those who preach the gospel at all times in these last days and bring souls with us. Do not feel burdened because you are told to bring souls; it means that preaching the gospel to them and bringing them becomes your food. With that food, your hearts gain strength and your faith grows.

When we eat the food of the spirit, He also adds the food of the flesh

Jesus said that you should not worry about what you will eat, what you will put on, or what you will drink. He said to look at the lilies of the field: although they did not sow or strive, did they not open up fully and bloom gloriously? Because God supplied everything to those lilies, the lilies bloom, bear fruit, and disappear and then bloom again; and however hard Solomon tried, he was not as good as a single lily. Yet in fact, you and I are people who always worry about what we will eat, what we will put on, and what we will drink, about how our bodies will live in the future, and about how our souls will live. I, too, honestly do not deny it before God. I have such a heart. I have the faith that, as for my living alone, God will feed me and clothe me. And I believe that God will clothe and feed the whole church. But I find myself thinking that in the truly difficult age at the end, I wish the saints would not suffer too great a hardship, would at least solve the problems of food, clothing, and shelter, and would live suffering less of such hardships, however those who are not born again may live. I think about how the righteous should cope with and pray about the fleshly side, how they

should eat food and live spiritually, and how they should keep their faith and live. And in doing so, I come to know and believe that our spirits live by preaching the gospel, and I speak to you. We must surely do so. We must do the things of the Spirit. We must preach the gospel. And as for living in the flesh, we must prepare well in advance for what is to come.

It is said that extreme weather events will occur frequently in the future. In several countries there has been so much rain that the water could not drain through the sewers and overflowed upward, and basements were completely flooded. Then worrying because we know in advance will not do any good; we must believe the word of God that there will be extreme weather, and prepare in advance with faith. If only we believe and prepare, even if a sudden disaster breaks out for the people of the world, we are not thrown into turmoil. We accept it with composure. Also, because before long an age will come when we cannot preach the gospel, and because an age may come when you cannot gather even if you want to, you must gather diligently now, listen to the word diligently, and hear all the word in advance. When that actually happens, there will be no one to preach the word to you, and at that time you must have faith individually.

We must believe the word that our Lord spoke: *"But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you" (Luke 12:31)*. When we seek His kingdom and preach the gospel, we obtain the food of the spirit and also obtain the food of the flesh. It means that when we do the work of preaching the gospel, our hearts become rich and our faith grows, and on the other hand, God blesses all the work our flesh does. In fact, the secret by which we Christians receive blessings is the work of preaching the gospel, the work of serving the gospel. Then you cannot help but live well, and the things you do cannot help but

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go well. Is it not the blessing of God that we receive blessings even though we do wrong and are not diligent? That is blessing, and that is the secret of our living well. If we first seek His kingdom and His righteousness, we will obtain all happiness.

How must the servants of God, and the brothers and sisters as well, live in the last days? We must live preaching the gospel. The conclusion is the work of spreading the gospel. The reason we are gathered here is also to spread the gospel, and as for our gathering and keeping our faith, we keep our faith in order to spread the gospel. So in these last days we must do the work of preaching the gospel to one soul after another. The secret of living in these last days is living while preaching the gospel.

I believe that in these last days, many people—countless people, both in nearby places and in faraway countries—will surely believe in this gospel of the water and the blood that we believe in, and that many will receive the remission of sins. I have that faith. Because I have faith, I prepare gradually, work step by step, and preach the gospel without hurrying. Even if one goes slowly, the one who laughs at the end is the true winner. The one who makes a lot of noise and then cries at the end is the loser. It is a matter of who laughs at the end. I laugh before God. And I believe that all the work of serving this gospel will surely bloom. So it is not my own will; there is faith in my heart. We must not be discouraged or lazy in the work of preaching the gospel, but must do the work of preaching the gospel in season and out of season. Let us strive in that work.

Eat your meals, eat well, and live, and if the flesh needs something, ask for it; but do not cling desperately only to what the flesh needs. Before that, first do the work of preaching the gospel, and first do the work that you do by uniting your hearts with the church, the servants of God, and the saints. Then everything of yours will be resolved. Just as a tangled skein of

thread is untangled, all the problems of life are resolved and go well. Dear fellow believers, do not worry about what you will eat, what you will drink, or how you will live in the future. Even though it is this last age, there is nothing to worry much about. You only need to cope with it by faith, and there is nothing to worry about. Dear fellow believers, let us live by faith. Let us preach the gospel. I hope this will be a year in which we preach the gospel to many souls, eat much of the food of the spirit, see many souls receive salvation, and receive many blessings before God. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Can you open the door immediately when the Master knocks?

< Luke 12:35–40 >

“‘Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.’”

A heart that can open the door immediately

There is a difference between a servant who knows the fact that his master will return and a servant who waits so that he may open the door immediately to the master who is returning. The

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former servant also knows his master's name and house, but if he is absorbed only in his own work, he will be flustered only when he hears the sound of knocking on the door. Jesus did not merely tell His disciples to know about the second coming. *"You yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately" (Luke 12:36)*. At the center of waiting is not the time one has calculated but the master who will return. Because the servant wants to see his master and wants to welcome him, his heart is not stolen away by other things even while the master has not yet come.

We, too, while saying that Jesus will come again, easily regard that promise as a distant matter unrelated to our lives. Then the reason we must do today the work the Lord has entrusted to us grows weak, and we put off serving, saying that we will serve after all our own plans have been accomplished. But for the person who waits for the Lord, today is not empty time without a master. Because it is the time of living according to the will of the Lord and preparing to welcome Him, we must regard the salvation we have already received as precious and look after those who do not yet know that salvation. We can begin with the work of turning our hearts not only to souls in distant places but also to family and neighbors who are near us and yet have not heard the gospel.

The belt on the waist and the lamp kept burning

The Lord spoke concretely about the posture of the servant who waits. *"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning" (Luke 12:35)*. A servant whose waist is girded and whose lamp is kept burning is a person who has prepared so that he can move

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immediately when called. Just as a worker cannot do his work with his belt fastened loosely, what we need, too, is not the work of imitating the outward appearance, but a heart that has tightened the belt of the heart and is ready to serve the Lord. If we spend our time with a lamp actually lit and yet abandon the work we have been entrusted with, it will go against the waiting the Lord spoke of. Believing the promise of the Lord, preaching the gospel, and doing together the labor needed to carry out that work is the watchful life.

We cannot say that only the work of the person who preaches the gospel directly is precious and that the labor that helps that work is trivial. A heart toward the Lord can be contained also in preparing a place so that people can hear the word, sharing what is needed with those who serve together, and caring for those who are weary. Because the work we have each been entrusted with differs, if we compare only what shows outwardly, we easily come to despise one another's labor. But when we look at how another person's labor is connected to the work of preaching the gospel, we see a reason to give thanks. The servants who wait for the Lord must regard as precious those who serve the same Master, rather than boasting of the size of their own work.

Preparing does not end with vaguely resolving to be zealous. Our heart must continue on to knowing rightly the word we are to preach, listening to what the person we will help needs, and making time to carry out the work we have been entrusted with. Even when things do not go as we thought, rather than being impatient to produce results on our own, we can ask God for wisdom and consult together. Such labor is not worldly work that makes us forget the second coming, but becomes an expression of the faith that lives today remembering the Lord, who will come again.

The master who has his servants sit down and serves them

Since the servants waited for their master, it seems natural that the servants would serve the master even after he has returned. But Jesus gave an amazing promise. *"Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them" (Luke 12:37)*. In the word that the master has his servants sit down and serves them himself, it is revealed how preciously the Lord cares for the people who wait for Him and serve Him. This does not mean that the positions of master and servant are reversed so that we come to command the Lord. It is a word that shows the rest and joy that the Lord will bestow on His people by grace.

What kind of Master is the One we are waiting for? He is the Savior who has already given Himself for us who were sinners. He did not wait for us to become qualified to receive salvation; rather, in order to rescue us who were under sin, He came Himself, and by receiving baptism from John, He had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. Not only our past sins but also the sins we commit today and all the sins we will commit for the rest of our lives were passed on to the Lord at that time. Jesus, who bore that sin, received in our place the judgment we had to receive by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and He rose again from death, saved us, and went up to heaven.

Before that Master departed, He promised, *"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3)*. Since the One who accomplished all the work of salvation and went up said that He would come again, we who have received

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the remission of sins believe that promise and wait before the door. It is not that our record of service erases our sins, or that the merit of having waited a long time fills up what is lacking in salvation. Because we believe the work the Savior accomplished, we trust His promise and serve. Since the Lord, who has already given His own life for us, does not forget the labor of His people, we have no need to be discouraged because few people recognize it. Looking to the joy the Lord will give, we can give our hearts to the work entrusted to us today.

Do not slow down your preparation even if the waiting grows long

When it seems that the master will return soon, it is easy to wait, but as the night deepens, the servant's heart, too, can grow slack. So the Lord spoke of the time when the waiting has grown long. *"If he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants" (Luke 12:38)*. The servant who is awake even in the second or third watch is a person who has not forgotten his master's promise just because he has waited a long time. It is not that the promise of the second coming becomes void because the Lord did not come at the time we expected. Since the One who determines the time of His coming is the Lord, we are not in a position to hurry the time or to set the date as we please.

The parable of the thief that follows immediately is also not a teaching to find out the date. The word that the master of the house would have prevented it if he had known when the thief would come means that we must prepare for a time we do not anticipate. *"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Luke 12:40)*. Therefore,

we must not seize on one event that happens in the world and declare the hour of the second coming, but must live so that we can welcome the Lord even at an hour we do not expect. Neither putting off faith because of one's own judgment that it is still far off, nor abandoning the responsibilities we have been entrusted with because of the excitement that it will end soon, is an attitude that follows this word.

The exhortation to be watchful is not a command not to sleep even when the body is exhausted, but a word telling us to keep our hearts awake so that we do not depart from the Lord. Keeping in mind how many people there still are who must hear the gospel before the Lord comes is precisely being watchful. We who are weak gain the strength to wait while hearing the word, praying, and receiving help from one another. If we trust only in our own strength, we easily grow weary, but if we look to the Lord, who saved us and cares for us to the end, we can serve again in the place entrusted to us. Let us not become servants who begin to prepare only when they hear the sound of knocking on the door. Let us keep the promise that the Lord will come again within today's work, and serve the gospel with a heart willing to open the door to Him. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

The word about preparing for the second coming of the Lord

< Luke 12:35–40 >

“‘Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.’”

The servant who is watching when the Lord comes is blessed

This word is a word telling us to prepare for the second coming of the Lord. It is a word telling us to be watchful and

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work before the Lord comes. *"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them" (Luke 12:35–37)*. It means that if there are people who are watching, working, preparing, and preaching this gospel to everyone when the Lord comes again, they are blessed.

It means that those who really prepare, who remember the time when the Master comes, and who are watching when the Lord comes are blessed. Our Lord says that He blesses such people and that the Lord Himself also serves us. The Lord also said that those who are watching like this even in the second or third watch are also blessed. He said that those who are watching while doing their own work until the very early dawn are blessed, and in saying this He focused on the second coming of the Lord. It means that those who do so when the Lord comes are blessed. He also said that servants who know when their master will come and prepare in advance are blessed, and He told us to prepare and work because the Lord will come at an hour we do not expect.

In the verse right before this word, the Lord said, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:34)*. So it means that if people's hearts are on the gospel and on the Lord, such people do this. And it means that the Lord Himself also serves those who serve the gospel.

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If we believe in the second coming, would we not prepare?

They say that an earthquake occurred and many people died, and many such things happen in the world. This is related to this word, too; if we really believe that the Lord will come again, should we not be preparing? As the Lord said, the world will collapse from natural disasters, the Antichrist will appear, and finally plagues will spread and people will all die; and He said that when the Lord comes, He will protect and bless those who love, believe in, and preach this gospel, and will raise such people again to live reigning with God forever and ever in the new heaven and the new earth. The point is this: if we really believe this, would we not work according to that belief? Those who do not believe would not do so. Then one day they suddenly meet with disaster, and one day they suddenly lose their jobs, are driven into debt, and become hard-pressed. Is it all right to go on living as we have until now, not knowing that great hardship will come upon the world? Dear fellow believers, do those who believe in Jesus live like this now without knowing that the Lord will come? Because we believe that He will come, we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and preach it to the whole world. It is this gospel, which says that the Lord bore all the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John and received all the judgment for that sin by shedding His blood on the Cross. Since that Jesus rose again from death and is the Lord who will come again, the One we are waiting for is the very Savior who has remitted our sins. If, not knowing that He will come, we just gather money to put up big church buildings, it is all vanity of vanities.

A person must live for a great cause. One must not stake one's life on some amount of money, but must live for a great

cause. We must become people who, for the sake of a great cause, benefit others, know what the will of God is, and, since God has spoken like this, believe this word and live it out practically—people who prepare. Of course, the world goes around only if there are people who work at a job and live on a salary, but even so, the born-again must be big-hearted and live for great things. A person should live for something big; a person who clings only to what he himself eats and drinks and lives as a slave to it his whole life is a narrow-minded person. It is said, *"There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty" (Proverbs 11:24)*. Becoming rich even while giving generously to others is precisely the life of the preachers who preach this gospel. That being excessively sparing only leads to poverty means that a person who lives only for himself becomes poor.

We must practically prepare for the things that will happen in the future. A person who does not prepare is dull and foolish. He said that the person who stays awake and prepares even late at night because the Lord is coming, who has made preparations for the Lord's coming and waits watchfully, is blessed. And He said that the Lord serves such a person. He said that those who do so even in the second or third watch are even more blessed.

Preaching the gospel is being watchful

What is He saying? It means that the person who is watching when the Lord comes is blessed. The person who believes and stays awake and prepares is a believer. Such a person prepares like that because he really believes. What must we do when the Lord comes? Is preparing just keeping the lamp lit and waiting? The Lord will come and judge those who have not received the

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remission of sins in this world and put them into the fire that is not quenched, yet people do not think that death will come to them and do not prepare. Since the Lord said that He is coming, we must preach the gospel to everyone, just as we are preaching it now. Preaching the gospel to everyone and preparing watchfully—preaching this gospel is being watchful. When the gospel has been preached to everyone, the Lord comes. Then the Lord takes us away. Before that, everything He said will be fulfilled.

When we preach the gospel, people who receive the remission of sins come into being. This is not a small thing. It is a tremendously great thing. If it does not feel real, imagine that those people who have been saved are standing here giving their testimonies. Imagine that they are singing praises. Even though it is not visible to the eye, it is a fact. People who have received the remission of sins in many countries come to gather together and form churches. In reality, people who are saved like this come into being. This is what we are preparing. It is preparing for the second coming of the Lord. You and I are doing everything to preach the gospel and to do the flower-calyx work for the gospel, and this is what actually happens.

When pastors in various places around the world are saved and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, churches that believe in the same gospel are established there, too. In that way, the Church of God can come into being in several places even in a single month. It means that living a life of preaching the gospel like this, causing people to receive the remission of sins, establishing churches, having them preach the gospel, and doing this flower-calyx work is precisely the life of waiting for the second coming of the Lord. It really is so. If we truly believe, this is what we do. We are preparing. Some brothers and sisters seem to think that it is nothing more than words on paper,

because it does not feel real to them. But what is invisible to the eyes of the flesh is visible to the eyes of faith. I cannot tell you how well we are preparing. We must keep on doing it. Because what we gain is so great compared with the work we do, we cannot but do it.

It means that you and I are now servants waiting for the second coming of the Lord. This is reality. If you and I say we believe, we must prepare. If we say we believe that the Lord has saved you and me, have we not prepared by faith? Having prepared, how much are we gaining now? We look ahead and prepare. The person who does not prepare gains nothing later, either. If we really believe, we must do it. It is not that we must do this; we are doing this right now. Those who work gain a great deal. If we keep on doing it, we will become rich as a result, and would it not be enough if we serve the gospel much, live well ourselves, and stay watchful?

We must become people who prepare. We must become people who prepare so as to be able to receive blessings, and who also prepare their own lives. Instead of earning it like a day laborer's wages and eating it all up that same day and ending there, we must prepare somewhat steadily and become people whose stomachs are not full right now but will be full later. We must do so also in living in this world.

Prepare now, while we are still fine

The Lord said to us, *"Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Luke 12:40)*. Since the Lord said this to His disciples, we must always be thinking of the time when the Lord will come. We know that the time when the Lord will come is near. It is very near now. These days people do not

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even talk much about the things that will happen at the end. This is because it is frightening to talk about them. We must know that such things will come upon the world and be preparing. We must be preparing now, while we are still fine.

A person who, even though he has received the remission of sins, thinks only of the safety and comfort of his own flesh and tries to keep only his own flesh alive is a foolish person. A person must be outstanding in his thinking. One must not think that one knows on the basis of what one learned at school or from textbooks, nor think that one knows because one has read a few books.

If we are watchful in this age now, serve this gospel, and eat, drink, and live for the gospel, the Lord makes things go well for us. What does this word say? *"Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them" (Luke 12:37)*. Does this make sense? Those who are called servants ought naturally to wait well until their master returns, and when the master returns, to open the door for him and bring him water to wash his feet. They must naturally make up their minds to do so and do it. They must not think that they are higher than the master just because they do well. It must be clear that "You are the master and I am the servant." Yet the Lord said that if the master, when he returns, sees the servants doing so, the master will gird himself and have the servants sit down and serve them. Will He really do so? Of course, He does so in the Millennial Kingdom. He makes things go well. And it is a word that says the Lord helps and serves like this, even on this earth, those who live for this gospel.

The life that serves the gospel is a successful life

Dear fellow believers, does it seem that if we live for the gospel, we will be ruined? Does it seem that we will be weeded out? Is the life of you and me a wrong life, an empty life, a failed life? You and I have been serving the gospel until now; is that life a failed life or a successful life? It is a successful life. It is said, *"Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3)*. Is this not a successful life? Who in the world has done what is right like us? You and I are all people who have done what is right. A high position in itself cannot save a person from the judgment of sin. Great wealth in itself cannot save a dying soul. With position or wealth alone, that work cannot be done. Only you and I, who have believed in this gospel of the water and the Spirit and served this gospel, and served for the work of turning other people to righteousness, into the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and causing them to be saved, have done what is right. There is no one on this earth who has lived like this and departed. Though it is not visible to our eyes, we are great people. You and I must think of that at all times.

When one pastor receives the remission of sins, that church becomes the Church of God. We must also regard as precious the fact that churches are established as people who have received the remission of sins preach the gospel. It is an enormous thing. We are people who do a great work. That is why the Lord said, *"He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly,*

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I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward" (Matthew 10:41–42). It means that it is never in vain. He told us to be ready, and we are ready. I hope that we who serve the gospel, too, will be supplied with what we need and be able to help others. While serving the gospel, we must be able to help others.

When you have no strength and your heart is troubled, come to church. If you come to church and sit here like this, your heart is restored. That is why this church must exist. You and I must attend worship and must hear the word. The Lord is coming to this earth before long. He will come quickly. I cannot tell you how much the work is progressing now and how much the gospel is being spread. He said, "*This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14)*. In just a little while, the Lord will come. That said, He is not coming right away, so until then we must not worry but live prudently. A person who has been with the gospel and with the Lord is a blessed person, a person who receives blessings from the Lord, a person who receives recognition from the Lord, and things go well for him.

But in these last days, those who have not been with the Lord face destruction. I hope that you will not become those who, at the time when the Master's coming is imminent, foolishly do not wait for the second coming of the Lord and give up waiting for the Master. I want you to live by faith, receive blessings in both spirit and body, and meet the Lord while doing what is right before the Lord. I want God to give faith and blessings to such people. ✉

Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

The servant who feeds the people entrusted to him and the servant who beats them

< Luke 12:41–48 >

"Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming," and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and

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to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.'"

The position of one who has been entrusted with the master's will

When the number of people in one's charge increases, it is easy to think as if one were their master. Because one has gained the authority to decide matters and manage goods, one tries to handle even people according to one's own will. But the steward whom the Lord appoints is not a person who has occupied the master's position. He is a person who has been entrusted with the work of caring for the people who belong to the master according to the master's will. After Jesus taught them to wait for the master who will come again, He spoke of the image of this very steward.

Peter asked whether the preceding parable was a word spoken only to the disciples or a word spoken to all people. In response to that question, the Lord made them think about who the faithful and wise steward is. *"And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?'" (Luke 12:42)*. If we sort out whom the word is directed to and try to stand outside of it, we will fail to see the very work that has been entrusted to us. Anyone who has received the remission of sins and has the Holy Spirit dwelling in his heart is a servant of the Lord and a person who serves the Lord with the grace he has received and in the position he has been entrusted with. Not only in the office of teaching the word, but also in the positions of helping the lives of the saints or

laboring so that the gospel may be preached, we must follow the master's will.

The reason a steward needs wisdom is that he must look into people's circumstances and needs, and the reason he needs faithfulness is that he must not turn the master's things to his own benefit. Even if he has the ability to handle work well, if he uses people, he is not a faithful servant; and even if he has good intentions, if he does not look after the people in his charge, it is hard for him to give them the help they need. Wisdom and faithfulness are not skills for exalting one's own name, but the heart and discernment to serve the master's people well. Therefore, even when we evaluate our work, we must examine whom we are caring for with our authority rather than how great an authority we have.

Give out food suited to the time without ceasing

The work of a steward does not end with knowing what is in the storehouse. Only when he gives out food to people at the time they need it is the work entrusted to him accomplished. He must not cling only to the memory of having once given a great deal and turn away from the needs that come afterward, nor must he, on the grounds that he manages the food, fail to give it to the very people who are hungry. The Lord said that if, when He returns, He sees that servant doing so, that servant is blessed. *"Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has" (Luke 12:44)*. What the Lord regards as precious is not a person who knows the master's will only in words, but a servant who keeps caring for people according to that will. Since the food we use when we serve is not originally ours but what we have received from the Lord, the Lord's way is that we serve

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with what we have received and that He entrusts more to those who have served.

The most precious food entrusted to us is the word of the gospel that gives life to sinners. If we only tell a person who cannot stand before God because of sin to polish his conduct more, that person cannot know by what he escapes the judgment of sin. Even if we speak only of the blood of the Cross and leave out the reason He came to shed that blood, the food is not complete. We must preach the fact that when Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River, all the sins of the world passed on to the Lord once and for all, and that because He bore that sin, He went to the Cross. Because the sin of no person of any age is left out of that sin of the world, our past sins, our present sins, and even the sins we will commit in the future are all included. Bearing that sin, which He had borne through His baptism, the Lord received the judgment in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rising again from death, He accomplished eternal salvation.

What a soul seeking the remission of sins must believe in is precisely Jesus Christ, who saved him in this way, and the work He completed. Giving out this food rightly is not binding people to oneself, but helping them to believe the word of the Lord and live by it. We must keep letting even those who already believe the gospel hear this word so that they can live looking to the righteousness of the Savior rather than their own weakness. And we cannot neglect the food the body needs on the grounds that we care for souls. Looking into what those who work with us are eating as they get by, and what help neighbors who are going through hardship need, is the attitude of regarding as precious the people in our charge.

The servant who harms people, using his master's delay as an excuse

The Lord also showed the exact opposite of the servant who gives out food. *"But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers" (Luke 12:45–46)*. This servant harbored the thought that his master was delaying his coming, beat the people in his charge, and ate and drank for his own satisfaction. He thought that while the master was away, it was all right for him to lord it over them as if he were the master. The act of harming the people one must feed and the act of using the master's things for one's own desires come from the same heart. It is a heart that puts one's own will ahead of the master's will and despises the master, who will return and examine everything.

As we read this warning, we must look back on ourselves to see whether we are treating people carelessly on the grounds that we are the ones in charge of the work. Oppressing the weak by putting forward the claim that it is for the gospel, or insulting those who seek help, is not the right use of the authority the Lord has entrusted to us. Even if we put forward the results of our work, the wrong of having harmed people does not turn into something good. If we have recognized our wrong, we must acknowledge it before the word of the Lord, abandon the attitude of harming others, and return to the place of actually caring for them.

The word that the Lord will appoint this servant his portion with the unbelievers is a warning of judgment that cannot be

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taken lightly. However, we must not change this into meaning that a saint who, because of weakness, was unable to do enough work loses salvation on the grounds that the amount of his service is small. The servant in the text insists on his own way of ignoring the master and harming people. Even if one has words calling on the Lord and a position one has been entrusted with, if one does not believe what the Savior has done and rejects the master's will, that name and position cannot prevent judgment. On the other hand, we who believe in the remission of sins must also not take evil lightly, using grace as an excuse, but must receive this rebuke into our own lives.

Responsibility that grows deeper in proportion to how much has been entrusted

The Lord distinguished between the servant who knew his master's will and yet did not prepare, and the servant who did wrong without knowing it. Both servants are responsible for their wrongdoing, but the responsibility of the servant who knew the will and yet disobeyed it is heavier. *"But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48)*. Having learned much of the word is not something that only increases one's qualifications to stand over other people. The more grace we have received and the more work we have been entrusted with, the more deeply we must also think about to whom we should give out that grace. We who know this gospel—that the Lord had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John—are people who have been entrusted with much.

Because not preaching it because we do not know it and not preaching it although we know it are different, if we know the gospel and yet lock it up within ourselves so that no one can hear it, we must look back to see whether we are following the will with which He has entrusted us.

That said, we cannot demand the same amount of work from everyone. Because the circumstances and strength the Lord has entrusted to each are different, we must not regard our own labor as worthless by looking only at the amount others have accomplished, nor drive the weak into a corner. It is important to examine the time, strength, and wealth we have and to continue the work in which we can actually serve. Rather than straining to produce a great result at one time, we need the faithfulness of giving out the food needed today and preparing to care for others tomorrow as well. To such a servant the Lord says, *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things" (Matthew 25:21)*. If it is hard to handle alone, it is also wisdom to ask for help so that we can serve together.

Let us remember to the end the fact that the people the Lord has entrusted to us are not our own possessions. Because they are precious souls whom the Lord came to seek in order to save them with His own life, we cannot harm or use them for our own convenience. If you have been entrusted with food, feed them; if you have received the word, preach it; and if you have received a place of caring for others, look after people's needs. I hope that you will lay down the heart that tried to lord it over others like a master and stand before the Lord, who will come again, as stewards who faithfully serve the people in their charge. ✉

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Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

Preach the gospel for the sake of their souls

< Luke 12:49–53 >

“‘I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.’”

Why division arises even though the Savior has come

When we believe in Jesus, we may expect that the people close to us will also rejoice with us and that all the affairs of our household will go smoothly. But when, after accepting the gospel of the remission of sins, we meet opposition from our families instead, our hearts are sometimes shaken as we wonder whether we have believed something wrongly. Because Jesus knew that His disciples would go through such things, He clearly stated the purpose for which He had come. *“I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!” (Luke*

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12:49). The coming of the Lord was not something that satisfied everyone as people wished and kept their existing lives just as they were. The fire that the Lord sent on the earth is the very work of saving sinners. Because this salvation—in which He came clothed in a human body, had sin passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and rose again—has been sent on the earth, it has become impossible to let things go by as if nothing had happened, leaving sin and unbelief just as they are.

People judge God by the standard of their own thoughts and want to accept only the words that fit that standard. But when the Savior comes, reveals sin, and tells them to believe in Him, people come to show either faith or unbelief before that word. Since there are people who accept the word of the Lord as right and also people who refuse to abandon their own thoughts, people are divided wherever that fire has been kindled, and conflict arises even within close relationships. Division means being divided. Here we must see the reason the Lord speaks of division after speaking of fire. We cannot regard merely not quarreling outwardly as peace while covering up the fact that the unbelief that rejects salvation and the faith that receives salvation are different.

The Lord did not give us authority to harm people through this word. Nor can we hate others because their thoughts differ from ours and call that the will of the Lord. Rather, He calls us to make clear what we believe and whose word we follow. Since the mere fact that division has arisen does not prove that our faith is right, before defending our own quarrelsome nature, we must examine whether we are rightly believing the word of the Savior.

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The baptism of suffering that the Lord had before Him

Before speaking of the division that would arise among people, the Lord revealed the suffering He was to receive. *"But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:50)*. At this time Jesus had already received baptism from John, so the baptism He was yet to receive was not a second mention of the baptism He had received at the Jordan River. When He was thirty years old, as John laid his hands on His head, the sin of the whole world passed on to Jesus, and all the sins that we, born as descendants of Adam, commit throughout our lives—the sins of the past, the present, and the future—were all included in it. Because He bore that sin, there remained for the Lord the work of receiving the judgment for that sin on the Cross, and it was in the face of that remaining path that He spoke of His distress. On the path of accomplishing salvation there were real suffering and death, but the Lord did not promise the work of saving sinners with light words and then draw back.

Jesus went that path to the end, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and received in our place the judgment that sinners had to receive. And by rising again from death, He accomplished salvation. This is exactly the news we are to preach to our families as well. It is not news that sin has disappeared as people's conduct gradually improved, but the word of salvation that Jesus Christ bore all our sins, paid the price of sin, and rose again.

Therefore, when we speak this gospel to our families, what we claim is not that we are better than others, either. It is that, because the Lord, who knows all our sins and weaknesses, has saved us, we have believed in that completed work and received

the remission of sins. If we think we are righteous because we have no faults, we come to look down on others; but if we believe in the grace of the Lord, we come to realize that our families also need the same salvation. Here lies the reason why, even at the moment we face opposition, we must first look to the Savior, who suffered in our place, rather than upholding our own pride.

The closeness of flesh and blood cannot replace faith

The heart that believes in the Savior cannot be decided merely by the agreement of the people close to us. *"Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division" (Luke 12:51)*. If, in order to get along well with one another, we must deny the salvation Jesus accomplished, we cannot abandon the gospel to keep that relationship. This is because the fact that the Lord has saved us does not become true only when more people in the household agree with it. Faith is not stubbornness that tries to prevail over the opinions of our families, but truly accepting the word of God, who has remitted our sins.

The Lord spoke even of five people in one household and taught that they would be divided into sides within it. Even in a family that has eaten and lived together and gone through the same things, the faith that accepts Jesus does not automatically become the same as well. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of a person who has received the remission of sins but does not dwell in the hearts of family members who do not yet believe, so even though they live under one roof, what they hope for and their purposes become different. When one person tries to follow

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the will of the Savior and another demands that he give it up, the one who believes must decide what he will follow. Other matters of life can be fully discussed and conceded, but we cannot say that the gospel through which all our sins have been remitted is not true. While valuing the love of our families, we must also make the place of our faith toward the Savior clear.

Because not being understood by those close to us feels more painful than opposition from strangers, the choice to keep our faith may also be accompanied by tears and difficulties. At such times we must lay down the thought that we are going the right way only if we are acknowledged by everyone. Going through the conflict that Jesus foretold does not mean that the promise of salvation was wrong. We must examine again through the word what the Lord has done, and pray together with our brothers and sisters in faith to gain the strength to follow the Lord.

Preach the word while loving the souls of your family

The conflict the Lord spoke of is not something that happens on only one side of family relationships. *"For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" (Luke 12:52–53)*. This means that, whether parent or child, depending on who believes the gospel first, one may clash with those close to him. Therefore, a parent cannot decide a child's faith in the child's place on the grounds of being a parent, nor may a child ignore his parents on the grounds of being a child. Each person must hear and believe the truth of

salvation before the word of God. What we hope for is not to win our families over to our side and boast of it, but for them also to receive the remission of sins and live with the Lord.

If we forget that purpose, the words with which we were preaching the gospel turn, before we know it, into words meant to defeat the other person. The servant of the Lord is by nature not a person who stirs up fights but a person who preaches peace, and this fight, too, is not a fight waged out of hatred but a fight waged to rescue. Therefore, we must first listen to what the other person does not know and what he finds difficult, and, as if plowing the field of the heart, explain step by step the word concerning sin, judgment, and salvation. If we forcibly demand an answer or insult him before he has even listened, our rough attitude may become a hindrance to his hearing the word. Since faith cannot be made with fists or threats, even if there is opposition, we must pray to God, and exhort and wait according to the word that says, *"Be ready in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2)*. The heart of the Lord, who gave His life for sinners, must also be revealed in the words we preach and in our attitude.

Also, we must not neglect the things we ought to do for our families on the grounds that we believe the gospel. While fulfilling our responsibilities in life and giving needed help, we can clearly state our faith in response to demands that we not follow the Lord. We must not call even quarrels caused by our own faults persecution for our faith, but must acknowledge what we did wrong and correct it. Yet even so, there is no need to retreat from our confession that the salvation of Jesus is true. Caring for the people we love and preaching the word of salvation to them must go on together.

If, because of your family's opposition, you have come to doubt even the joy of the remission of sins you first received,

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look again to Jesus, who went the path of suffering to the end for us, and to the salvation He accomplished. Even if we cannot change the hearts of those close to us right away, we cannot turn the sins the Lord has remitted back into our own share. If the fire the Lord sent has been kindled in our household as well and sides have been divided, it means that the gospel has entered that household, not that we believed wrongly. Believing in that grace and praying for our families, let us preach the word for the sake of their souls so that they, too, may know and believe in the Savior, rather than setting our hearts on winning the quarrel. ✉

Sermon 11 by Paul C. Jong

The remission of sins that must be received on the way to the magistrate

< Luke 12:54–59 >

"Then He also said to the multitudes, 'Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, "A shower is coming"; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, "There will be hot weather"; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite.'"

The time of salvation that people pass by while watching the clouds

When clouds gather in the sky, people hurry the work they were doing and prepare to avoid the rain. When a hot wind blows, they think that the weather will soon become hot and change the way they live. Because they know that the signs revealed before

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their eyes are related to their own lives, they do not let even small changes pass by unnoticed. Jesus spoke to the multitudes by citing exactly this familiar kind of judgment. *"Then He also said to the multitudes, 'Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, "A shower is coming"; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, "There will be hot weather"; and there is'" (Luke 12:54–55).* Although they knew the coming weather by looking at the clouds and the wind, they did not make the proper judgment before Jesus, who had come to them.

The Lord did not say this word to praise their knowledge of the weather. He was revealing a heart that diligently discerns the things needed for life but makes no judgment concerning the salvation of its own soul. *"Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?" (Luke 12:56).* At that moment, before them was Christ, who had come to save sinners. If people hear the word of the Lord and see the work He is doing and still do not examine whom they should believe, then even though they know the weather well, they are missing the most important time.

We, too, may quickly examine things that would bring loss to our lives while putting off standing before God as a matter for the distant future. This is because we assume that, since we have no difficulties right now, we will go on living as we do now. But a comfortable day is not evidence that the problem of sin has been solved. At this time, when we can hear the word today and examine the work of the Savior, we must make clear what we will believe as we come before God. Discerning the time does not end with becoming a person who is well informed about the latest news, but must extend to accepting today the salvation the Lord has given.

Do not leave what is right to others

Because those who hear the word must decide how they will receive the word they have heard, they cannot put off judgment while waiting only for the assessment of others. *"Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right?" (Luke 12:57)*. If someone pretends to believe because others believe, or does not even examine the word of the Lord because those around him oppose it, he is not a person who judges for himself what is right. That does not mean, however, that he should make his own feelings the standard of truth. It means that he should discern in his heart whether the Lord who speaks is right and whether he must believe in the work He has done.

For this, we must distinguish between our own thoughts and the word of God. The thought that, because we have lived diligently, we will also be able to escape the judgment for sin is familiar to us, but our labor cannot remove the sins we have already committed. Even among people who say they believe in Jesus, two kinds of words are heard. One side says that because the Lord had all our sins passed on to Him through His baptism, those who believe have no sin; the other side says that sin still remains and must be washed away every day. Which side is according to the Bible cannot be decided by someone else for us; we must judge for ourselves, taking the Bible as our measuring stick and confirming it verse by verse. Before God, it is one of two, either yes or no, and a person who puts off judgment to the end is the same as one standing on the side of no. We can believe only when we know, and only when what we believe is clear are we not shaken by what people say.

This word is a living exhortation to us as well, who already believe the gospel. If we confess that the Savior is right but always make the judgments of our lives by the standard of our

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own cravings, the word we believe and the path we follow come to diverge. We must examine what pleases the Lord and correct our plans, and if we have been holding on to wrong thoughts, we must acknowledge it. This is not paying the price of salvation by accumulating right conduct, but following the will of the One who saved us because we truly believe in Him. Even when what is convenient for us and what is right before God differ, we must be able to decide by the standard of the word.

The opportunity to be reconciled before reaching the magistrate

Jesus explained the reason we must not put off right judgment through the picture of the way to the magistrate. *"When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison" (Luke 12:58)*. The time when one is still on the way and the time after one has received a verdict and been locked in prison are not the same. If one does not, to the end, settle a problem that could have been settled on the way and goes all the way before the magistrate, he cannot change the outcome as he pleases. The Lord tells this parable to let those who are listening now know the place where they are standing. While there is still an opportunity to hear the word and turn back, we must settle the problem of sin that remains for us before the judgment.

When we stand before the law of God, which accuses us, we cannot deny the fact that we are sinners. Even if we hide the sins revealed outwardly, before God even the wickedness of our hearts is revealed, and saying that others are the same does not

erase our own sins. Even if we complain that the law is not right or resolve to do well from now on, the price of the sins we have already committed remains. Therefore, to be reconciled to God, instead of insisting that we have no sin, we must acknowledge that we are people who cannot remit sins by our own strength and receive the grace the Savior has bestowed. To the person who seeks the remission of sins, the Lord tells of the work of salvation He has actually accomplished.

God Himself paid the debt for which the law accuses us. Jesus received baptism from John and had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all, and that sin of the world includes, without exception, all the sins we commit from the time we are born until we die, both the sins we have already committed and the sins we will commit in the future. Bearing the sin He had received through His baptism, the Lord was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and He received in our place the judgment for sin that we should have received. And by rising again from death, He saved us from sin and death. Therefore, being reconciled on the way is not clinging to the judge and begging him to turn a blind eye, but accepting with our hearts the One who paid all that debt in our place.

Believe in the salvation that left not even a mite

The Lord spoke sternly to the very end, saying that the problem of sin cannot simply be covered over. *"I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite" (Luke 12:59)*. The word that one cannot come out of prison if even a small amount remains shows how thoroughly sin must be settled. The 'there' the Lord spoke of is hell, and there no one can pay the price by himself and come out. It is a warning that

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we must not stand before God while leaving behind the price of sin that we cannot pay by our own strength. Therefore, we must not expect another way to open up at the end of our lives, but must believe now in the remission of sins the Lord has given.

Looked at the other way around, the word that one must pay without leaving even a mite means that the Lord took away all our sins without leaving even a mite. That does not mean that we have become people who will never once do wrong in our actions from now on. We still have weaknesses, but because Jesus bore even all those sins and received the judgment for them, the remission of sins is complete for those who believe. The Bible says, *"By one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14)*. Believing in this salvation, we have no need to try to pay the remaining price of sin separately with our own suffering or good deeds. We must not regard the salvation the Lord has accomplished as incomplete, and whenever we come to know of sin, we must believe in the work of the baptism and the Cross, through which He bore even that sin. A person who relies on grace acknowledges his wrongs rather than hiding them, and can turn back from the wrong path and follow the will of the Lord.

A person who thus knows his own situation, with judgment ahead of him, does not treat lightly the time given to him today, either. While fulfilling the responsibilities he must fulfill in daily life, he looks for opportunities to preach the gospel to those who do not yet know the word of salvation. It is not that we can believe only after finding out the date of the end of the age; rather, because we know that life and the times belong to the Lord, we believe and serve today. Let us not endlessly put off the problem of sin alone while we prepare when we see changes in the weather. While there is an opportunity to be reconciled on the way to the magistrate, believe with your heart in Jesus Christ,

who has remitted our sins without leaving any, and live with Him. ✉

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Sermon 12 by Paul C. Jong

Do you not judge for yourselves what is right?

< Luke 12:49–59 >

“‘I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.’ Then He also said to the multitudes, ‘Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, “A shower is coming”; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, “There will be hot weather”; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite.’”

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"I came to send fire on the earth"

Let us look at the word in Luke chapter 12 verses 49 through 59. In verse 49 the Lord said, *"I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49)*. What does the word that the Lord came to send fire mean? The Bible explains this part in verses 51 through 53. *"Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division" (Luke 12:51)*. It means being divided, fighting. That He came to send fire means that He came to judge those who oppose God; that is, it means that He came to bring division, to bring about fighting.

Why does He do this? God, as the God of the word, made this universe and said to man, *"Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17)*. In a word, He was saying, "Do not have your own standards. I am your Creator and your Master, so know that what I have said is the truth, believe it, and worship Me. Then I will bless you in all things." But man listened to the words of the fallen angel, did not believe the word of God, opposed it, and did not accept it. That is why all people are born as sinners when they are born on this earth. The Lord came to this earth to save sinners, and His saying, "I came to send fire on the earth; I came to judge," does not mean that He will judge right now. It means, "Are not your ancestors, you, and your descendants now opposing Me? I have come as your Savior, but there are some who believe and some who do not, so make it clear." It means, "Let those who believe in Me say clearly how they believe, and if they believe, let them follow; if they do not believe, let them say that they do not believe and make their own faith known precisely." And His going on to say that He came

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to bring division means that He does not tolerate believers and unbelievers mingling together and living vaguely united.

If we believe, we must seek God clearly, as befits believers, and believe and follow what the God of the word has spoken. Otherwise, we must clearly show that we do not believe. And we must fight over which is right. The question is this: Is it right to be saved by believing that the Lord came to this earth to save us, and to live receiving the blessings God gives while living according to the will of the Lord as His word says? Or is it right not to believe the fact that the Word is God and that He has saved us? The Lord wanted clarity, saying, "If you do not believe, show clearly that you do not believe; if you want to oppose, then oppose. In any case, when the period of salvation is over, I will judge, so make it clear." What God hates most is for believers to live like unbelievers, and for unbelievers to act and talk like believers. It means, "If you believe, live as befits a believer."

The baptism the Lord was to receive and the Cross

Having spoken this word, "I came to send fire on the earth," the Lord is soon to hang on the Cross and die. So in verse 50 He said, *"I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:50)*. Baptism has the meaning of taking something upon oneself. Here baptism refers to the work in which Jesus bore sin by receiving baptism from John, and to the judgment He was to receive because of that sin. The Lord had already borne our sins by receiving baptism from John, but the work of being nailed to the Cross still remained. The Lord was holding it close as a task still to be done. He would soon go to the Cross, so how severe that distress of His must have been! He had to accomplish that work no matter what, but

because the Lord had a body of flesh, that work was so dreadful that He found it hard.

The Lord speaks clearly on this earth to those who believe and to those who do not believe. He is telling us to make it clear which is right: whether those who believe according to the word are right or those who do not believe are right; whether it is right to believe in a religious way while saying we believe, or whether it is right to be saved by the faith that believes that, truly according to the word of God, He came to us and saved us, and even after being saved, to live by faith separated from the world. *"For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" (Luke 12:52–53).* It means that even within one family, those who believe and those who do not believe will clearly quarrel. The Lord wants us to reveal our faith firmly, even through division. He does not want the fighting itself; rather, He is telling us to judge, through that fight, whether the Lord is right or not right, and whether it is right or not right that He came to us when we had fallen into sin and saved us in this way, and to speak precisely, standing on faith.

And if we do not believe, He is telling us to make it clear, saying, "I do not believe that God made us and that, when we fell into sin, He came to save us and saved us. If God meant to keep us from falling into sin, He should either not have made the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil or not have given the word not to pick and eat it. Since He did that while knowing our weakness, did He not make us into playthings or toys? Therefore, I do not believe."

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If you believe, live as befits a believer

We must apply this word that the Lord spoke to those who now believe and to those who do not believe alike, and think about it. If we say that we believe that the Lord saved us according to the word of the Bible, how must you and I live? We must live as befits people of faith. Why would we follow the world? Why would we love the idols of the world and go around following after them? It means that we must draw the line clearly, saying, "I cannot do that. My God is Jesus Christ. He is my Savior and my star. I want to keep His commands, and I want to live according to His will. I love Him, and He is my God. I want to live keeping the word He spoke not only to me but to all of us."

To say, while claiming to believe the gospel, "I believe the gospel; I believe because it says He saved me, but as for how I live, I cannot live as God says," is to deceive oneself. Living by following the word of God, as believers do, is what is right. But if someone says with his mouth that he believes and yet says that, as for how he lives, he wants to live like the people of the world, then what kind of believer is that?

The Lord is soon to hang on the Cross and die. Why does He hang on the Cross and die? He hangs on the Cross and dies because, in order to bear our sins, He had our sins transferred to Him with the baptism He received from John. And He said to us, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19)*. It means, "Preach everything about how I have saved you; spread this; live for this." But if we do not live for this, we are deceiving the Lord and deceiving ourselves. We can deceive people, but we cannot deceive God. Even when we believe in Jesus, our flesh wants to live vaguely.

But because, the moment we believe in the Lord, the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts and dwells there, and He is our God, our hearts want to live by faith as it is written in the word and want to live as pleases the Lord. If we live as the Lord has said, the Lord is pleased and the Holy Spirit within us is pleased; if not, the Holy Spirit grieves. Is it not right to live following the will of the Master we serve? That is what He is saying. The Lord clearly said that He would judge those who say they believe and yet in fact do not believe and say that the world is good. That is what is meant by the word, "I came to send fire on the earth."

While we all alike say we believe, a father and a son fight within one household. Both believe in Jesus alike, but one believes, is born again, and lives spreading the gospel and serving the gospel as pleases God. He lives making this the purpose of his life. The other says, "My life is my own, so why should I live being interfered with by God? If God is that kind of God, I will not believe." Then it means that they should fight. It means that each should reveal his own faith firmly. If someone says only with words that he believes but actually rejects the salvation of the Lord, he is deceiving himself and the Lord, and he cannot escape the judgment of the Lord. God surely judges. A person who says he has been saved but does not live the life God wants is in fact an unbeliever. Does such a person go to heaven? The Bible calls such a person the one who received one talent, a lazy servant. When the master told him to hand over the money, he brought out the one talent he had buried in the ground, and the master said, *"Take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents" (Matthew 25:28)*, and, *"Cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness" (Matthew 25:30)*. It means to treat him exactly the same as an unbeliever.

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Both heaven and hell are reality

Faith is a matter of reality. In the world it is hard to get a job, and it is hard to live, too. But there are people who, while living in the church serving the gospel, think, "If I went out into the world and lived, I would earn so much money and could live enjoying myself for my own sake as much as I liked," and so live finding the life of serving the gospel painful, hard, and sorrowful. Believing in God is a matter of reality; then, if God said, "Do you not believe in Me? Are you not resenting Me while not believing in Me? Then go out and live as you please," could they really do so when their own flesh had become hard pressed? Receiving the remission of sins by believing, going to heaven by believing, and receiving the blessings God gives by believing are also matters of reality, not a mere daydream. Our not believing, leaving the church, going out into the world, and living for ourselves is also entirely a matter of reality. You have the knowledge of the gospel, and whether you believe or not depends on yourself; so think about it realistically. The question is whether you can realistically say, "I will quit it all, go out, and live as I will; living that way, I will go to hell," and do so. If you can, then you can just do so.

Whether one goes to heaven or to hell is a matter of reality. It is not a daydream, an illusion, or a dream. Those who believe actually go to heaven, and those who do not believe actually go to hell. Is this a lie? Since it is fact and reality, either yield your heart and believe, or, if you do not want to yield your heart and want to live as you will, saying, "My life is my own," you yourself must reveal clearly that you do not believe. You can just say, "I do not believe; therefore I will live as I will; I will not stay here," and go out and live. That is not to say that you should leave. If, though we have met the truth, our hearts like the

salvation the Lord has given but our flesh dislikes this, and we make up our minds, "I will follow the flesh," then that is how it will be. The Lord says this word because He is to die on the Cross very soon. It means, "I came to send fire on the earth, to judge; reveal firmly whether you believe or not." If you say, "I do not believe; even if I go to hell, I will live as I will; I will even accept being cursed," then you can just put it into action.

But if you say, "I like the gospel and believe it, but my heart keeps flowing toward the flesh and following it," then you must know that the Lord has saved you, just as you are. Even though you and I have been saved, we still have hearts that like the world and want to follow the world. It means that the Lord had all those sins, too, transferred to Him with the baptism He received from John and has removed them all. Then we must say, "I cannot leave that Lord. I believe, and even when the desires of the flesh rise up, because this is not right, I will deny myself and, though I am lacking, live as the Lord wants." *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23)*. So, praying before the Lord and denying ourselves daily, we must say, "By the Lord, who lives within us—the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of God—I will uphold His will and live," just as the word says, *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20)*. We cannot do it well on our own. So we make up our minds to follow the Lord together, receiving help from our seniors and peers in faith. It means that it is one or the other.

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"Why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right?"

In verses 54 through 57 the Lord tells us to discern this time. *"Then He also said to the multitudes, 'Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, "A shower is coming"; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, "There will be hot weather"; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right?'" (Luke 12:54–57).* It means that you should think about it on your own. The Lord spoke at that time, but because the word of the Lord is eternal, He speaks to us at any time in the present. Though we are not meteorologists, when we see a cloud rising in the west, do we not say, "A shower is coming," and when a warm wind blows from the south, "Now it is going to be very hot"? He is saying, "You know such things well, so why can you not judge for yourselves what is right?" It means that one must judge for oneself.

If we say that we know the words God spoke to us in the Bible—the word that He saved us with the water and the blood in this way and the word that He will send us to heaven—then we must judge for ourselves. Each of us must judge and believe for himself, saying, "It is right that the Lord saved me; I believe." But people do not judge for themselves; they only put it into their heads and say, "I believe this, but my body will go to the world." Which is right? Why do you not judge for yourself? Why do you make other people pass judgment on you? It means, "Do you not judge for yourself what is right? Judge for yourself." If you say, "This does not suit my taste; I cannot live this way," then it means that you must judge whether it is right for you to think this way and make up your mind this way. If, though you judge

it not to be right, you say, "I will live by my own stubbornness; I will give up all the blessings the Lord gives and receive the curse the Lord gives," then it means, "Do as you have judged."

The Lord does not force us to believe. The Lord says to us, "Is it not right that I caused you to be born on this earth, and that I came to this earth to save you, who had become sinners, received baptism from John, hung on the Cross, shed My blood, rose again from death, and saved you? Have I not become your God, and have you, who were once created beings, not now become My people by believing in the salvation I have given? Have you not now received the blessing of being clothed with the glory of having become children of God, to whom the angels look up?" And He tells us to judge. It means, "Which is right? Is it right to believe, become children of God, and live according to the will of God, or is it right to think that you will know it only intellectually, not believe it in your heart, reject it, and live as you will? Judge." If you say, "This is right," then it means, "Then do as is right."

In the Bible, among the disciples of Jesus there was a man named Judas. There are several people named Judas in the Bible, so one can distinguish them by which region a Judas was from; the disciple Judas wanted Jesus to become the king of this land, and did not want Him to become the Savior who would bear the sin of mankind, hang on the Cross and die, rise again from death, and save mankind from sin. To put it simply, one can say that Judas was a man who dreamed of the independence of his nation. Because the nation of Israel was living as a colony of Rome, he thought that independence was necessary, and then he was called by Jesus and came, but he still had not given up his own dream. He thought that if he sold Jesus and made Jesus and the Roman soldiers fight directly, Jesus would sweep away the Roman soldiers and become the true king of the nation of Israel.

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Thinking, "If I sell Jesus to the religious leaders, Jesus will be dragged away by the Roman soldiers, and then will He not strike them with His word?" he sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

But Jesus was arrested and tried in Pilate's court; He wore a crown of thorns on His head, and blood flowed where the thorns pierced Him; He was struck with a whip, and His whole body was torn and covered in blood. But it was earlier than that, when Judas saw that Jesus had been condemned, that he repented of his own accord. Judas had thought that if someone attacked, Jesus would sweep them away; so, thinking, "This is not how it was supposed to be. I have truly done wrong. I have judged wrongly," he took the thirty pieces of silver he had received, went to the chief priests, threw it down, saying that he would not take this money, and, being in so much anguish, hanged himself. The Bible says, *"He threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself" (Matthew 27:5)*, and Acts records of him, *"Falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out" (Acts 1:18)*. It came to pass according to the prophetic word of the Old Testament. Selling Jesus also came to pass according to the prophetic word, but whether what one is doing is right or not right is something one must judge for oneself.

God, who is the Word, made all things in the universe by the Word, made man too, and told him not to pick and eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; but by picking and eating it, man became a sinner, and because of sin he could not but go to hell. But Jesus, who is God, in order to save you and me, who resemble the image of God, was born as a man of Mary and came to this earth, received baptism from John the Baptist at the age of thirty, died on the Cross and saved us, and to those who believe *"He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12)*. The question is whether this is right or not right. Is

that work of God, which makes us children of God and lets us go to heaven, right or not right? If you think it is right, then you believe, follow the Lord, live the life the Lord wants, live receiving the blessings God gives on this earth as well, and in a little while go to the Lord's kingdom. Otherwise, if you judge, "I do not believe. I do not like it. Being saved is good, but I do not like living according to the will of the Lord. Therefore I will reject it; I will reject all the blessings the Lord gives; I will live as I will on this earth and then go to hell," and you think that is right, then you can just do so. It is the same for anyone. After being saved, people go around thinking, "Why does the Lord make me do the work of serving? Is this right? I, too, have my pride and my own will, so why does He force me to do this? Is God bad? Is the church bad? Are people bad?" and they say, "I will accept everything good here and reject what is disadvantageous to me and live that way," but God tells us to lean to one side.

If you say, "It is right to believe that God has saved me and you and to live following the will of God; while I live on this earth He blesses me with what I need, and when I go to that kingdom He rewards me with heaven; so I have decided to look to that reward and live on this earth as the Lord wants," then you live that way. Otherwise, if you say, "I will reject all the blessings of the Lord; it is fine with me to lose everything," then you can just live that way. God tells us to decide. Must you judge for yourself, or must others judge for you? Is it not because others judge for you that you fight with yourself every day? To those who want to be judged as they themselves wish, the Lord says, "Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?" You and I must judge. Why do you not judge? Is it not because it is disadvantageous to you that you do not judge?

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Be reconciled to the law while you are alive

In conclusion, the Lord says, "*When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison" (Luke 12:58)*. Who is the one who accuses you? Who is the one who says that your judgment is wrong, the one who judges that thought to be sin? It is the law of Moses. The law that says, *"You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3)*, tells us, when we make a wrong judgment, "You are thinking what is not right; that is precisely sin." It means that if we find believing in God and living according to the will of God something to complain about, that is sin. It is right to render the verdict that all that God has done is right, to believe, and to follow His will; yet who is the one who accuses those who, while having sin in their hearts, do not receive the remission of sins and, while opposing God, think the opposite, judge the opposite, go off onto a side path, and walk the road of becoming enemies of God? It is Moses, that is, the law. We cannot escape from before the law of God. All people who have sin are under the rule of the law. That is why it says that while we are alive, when we go to the magistrate, we must make every effort to be reconciled along the way—that we must be reconciled quickly while we are still alive. It means that if we receive the judgment for sin, it is hell, so we must be reconciled quickly.

Sinners must confess before God as follows: "I am one who is bound to go to hell anyway. I want to be saved from sin; I do not want to go to hell because of my sins. Lord, help me. Please save me. I believe that You saved me through Your Son. I want to follow Your will in whatever situation I may be in this world." In this way, we quickly reconcile and believe, look forward to

receiving later the blessings the Lord gives, and say, "In this present life I will live for Him according to His will." It means that you must receive salvation and desire to live according to the will of the Lord.

In verse 59 He said, *"I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite" (Luke 12:59)*. The Lord says that unless you receive the remission of your sins—down to the last mite, down to as much as a speck of dust one shakes off—through faith in the Lord and enter the Lord's kingdom by that faith, that is, if even a mite of sin remains in your heart, you will by no means come out of burning hell. Does it seem to you that, in preaching this word, I am preaching my own words? In this world, a person who preaches the word of God rightly is called a servant of God and a preacher. The words of a preacher who preaches the word of God rightly are the word of God. When a preacher stands at the pulpit, whatever his relationship with you may be, he speaks exactly what God says. So you are now hearing the word of God, and it means that you must judge while hearing the word.

What is right to believe? After believing, how is it right to live? It means that you must judge for yourself, believe for yourself, decide for yourself, and live on your own. If you are not going to believe, make that path clear; if you believe, live for the spread of the gospel as the Lord wants. Then will He not supply what you need? *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. It means that after believing, you must first live the life the Lord wants. If someone does not want to live the life the Lord wants after believing, that person does not truly believe. He is not a person who has died with Christ and come alive again with Him, nor a person who has the Holy Spirit in his heart; he is a theoretical and intellectual person. His end is destruction.

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Instead of serving and spreading the gospel, he is one who hinders the spread of the gospel. So if there are people who, though they are in the church, do not want the gospel to spread well and the work of God to go well, they too must hear this word. There is no need to force them to believe.

Then, in conclusion, who loses? Do those who believe lose? Do those who do not believe and live only for themselves gain? I hope you will judge who loses and who gains. Because I believe in God, I will live as God wants. While living as He wants, I will give up many things of my flesh. And while living as God wants, I will receive many blessings from God and share the blessings I have received with many people; and according to the word that says, *"Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3)*, I will lead many people to what is right, shine like the stars in heaven, and live enjoying eternal life with God. I have chosen this path. Which path will you choose? I hope you will judge for yourselves and choose your path. ✉

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CHAPTER

13

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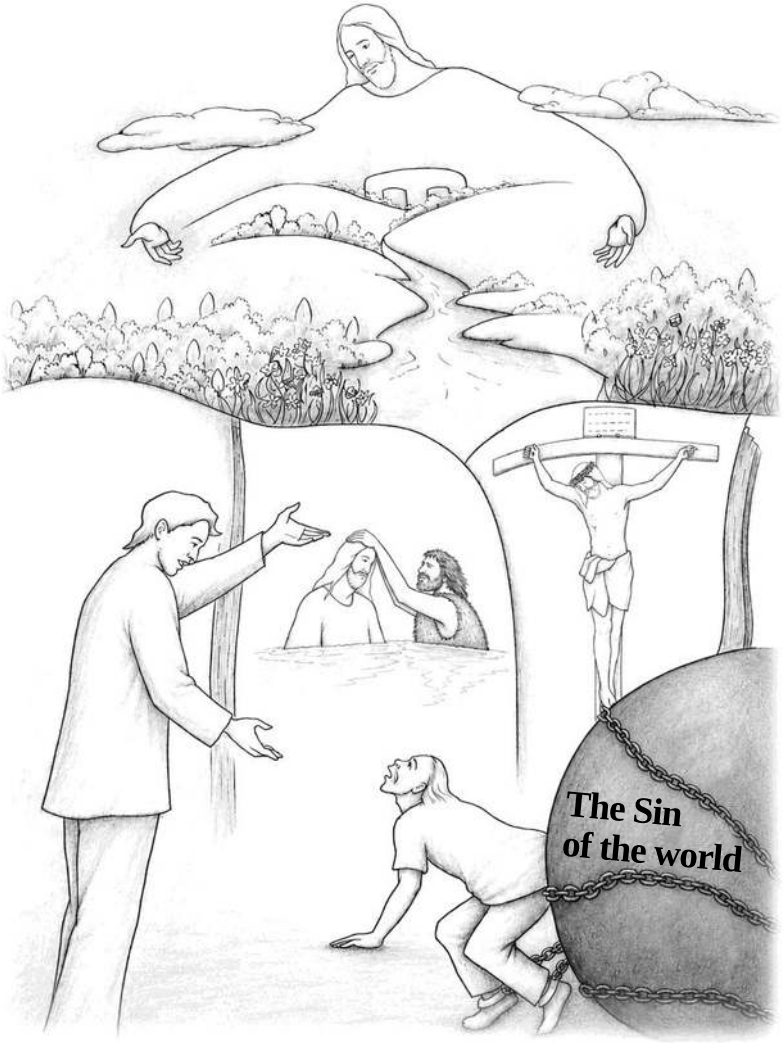

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Today, when we have escaped disaster, is also the time to repent

< Luke 13:1–5 >

“There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.’”

The heart that hears of the deaths of others and establishes its own righteousness

When we hear news of a person who has suffered a great misfortune, it is easy to think first about why that person went through such a thing. The fact that we ourselves did not suffer it becomes a reason to feel relieved, and before we know it, we may even consider that we, who survived, have lived more rightly. When the news that certain Galileans had been killed by

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Pilate was brought to Jesus, the Lord asked a question directed at the hearts of the people who had brought that news. *"And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things?'" (Luke 13:2)*. He was asking whether one can judge, from the fact that the harm was great, that that person's sins were more than those of other people.

Because these people shed their blood while they were offering sacrifices, it would have been an even greater shock to those who heard the news. However, the text does not tell us about the usual conduct of those who died, and Jesus did not explain what special sin they had committed that they died. Rather, He denied the thought that the people who had suffered harm in that way were greater sinners than the other Galileans. Inventing hidden sins of those who died on the basis of the horror of the event is not an attitude that follows the word of the Lord.

If we make the misfortune of others evidence of our own righteousness, we end up not examining our own sins that are before God. This is because the fact that we spent today without any particular accident and the fact that we are without sin before God are different matters. We cannot escape the judgment of sin for the reason that we have suffered less hardship than others or have lived longer. Before the Lord, who heard this news, what we must lay down first is the heart that judges the deaths of others while regarding ourselves alone as safe. The Lord makes us stop that comparison and makes those who hear the word look back on their own souls.

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Repentance needed even by those who were not under the tower

Following the people killed by Pilate, Jesus spoke of the eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell. If there was human violence in the former event, this time a tower that fell took people's lives. Though the forms of the events differ, they are the same in that they do not become grounds for the living to exalt themselves. *"Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem?" (Luke 13:4)*. The Lord did not accept the judgment that the rest of the people in Jerusalem had survived because they were more righteous than those eighteen.

We do not have the ability to find out the causes of all suffering, and we must not rashly draw conclusions about things the Lord has not revealed. When we meet people who are sick, we must look after their pain, and with those who have suffered sorrow we must grieve together and give them help. We cannot comfort a person by sitting there and evaluating how lacking that person's faith was. News of disaster does not give us the authority to condemn other people. Rather, it makes us realize that we cannot hold on to even our own lives by ourselves, and makes us look back on ourselves before God today, while we are alive.

That said, it is not that Jesus regarded the matter of sin and judgment lightly. After denying the thought that those who died had especially more sins, He said twice that the living, too, would perish unless they repented. The attitude of seeing the sins of others as great and the attitude of seeing our own sins as small must be abandoned together. We must not come to God through the comparison that we are better than others, but must

acknowledge our own sins and come to the Savior. What is more urgent than predicting whether we will suffer the same disaster is examining whom our own souls are relying on.

Acknowledge your sins and turn to the Savior

"I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). This warning is not a word that abandons its hearers in fear, but a call to turn from a wrong heart while they can still hear the word of the Lord. Repentance does not begin with finding people worse than oneself, but with acknowledging that one is a sinner before God. Also, we must not remain only in the emotion of grieving over sin. We must abandon the thought by which we regarded ourselves as righteous and accept the fact that we cannot resolve the judgment of sin with our own strength.

In our hearts there are pride, envy, and greed, and before God we cannot hide even the sins we have not revealed to others. The Galileans did not have more sins, nor do we have fewer sins. *"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6)*. Because the sins we have already committed do not disappear even if we resolve never to do wrong again, and because we have no ability to remember every past sin one by one and pay for it, God made His own Son bear the iniquity of us all. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had the sins of all the people of the world passed on to Him once and for all. All the sins we commit from birth until death—past sins, today's sins, and even the sins we will commit in the future—were passed on to the Lord at that time.

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Bearing the sins He had thus received, the Lord was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and He received in our place the judgment we should have received because of sin. And He rose again from death and gave us new life. Therefore, a person who truly turns does not put forward his own tears or resolutions as the grounds of salvation, but believes in the work of Jesus Christ, who bore all sins. It is not that we escape judgment because we were not crushed to death by the tower; we escape judgment only when we believe in the One who received the judgment for our sins in our place. Before the word that tells you to repent, do not try to adorn yourselves further, but accept with your hearts the Lord, who saved us through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

Today, while you are alive, hear the voice that calls sinners

The reason the Lord speaks to a sinner is that He wants that person to turn and obtain life. *"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:32)*. A person who insists that he is righteous does not acknowledge the fact that he needs a Savior, but a person who knows his own sins values the calling of the Lord. We who hear the word today have no need to stand in the position of judging the end of those who died. We need only answer the voice of the Lord, who is calling none other than us, and believe in the remission of sins that He has already accomplished for us.

Even after we have received the remission of sins, if we keep looking only at the improvement in our own conduct, a heart that forgets the grace we have received and tries to build ourselves up by comparing ourselves with others can rise up. At such times,

we must remember the fact that we, too, were sinners who could not have been saved but for grace. Rather than feeling relieved as we look at the failures of others, we must know that we, too, have the same weakness and return to the word. The faith that the Lord has remitted our sins does not become an excuse to hide wrongdoing. Rather, because we believe in the Lord, who bore all sins, we can acknowledge our faults, turn from wrong words and deeds, and serve our neighbors.

When we hear news of disaster again, let us not think that we are more righteous than the people who suffered it. Let us look after their pain and give the help we can, and let us preach the word of the Savior, who gives life to sinners. Today, on which we have escaped disaster, is not a time to prove our own righteousness but a time to believe in and follow the grace of the Lord. I hope you will turn your gaze, which was on the misfortunes of others, to yourselves before God, and live relying on Jesus Christ, who calls us to repentance and has remitted all our sins. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The grace of giving one more year while waiting for fruit

< Luke 13:6–9 >

“He also spoke this parable: ‘A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, “Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?” But he answered and said to him, “Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.”’”

What He sought from the tree planted in the vineyard

The mere fact that the fig tree stood in the vineyard did not mean that the owner’s will had been accomplished. The owner did not come to check whether the tree was there, but came to obtain fruit. *“He also spoke this parable: ‘A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none’” (Luke 13:6)*. There was a place where it had been planted, and there was time for it to grow, but the fruit the owner sought was not there. There was a difference between the

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fact that the tree occupied that place and the fact that it was producing what the owner wanted. Jesus told this parable after saying that unless they repented they would perish.

Therefore, as we look at this tree, we must not first assess the usefulness of other people. We ourselves, who are hearing the word, must look back on what kind of heart we are living with before God. A record of having had opportunities to hear the word or of having led a life of faith for a long time cannot by itself take the place of our own faith. We must examine whether we acknowledge our sins and turn to the Savior when God reveals them, and whether we believe with our hearts and follow the word we have already received. This is because repentance is not accomplished merely by the lengthening of the time we are alive.

The Lord does not explain the reason the tree failed to bear fruit by diseased branches or bad soil, but directs our gaze to what the owner, who had been waiting, sought. What the parable shows is the fact that the owner looked for fruit but did not obtain it. If we, too, before the word that tells us to examine ourselves, speak only of the faults of other people or the difficulties of our circumstances, we may miss our own hearts, which must turn now. We must think of the grace we have received from God and honestly look at what response we are making before that grace.

The decision of the owner who waited three years

It was not a decision the owner made hastily after coming just once. *"Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?'" (Luke 13:7).*

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The word that he came every year and yet did not obtain fruit reveals the fact that there had been waiting all that time. If the words to cut the tree down sound only sudden, we have missed the time the owner had been waiting before that. John the Baptist, too, cried out for repentance and showed the same picture. *"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)*. We must not think that because God did not judge right away, He regards sin and unbelief as all right. Even while He waits, the Master is seeking fruit.

We cannot calculate the three years of this parable as a deadline for repentance set for each one of us. Nor can we conclude that God has cut a person down because things do not go well for him one day. This is because the Lord earlier denied the thought that people who suffered disaster had more sins than others. The warning we must hear here is not a commentary on the misfortunes of others, but a word about our own hearts, which keep refusing to turn until the very end, even while receiving grace. Knowing that there is a time when we will stand before God, we must not take today's calling lightly.

It is not only because we do not know our wrongs that acknowledging our sins is difficult for us. It is because, even knowing them, we do not want to humble ourselves and do not want to let go of the thoughts we have set up. If we say that the word is right but try to keep our own righteousness to the end, our hearts may remain the same even as the years of hearing increase. The Lord demands repentance of us, who are like that. Instead of making more excuses for ourselves, we must acknowledge that we are people who are to be judged because of sin and turn our hearts to the Savior, who came to give life to sinners.

The keeper of the vineyard, who asks for one more year and tends the ground

In the face of the words to cut it down, the keeper of the vineyard asked that the tree be left as it was. *"But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it'" (Luke 13:8)*. The keeper of the vineyard did not say that it did not matter if there was no fruit. Since he said he would dig around the tree and fertilize it, the additional time to be given was accompanied by concrete care. He asked for waiting not to remove the owner's demand, but in the hope that fruit would be borne according to that demand. In this scene we learn that we must not regard the longsuffering of God as an indifference in which He does nothing at all.

The grace of the Lord toward sinners was also not a matter of merely watching from afar until we became righteous by ourselves. Just as the keeper of the vineyard dug the ground and fertilized it for the tree, the Lord Himself came to this earth for us, who cannot remove our sins by our own strength. John the Baptist saw Him and cried out, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. This is because when Jesus received baptism from John, the sin of the whole world was passed on to the Lord once and for all. Not only the sins of the days we have already lived but even the sins we will commit as we go on living—all the sins from birth until death—are included in that sin of the world. Bearing the sins He had thus received, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death and gave us life.

The way we obtain salvation is not to first produce fruit, show it to the Lord, and then receive the remission of sins. We must believe in the Savior, who received our sins through

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baptism and received the judgment for those sins on the Cross. What we must first present before the owner who came seeking fruit is not our own righteousness, but a heart that believes this grace by which He dug the ground for the fruitless tree. If we believe what the Lord has already accomplished, we can escape from a heart that looked only at our failed selves and rely on grace. Do not turn the love of the Lord, who, while being longsuffering, even let you hear the word of salvation, into permission that it is all right not to believe from now on as well.

Fill the additional time given to you with the fruit of repentance

The request of the keeper of the vineyard returns at the end to the matter of fruit again. *"And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down" (Luke 13:9)*. The waiting is not for endless postponement, nor is it an acceptance of the fruitless state as it is. The parable stops here without telling the ending of what became of the tree later. It is to make those who hear the word look back on the today that has been given to them. We must not boast of the fact that we still have time, but must accept the will of the One who gave us that time.

From a heart that believes in the remission of sins comes a response of acknowledging one's own faults and trying to follow the word. Because such a person has received grace, he also holds compassion for the weaknesses of other people and wants to preach to them the gospel he himself has received. Here, fruit is not a competition to gather many achievements to show to others. It is a life of knowing the will of the Lord and willingly doing even a small service, and of turning when a wrong heart is revealed and being guided by the word. God knows the heart

with which we treat that word, rather than the size of the place we occupy.

When a saint hesitates because of weakness or has not sufficiently carried out the work entrusted to him, we must not immediately judge that his salvation has disappeared. This is because the grounds for the remission of sins are not the achievements we have accomplished, but the salvation that Jesus Christ completed. However, neither can we insist that greed and unbelief are right on the grounds that we believe that grace. Let us examine what the Lord, who gave us life, wants, and if we need help, let us learn together in the word and carry out the work entrusted to us. Let us not be satisfied merely with standing in the vineyard, but today, too, let us bear the fruit of repentance in which the Master will delight, believing the grace that cares for us. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, who loosed a bondage of eighteen years on the Sabbath

< Luke 13:10–17 >

“Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, ‘Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.’ And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, ‘There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.’ The Lord then answered him and said, ‘Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?’ And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.”

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The Lord, who saw the bondage of eighteen years

In the synagogue on the Sabbath there was a woman who had long been unable to straighten her body. At the very place where Jesus was teaching the word, a person who had been ill for eighteen years was present. The text does not say that the woman first came to Jesus and asked Him to heal her illness. The Lord saw her and called her, and He loosed the bondage that had afflicted her. *"But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, 'Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.' And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God" (Luke 13:12–13)*. The person who, in long-standing suffering, could not straighten her body by herself was immediately made straight by the word and the touch of the Lord.

The woman did not boast of her own strength or put forward the merit of having endured for a long time, but glorified God. This is because it was clear who had changed her condition. Even the long span of eighteen years could not hinder the authority of Jesus, and the Lord did what others could not do. The fact that the Lord saw that woman is precious to us as well. Even if a person stands as one person among many people, before the Lord the suffering and the needs he goes through are not hidden.

The text makes it clear that this woman was bound by Satan, but it does not lead us to conclude that all illnesses or bodily discomforts have the same cause. Rather than rashly judging another person's sin or faith on account of his pain, we must see how the Lord treated the one who was suffering. Jesus did not stand her before the people to put her to shame, but caused her to be loosed from her long suffering. We, too, who learn the work of the Lord, must not regard a weak person only as a

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burden, but must look carefully at what that person needs now. If, in the place where we hear the word, we turn away from one person's suffering, we will miss the heart of the Lord.

The ruler of the synagogue, who was indignant in the face of the joy of being healed

While the woman was glorifying God, the ruler of the synagogue became indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. *"But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, 'There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day'" (Luke 13:14)*. When we look at what he said to the crowd, he did not deny the act of healing itself. However, he himself set the days on which people were to be healed, and insisted that such a thing must not happen on the Sabbath. Rather than rejoicing over the person whose suffering had ended before his eyes, he first examined whether it fit the standard he had set up.

The ruler of the synagogue said that there were six days and that people should come during them, but he had no authority to put off the grace bestowed on that woman that day. To know the will of God, who gave the Sabbath, he had to see the work Jesus accomplished on that very day, but the ruler of the synagogue made his own interpretation a more certain standard than the deeds of the Lord. Being in a position of teaching people does not mean that one always knows the will of God rightly. If we do not lay down our own thoughts before the word, we may instead look with displeasure on something for which glory should be given to God.

We, too, when we become accustomed to an established way, can think that keeping that way is itself faith. Gathering together and following order are necessary, but they must not obscure the will of the Lord, who saves sinners and cares for the weak. Especially if another person has received grace and we become angry for the reason that it differs from our thinking, we must look back at what our heart is trying to protect. This is because we may regard the heart that tries to protect our own reputation as an attitude of being faithful to God. Our judgment, too, must be set right as we accept what the Lord has done.

Would one loose an animal from its bond yet keep a person from being loosed?

The Lord exposed the contradiction between the words of the ruler of the synagogue and his actual life. *"The Lord then answered him and said, 'Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?'" (Luke 13:15–16)*. They, too, loosed an ox or a donkey on the Sabbath and gave it water. While giving the care that animals needed, they tried to block the Lord's work of loosing a person who had been bound for a long time. The reason the Lord rebuked them as hypocrites was that, while speaking strict words, they did not apply the same standard consistently. Under that standard, the thirst of their own animals was visible, but the long suffering of a woman was hidden.

By calling that woman a daughter of Abraham, Jesus made those who had fixed their eyes only on her inability to straighten

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her body realize that she was a precious person before God. Moreover, the Sabbath was not a day that went against the will of the Lord, who looses people from bondage. The Lord made it clear that it was fitting to loose her on that very day. A heart that cherishes the Sabbath should rejoice in the freedom God bestows, but the ruler of the synagogue was standing on the side of blocking that freedom.

Through this event we also look to the work of the Savior, who looses us from the bondage of sin. When the Lord began His work, He read the word that says, *"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" (Luke 4:18)*. Because a sinner cannot remove the sins he has already committed by resolving to keep more rules, Jesus came to bear those sins Himself. Just as, in the synagogue, the Lord laid His hands on the woman and her body was straightened, at the Jordan River John laid his hands on Jesus and gave Him baptism, and at that time the sin of the whole world was passed on to the Lord once and for all. Through that baptism He bore not only the sins of our yesterday and today, but even all the sins we will commit throughout our whole lives from now on. And bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and received in our place the judgment we were to receive, and by rising again from death He saved us from sin and death. Since the One who loosed the woman who had been bound for eighteen years has also loosed us from the sin that has bound us all our lives, we need only leave behind making our own conduct the basis of salvation and rely on the remission of sins that the Lord has accomplished.

Rejoice together over the grace of being loosed

The word of the Lord exposed the contradiction of those who had opposed Him, and the multitude rejoiced at what the Lord was doing. *"And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him" (Luke 13:17)*. At first one woman straightened her body and glorified God, but now the whole multitude rejoiced at the glorious work of the Lord. The anger of the ruler of the synagogue could not determine the value of that grace. The fact that Jesus had actually loosed the bondage remained, and the people could see His work and rejoice.

We, too, must remember that the reason we received the remission of sins does not lie in our own strictness. We were not saved because we have lived a life of faith for a long time or kept the rules better than others; rather, we believe that grace because the Lord bore our sins and received judgment. Therefore, when another person hears the same gospel and receives the remission of sins, there is no reason to compete. We can rejoice together simply because the Lord has saved him. A person who knows the grace bestowed on himself also values the grace bestowed on others.

If we believe the fact that the Lord did not turn away from weak people like us but saved us, our attitude toward those beside us who need help must also change. Rather than only rebuking a person for not having done the assigned work even while he is struggling, we must listen to his circumstances and look for a way to handle it together. Our service does not remit sins, but because we know the love of the Lord, who saved us, we cannot turn away from the needs of our neighbors. Let us remember the gaze of the Lord, who saw and called the woman

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who could not straighten her body for eighteen years. I hope you will turn from the heart that tried to block the freedom given in the synagogue that day, and serve while rejoicing together in the work of the Savior, who saves people. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

See the kingdom of God contained in a small mustard seed

< Luke 13:18–21 >

“Then He said, ‘What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches.’ And again He said, ‘To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.’”

The reason He compared the kingdom of God to a small seed

When we think of a great kingdom, it is easy to first think of wide lands, many people, or the figure of a powerful king. But in explaining the kingdom of God, Jesus spoke of a small seed that people plant in a garden and of leaven that is put into meal. *“Then He said, ‘What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it?’” (Luke 13:18)*. The Lord makes us, who try to judge that kingdom only by the size before our eyes, see how what began small grows and spreads. In other words, we cannot limit what God will accomplish only by how it looks at first.

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Just before this word, Jesus healed the woman who could not straighten her body for eighteen years. That woman was loosed from her bondage and glorified God, but the ruler of the synagogue was indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and he opposed that work. Because the salvation and the rule of the Lord do not collapse just because there is opposition from people, the Lord kept speaking and taught what the kingdom of God is like. If we look only at the reactions around us, we may become discouraged, but if we see what the Lord begins and accomplishes, we can follow His work by faith.

When the gospel is preached to our hearts, too, a great change does not become visible from the beginning. Even though we have believed the word that our sins have been remitted, our daily circumstances remain the same, and we ourselves may seem as lacking as before. That does not mean that the salvation we have received is small or incomplete. This is because, within that grace, the life of a child of God and the hope of the kingdom of God were given together. The Lord has given us grace greater than we can reckon right now, and as we live believing the word, He makes us know all the more how precious that grace is.

The tree that grows up until birds nest in it

"It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches" (Luke 13:19). In this parable there are both the beginning, when the seed is planted, and the picture of it becoming a tree in which birds nest. With eyes that look at a small seed, one cannot see all the branches that come later, but the Lord speaks even of the form that seed will grow to reach. A

person who has accepted the gospel, too, grows in faith while learning how great the grace is that gave him the remission of sins. A person who had been holding on only to the problem of his own sins comes to know that other souls also need the same salvation, and comes to pray for them and preach the word to them.

This mustard seed that is sown in the field of the heart is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we first hear it, it seems insignificant, and it feels so small that we may doubt whether our sins have really been removed through this one small word. But there is life in it. Jesus, who came to give us life, had the sin of the whole world passed on to His own body once and for all by receiving baptism from John. At that time He did not bear only our past sins, but bore all the sins from our birth until our death, even the sins we will commit in the future. Because of the sins He had borne in that way, the Lord was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death and saved us. In the person who has become righteous by believing this word, which seemed as small as a mustard seed, the faith that relies on the salvation already received grows.

That faith grows after we believe in this salvation does not mean that sins gradually disappear more and more. The Lord has completed the remission of sins, and we learn the depth of the salvation we have already received and a life that relies on Him. A person who used to follow only his own thoughts when facing difficulties holds on to the word, and a person who used to be indifferent to the needs of others comes to have a heart to preach the gospel. Like the birds nesting in the branches, through a person who shares the word he has received, others can also hear of the grace of the Lord and rely on it. The power that saves

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people lies not in our status but in the salvation of the Lord that we believe and preach.

The parable of the leaven that spreads through all the meal

The Lord spoke of the same kingdom of God with yet another parable. *"It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened" (Luke 13:21)*. If the mustard seed shows the picture of growing into a tree, the leaven shows the picture of entering into the meal and making all of it rise. Even if the leaven is little compared with the meal, its working does not stop at the place where it first entered. In the same way, the gospel is not a word that, after being preached to one person's heart, is to stay hidden only in that person. The Lord has those who were saved first preach the word they believed to others as well, so that more souls may enjoy the grace of the kingdom of God.

Just because we hear the word "leaven," we must not attach the same meaning to it in every place. Earlier the Lord likened the hypocrisy of the Pharisees to leaven, but here He clearly speaks of what the kingdom of God is like. Therefore, if we turn this parable into an explanation that something evil grows within the gospel, we will read the word of the Lord backward. What we must see now is the working of the leaven that spreads through the meal, and the work of the kingdom of God that He makes known through that picture. Even when He used the same thing as a figure, we must examine its meaning according to what He is explaining.

The gospel spreads not because we move people's hearts by force, but because those who have heard of the work of Jesus

Christ, who has remitted sins, believe that word and preach the grace they have received to others as well. We must preach the word step by step so that the other person can understand it, and examine together the parts he has not yet understood. We must not judge that the gospel has no power just because there is no immediate response, nor change the content of salvation into other words in order to get a response. We must preach with the faith that the very word that saved us is sufficient to save other souls too.

Do not take lightly the kingdom you have received because of its small beginning

Even when the number of people serving the gospel is small or the work we can do seems small, the will of the Father, who gives the kingdom of God, does not change. *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32)*. The Lord did not tell the little flock that the kingdom would be given to them only when they became a larger flock. He reassured the disciples with the fact that the Father is pleased to give them the kingdom. Therefore, our confidence must not come from the number of people gathered or from visible results, but from the word of God, who has given us grace.

The way to enter that kingdom, too, is this one gospel, which seems small. The Lord said to Nicodemus, *"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)*. This faith does not make us do nothing and only wait for results. A person who knows that there is life in a small seed does not throw it away as worthless but plants it. We, too, can let one person we meet

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today hear the gospel, and can learn the word and serve together with those who believed before us. Rather than trying to accomplish all the work alone, we must receive one another's help and examine with what heart we will carry out the work entrusted to each of us.

Let us lay down the heart that tried to evaluate the kingdom of God only by the scale and power of the world. When the mustard seed was planted, the birds that would nest in its branches were not visible, and when the leaven was put in, the sight of all the meal having risen was not yet visible. But the Lord spoke of the life and the spreading power contained in that beginning. Let us not take lightly the gospel that saved us from sin, but believe that word and preach it to other souls as well. When we rely on the Lord, who taught the kingdom of God by comparing it to a small seed, we can carry out today's work without giving up our faith because of the smallness before our eyes. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The door that is not opened by saying that one ate and drank in the presence of the Lord

< Luke 13:22–30 >

"And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, 'Lord, are there few who are saved?' And He said to them, 'Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, "Lord, Lord, open for us," and He will answer and say to you, "I do not know you, where you are from," then you will begin to say, "We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets." But He will say, "I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity." There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.'"

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From the number of the saved to one's own faith

When Jesus was going through the cities and villages, teaching, someone asked whether those who are saved are few. If it is a way on which many people go together, it is easy to feel at ease, and if it is a way on which only a few people go, one comes to want to know the reason. But rather than telling them the number of people who would be saved, the Lord made clear what the people who hear the word must do. *"Then one said to Him, 'Lord, are there few who are saved?' And He said to them, 'Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able'" (Luke 13:23–24)*. He turned a question that counted the number of other people into an exhortation about the gate through which the hearers themselves must enter.

The narrow gate is not a gate through which we can enter carelessly in whatever way we want. In another place, too, the Lord said, *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13–14)*. The wide gate is a way that people have made according to their own thoughts, so many people enter it; the gate of life is the one way that God has appointed, so few people find it. One cannot pass through that gate while putting forward one's own self-righteousness or regarding the faith of others as one's own faith. There are also people who pile up their own zeal, make a narrow gate for themselves, and try to enter through it, but a gate that man has made does not open into the kingdom of God. If you want the remission of sins, you must first acknowledge your own sins, and hear and believe how the Savior remitted those sins.

Here, striving is not a command to do much hard work and so obtain the qualification for salvation; it is a word telling us to abandon the gate of our own way and come in through the gate that the Lord has opened. The reason many seek to enter and are not able is not that God made the gate narrow, but their own desires within them. If a person is putting off the word because of the desire to be recognized in the world, because of money and honor, or because of people, the reason lies with himself. Even when following the Lord goes against our own plans, we must examine what is right and make up our minds by faith. The sense of relief that comes from following many people, or the pride of belonging to a small group, cannot take the place of this response.

The remission of sins that cannot be put off until after the door is shut

The Lord said that there is a time when people seek to enter but cannot enter. *"When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from'" (Luke 13:25)*. The authority to open and shut the door does not belong to the people standing outside but to the Master of the house. Even though there is now an opportunity to hear the word and receive salvation, we must not think that the opportunity will continue forever as we please. The Lord calls us to come in while the door is still open, and at the same time teaches the fact that after it has been shut, there is no turning back.

If we try to come to the Lord after resolving our sins by ourselves, our preparation will never be finished, no matter how

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long we wait. The narrow gate is believing that Jesus has removed all our sins. When Jesus received baptism from John, He had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. The sins we have committed while living, the sins we commit today, and all the sins we will commit from now until we die are included in that sin of the world. Bearing the sin He had accepted through His baptism, the Lord was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, receiving in our place the judgment of sin that we were to receive; and He rose again from death and saved us from sin and death. *"By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10)*. Believing only in the Cross while leaving out the baptism the Lord received is a gate that man has widened, not the narrow gate that God has opened.

Therefore, what we must present before the door of the kingdom of God is not our own merit, but a heart that believes in the salvation this Savior has completed. If we believe in the remission of sins that He accomplished through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, we have no need to go around looking for other ways to remove our remaining sins. This is because the Lord bore all sins and even received the judgment for those sins. If you do not yet believe with your heart, do not put it off until a later time when your circumstances are better, but accept the word of salvation that He lets you hear today.

Faith that cannot be replaced by saying that one ate together and heard

The people standing outside the shut door speak of their experience of having been close to the Lord. *"Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You*

taught in our streets.' But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity'" (Luke 13:26–27). They claim that they ate and drank in the Lord's presence and also heard the word He taught in their streets. But the Lord says once again that He does not know where they are from. This is because the experience of having been beside the Lord and the fact of having accepted Him as Savior are not the same. Even if people were in a place where they could hear the word, if they do not believe that word with their hearts, they cannot obtain salvation by the memory of having been close to Him.

We, too, may regard familiar hymns and worship services, and the word we have heard for a long time, as being directly the same thing as our own salvation. All these are precious opportunities to learn the gospel and to serve, but those opportunities do not take the place of faith itself. We must not put forward only how long we have been attending church while not knowing what the Lord has done. We must look back on how our sins were passed on to Jesus and why He died on the Cross, and whether we truly rely on the risen Savior. Lips that call on the Lord and a heart that believes in the Lord's work must be together.

Nor must we read this word, in which He makes the workers of iniquity depart, as meaning that salvation disappears every time a saint makes a mistake out of weakness. The Lord's warning is directed at people who, while not accepting the word of salvation, make their past record of having been close to Him the grounds of their salvation. We who have already received the remission of sins must, relying on that grace, acknowledge our wrongs and receive the guidance of the word. We must not insist that evil is right by saying that we believe in the Lord, but must want to follow the will of the One who saved us. With true faith,

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we do not demand that the Lord acknowledge our record, but entrust ourselves to His word.

The feast of the kingdom of God, where people come from the east, west, north, and south and sit down

The Lord said that there would be people who weep bitterly as they see themselves outside, even though Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the prophets are in the kingdom of God. Even if a person is in a position to boast of his ancestors, if he rejects the word of God that those ancestors believed, he cannot sit at the feast. On the contrary, even people who were far away believe that word and take part in the kingdom of God. *"They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last" (Luke 13:29–30)*. The Lord made it clear that people's judgments about distance and order can be overturned before God.

We must not change this word into the meaning that one whole nation is forsaken and another whole nation is saved. What the Lord points out is the heart that puts forward the bloodline or tradition to which a person belongs in place of faith. Everyone must believe the word of the remission of sins, and everyone needs the salvation that Jesus Christ has accomplished. Those who have heard the word for a long time must believe with thankfulness for that opportunity, and those who have heard the gospel late need not be discouraged because they are late. The life that God gives is not obtained by the order we put forward, but is received by believing in the grace of the Savior.

Let us go back to the first question. While we count how many others will be saved, we may fail to examine our own faith. What the Lord urges on us is not that we should know that number and be at ease, but that we should come in now through the door of salvation that He has opened. That door is not opened by saying that one ate and drank in the presence of the Lord. That door is open to those who believe with their hearts in Jesus Christ, who bore our sins, received judgment, and rose again. I hope that you will rise from the place where you were asking about the number of the saved and respond to the word of the Lord, who calls us today, while the door is still open. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Do not refuse the call of the Lord, who gathers us under His wings

< Luke 13:31–35 >

“On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, ‘Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.’ And He said to them, ‘Go, tell that fox, “Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.” Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!”’”

The work of the Lord, more certain than the threat of Herod

Anyone who heard that Herod wanted to kill him would first think of a way to escape. When some Pharisees came to Jesus

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and told Him to leave this place, too, it seemed outwardly as if a reason had arisen for the Lord to change His way. But Jesus did not let those words determine His work. *"And He said to them, 'Go, tell that fox, "Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected"'" (Luke 13:32)*. The Lord did not give up what He was doing out of fear of Herod, but made clear the work He was now doing and His will to finish that work.

The text does not explain what was really in the minds of the Pharisees who brought those words. Rather than making up their motives, we must see how Jesus answered when He heard the threat. The Lord said that He would continue the work of casting out demons and healing the sick. He did not stop caring for the people who were in pain because of the threat of a man in power. Herod could threaten the Lord, but he could not become the master who determined the will of salvation that the Lord would accomplish.

In the word that He would be perfected on the third day, too, we can see that the Lord was looking ahead to finishing His work. There is no need to calculate the remaining days of His travel from this short word alone, or to conclude that everything was finished three days from that day. What is important is not that the Lord walked on as if being chased without knowing the end, but the fact that He kept going, knowing the work He had to accomplish. We believe in the Savior, who came to us with such a clear will. Even when the threats of the world sound loud, the work the Lord has done does not become incomplete because of those threats.

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The reason He went to Jerusalem, where death awaited Him

When faced with the words telling Him to flee, the Lord instead spoke of the way He had to go. *"Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33)*. Jerusalem was the place that should have received the word God had sent, but the Lord revealed that the prophets had been rejected there. He was not speaking of a historical statistic that not a single prophet had died outside Jerusalem. He was pointing out the tragedy that the very city that should have received the word of God had instead been killing those who were sent. Jesus went there even though He knew the rejection and death that would come upon Him.

This journey was not something He first decided that day after hearing Herod's threat. *"Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51)*. Already from long before, the Lord had been heading toward that way. The steps of the Lord were not steps that went around seeking only safe places where He could be recognized by people. Because He had to receive the judgment for sin in our place in order to save sinners, Jesus went forward toward that work. Through the baptism He had already received from John, the Lord had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. The sins we committed in the past, the sins we commit now, and all the sins we will commit from now until we die were included in that sin of the world. The One who went toward Jerusalem was the very Son of God, who bore all those sins.

Because sin had been passed on to Him, He had to go to receive the judgment for that sin. *"He was wounded for our*

transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5). With the sins He had borne, Jesus was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, receiving in our place the judgment we should have received; and He rose again from death and saved us from sin and death. Here lies the reason He kept going the way He had to go even in the face of threats. The Lord, who bore our sins through His baptism, walked on in order to receive even the judgment for those sins Himself, and by overcoming death He gave us life. The steps of the Lord toward Jerusalem were the very way of the remission of our sins; therefore, this salvation, accomplished by the Lord's firm will, can be relied upon more surely than our uneasy feelings.

The city that did not want the love that sought to gather it

Jesus did not speak coldly to the city that would reject Him. *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Luke 13:34)*. In the word that calls the same name again and again, there is the sorrow that He had wanted to protect them, but they had not wanted it. The Lord did not hide that they had killed the prophets and stoned those who were sent, yet He made clear His heart that had wanted to gather them under His wings. It was not because they had done well that He wanted to embrace them; rather, He called them again and again in order to save them, who were in danger.

In this word two hearts face each other: the Lord wanted to gather them, and they did not want it. It was not that the grace of salvation was lacking, so that people could not return. The

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problem was the heart that held on to its own thoughts rather than the word the Lord had sent, and refused that call. We too must look back on whether, when we hear the word, we are accepting only what we want to hear. If we say that we desire the love of God but reject the very word that reveals our sins and leads us to the Savior, we are trying to fit that love to our own will.

The picture of gathering under His wings also makes us think of the fact that salvation does not come from ourselves. The One on whom we, who are weak, must rely is not ourselves made strong enough to overcome every danger, but the Lord, who received in our place the judgment for sin. Coming to Him is laying down the heart that insisted that its own plans were always right, and accepting the word. We who have already received the remission of sins must also turn back when we put our own cravings ahead of the Lord's guidance. We must not leave as it is the contradiction of believing in the Lord who protects us while still trying to reject His word alone.

Do not leave your house desolate, but accept the call of the Savior

The Lord's lament over Jerusalem also clearly reveals the result of rejection. *"See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" (Luke 13:35)*. The mere fact that they had their own houses and places did not make them safe. One cannot reject those whom God has sent and still claim His care as if it were a natural right. The Lord said that their house would be left desolate, and He connected their seeing Him again with the

confession that praises Him who comes in the name of the Lord. Before this word, we must not take the Lord's call lightly.

We must not turn this warning into words that condemn some whole nation today, or use it as a tool to explain the disasters of other people. The text shows the heart that did not want it even though the Lord called, and the result of that rejection. Therefore, we who hear the word must first examine what we are wanting. Look back on whether you are only asking Him to protect your own plans while closing your heart to the remission of sins that the Savior gives. The Lord did not come only as One who fulfills all our wishes just as they are, but came as the Savior who saves us from sin.

Jesus, who went the way of death to the end in order to save us, calls us today, too, through the word of the gospel. Believe in the Lord, who bore all sins, received judgment, and rose again, and set your heart under His wings. We too may meet opposition and fear when we serve the Lord, but all the more at such times we must examine the salvation the Lord has accomplished and fulfill the work entrusted to us. We can entrust our lives to the One who did not stop His steps toward Jerusalem even in the face of Herod's threat. Let us not follow the heart of Jerusalem, which did not want it though He wanted to gather them, but let us live gladly accepting the call of the Savior, who gathers us under His wings. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

According to whose will does the person who has passed through the narrow gate live?

< Luke 13:22–27 >

“And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, ‘Lord, are there few who are saved?’ And He said to them, ‘Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, “Lord, Lord, open for us,” and He will answer and say to you, “I do not know you, where you are from,” then you will begin to say, “We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.” But He will say, “I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.”’”

The direction of the heart that remains even after being saved

Even after believing the gospel, when faced with the choices of each day, we may look first for the way that is comfortable for us. While saying that we are thankful to the Lord, when we

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are asked what we actually want to do, it is always only our own plans that come first. Then, when someone urges us, we move a little, and when no one urges us, we stop again. When we look back on such a state, what we need is not someone who will push us harder, but to examine whom we believe and whose will we are trying to follow. A heart that believes in the Lord who saved us must be open toward the life He wants.

"Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able" (Luke 13:24). A person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit is a person who has already entered inside this narrow gate. But the gate is not something that ends once one enters it; from then on there is a way that the Lord has set. The Lord Himself was going along that way. When He spoke this word, Jesus was going through the cities and villages, teaching, as He headed toward Jerusalem, and at the end of that way there was the Cross. When we accept the word telling us to enter through the narrow gate, we must abandon the thought of obtaining salvation in our own way, and even after passing through that gate, we must lay down the stubbornness that insists that only our own will is right. This is because the One who saved us is also the One who leads our lives.

There are two kinds of people who must look back on themselves before this word. There are people who are outside the gate of salvation because they do not yet believe the gospel, and there are also people who have already been saved but do not follow the Lord's will in their lives afterward. Of course, people who have believed in the Lord also have weariness and fear, and things that do not go as they wish, so we cannot judge that someone has no faith just by seeing him hesitate for a moment. But we must distinguish between a heart that seeks help because it is weak and a heart that knows the Lord's will yet does

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not want it at all. A person who tells the Lord about his circumstances and asks for the strength to follow has already set his heart on Him. On the other hand, if a person uses whatever he hears only as a reason to keep his own plans, he is refusing the guidance of the word even while hearing the word.

The will of the Father that we must know first

When we hear that we must live according to the Lord's will, it is easy to start by making a list of things to do right away. But if we do not know what God has given us and what He wants, we may follow only our own thoughts even while moving about busily. Jesus taught about the same problem in another place, too. *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).* To do the will of the Father, we must first know that will. The will of the Father was to have His own Son bear all the sins of the people of the world and to make us His own children. This word cannot be fulfilled by gathering many outward deeds while leaving out this grace.

Because God knew that we have no ability to wash away our own sins, He sent Jesus Christ. By receiving baptism from John, the Lord had the sins of all the people of the world passed on to Him once and for all. That sin of the world is not limited to the past wrongs that we remember, but includes the sins we commit throughout our whole lives, from birth until death, and even the sins we will commit in the future. Because Jesus bore all these sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment that we sinners were to receive; and He rose again from death and gave us eternal life. Therefore, those who believe confess their lives as follows: *"I have been crucified*

with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). This faith, that we have died with the Lord and live with the Lord, is the faith we use when we walk the way after having entered.

The first place where we respond to the Lord's will lies in believing this work of salvation with our hearts. A person who has accepted the fact that the Lord has already remitted all our sins does not try to fill an empty space in salvation with his service. Because he is thankful to the One who has completely accomplished the remission of sins, he wants other souls also to hear of that salvation. Faith comes from knowing the will of the Father, and from that faith the heart to serve willingly grows. And the One who makes us follow this way is the Holy Spirit, who is within us. It is not that we follow the Lord by our own strength; rather, the Lord, who is in our hearts, leads us and makes us live according to the will of the Father.

Accept the will of the Lord as your own choice

Knowing grace does not always automatically make us choose rightly. Jesus asked the people who called on His name whether they actually followed His word. *"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46)*. If we call Him Lord, we must also acknowledge His authority to speak to us. If we welcome the promises that benefit us but push away the exhortations that make us turn our will around, the confession of our lips and the direction of our hearts part ways. The word telling us to strive is not a word telling us to be dragged along against our will, but a word telling us to want it ourselves. The Lord does not want a heart that goes only

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as far as someone pushes it from behind and would stay where it is if no one pushed.

If we, who have come inside the gate, want to know whose will we are following, we can look at the fruit of our lives. *"Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit" (Matthew 7:17)*. When the work of God goes well, we are glad even if it is not something we did ourselves; and if the saints benefit and the gospel is preached through the work entrusted to us, that is our sense of fulfillment. On the contrary, a heart that is not glad unless it is something it did itself, and that is satisfied as long as its own purpose is achieved no matter what becomes of the work of God, is the fruit of the self. When we are entrusted with some work, we easily look only at whether we can stand out, or think that the work other people do has nothing to do with us. But if we know that the gospel being preached and souls being saved is the will of the Lord, we come to examine whether that work actually benefits people rather than who is praised.

Being willing does not mean starting work according to one's own will without asking anyone. A process is needed of listening to the circumstances of those who serve together, understanding the purpose of the work one has been entrusted with, and discussing it in accordance with the word. On the other hand, we cannot call it training in faith to force someone who is exhausted and needs to rest to work. The joy of serving the Lord is not produced by coercion; it comes from knowing grace and offering one's heart to the Lord. When thoughts of the flesh rise up and block that way, we must not agree with those thoughts but drive them back by faith. Even if one handles the work little by little while receiving help, it is important to know why one is doing this work and to follow.

Today, which we are to live by faith before the door is shut

The Lord said that the time in which we must respond will not continue forever. *"When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from'" (Luke 13:25)*. The picture of people calling to the Master and trying to enter only after the door has been shut awakens the heart that puts off the word that is heard now. Those who do not yet believe must not put off receiving the remission of sins, and those who have already received grace must not give the life given to them today over to their own desires alone. While we do not reckon salvation and service at the same price, we must not separate the two as if they had nothing to do with each other.

God has accomplished salvation completely, but taking hold of it as one's own is the part of the person who believes. The Lord said, *"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 kingdom of heaven belongs to those who take hold of it and to those who believe. While believing that the Lord has remitted all sins, we must be able to acknowledge the way we have wrongly chosen and turn back. That there is a way of restoration for those who have been saved is also because His grace does not change. If you have fallen, do not stay in your own failure, but rely on the Lord who holds us up and live again the life that has been entrusted to you.

Let us look back on whether we, today too, are beginning the day with a heart that moves only when someone pushes us. If there is something you have been putting off because of your own convenience even though you know what pleases the Lord,

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lay that reason down before the word. Because we believe in the One who saved us, we too can want what He wants. I hope that we will become people who want it too when the Lord wants it, and do not want it when the Lord does not want it. We, who have entered through the narrow gate and received the grace of salvation, must now, on the way of living with the Lord as well, gladly accept His will as our own choice. ✉

According to whose will does the person who has passed through the narrow gate live?

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CHAPTER

14

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

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The meaning of His healing a sick man on the Sabbath

< Luke 14:1–6 >

“Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’ But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go. Then He answered them, saying, ‘Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?’ And they could not answer Him regarding these things.”

Jesus before the people who were watching Him closely

Even when we see the same thing, what we take from it differs depending on where our heart is. We can rejoice together that a person in difficulty receives help, or we can look for something to find fault with in the person who helped. In this scene in Luke as well, there were people looking at Jesus, but not all of them were looking with a heart to learn the grace of the Lord. As we read the word, we must look back on our own hearts to see what we are trying to see.

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"Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely" (Luke 14:1). Jesus went into that house, and the people were watching the Lord closely. They had not opened their hearts to the Lord merely because they were in the same place with Jesus. An attitude that places what the Lord does under one's own judgment and looks at it in that way keeps one from accepting the will of God that the work reveals.

At that time, before Jesus there was a man who had dropsy. The Bible does not tell us what words he spoke or why he was in that place, but only shows the fact that he was before the Lord; therefore, rather than guessing at that man's circumstances, we too must see what Jesus, who had him before Him, did. While people's gazes remained fixed on watching Jesus closely, the Lord asked whether it was lawful to heal the sick man. This question reveals the hearts of the people gathered in that place, and it also comes to us who hear the word today.

Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?

Jesus put a question to the lawyers and Pharisees who were in that place. *"And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'" (Luke 14:3)*. The Lord made them think about whether they could set aside the plight of a sick person while speaking of the Sabbath. Earlier as well, when He healed the man whose hand was withered, the Lord asked, *"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?" (Luke 6:9)*. If they were people who knew the law, they should not have stopped at judging others with their own knowledge,

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but should have examined what the work of the Lord, who heals, revealed.

They kept silent at this question. In the face of the Lord's question, they could not say that healing was not lawful, but neither did they give an answer acknowledging it as right. Knowing the Bible and being familiar with religious settings can be different from accepting the grace the Lord bestows. When the thought that one must guard one's own ideas comes first, one becomes unable even to rejoice that a person receives help right before one's eyes.

We too have a heart that regards the rules we have kept and the labors we have piled up as righteousness. Then, while judging those who do not do as we do, it is easy to forget the fact that we ourselves are also sinners who must receive grace from the Savior. The word God has given is holy, but our sins do not disappear because we know that word. Even if we have the knowledge to find out the faults of others, we have no power to remove the judgment for the sins we ourselves have committed. Only when we acknowledge that fact can we hear and believe what the Lord has done for sinners.

To a person who holds on to his own deeds as the grounds of salvation, the word that the remission of sins is given by grace may be unfamiliar. However, if we push away the word because it is unfamiliar to our own thinking, we come to place our own judgment in a higher place than the One who accomplished salvation. When the Lord asks us, what we must do is not to guard our own rightness while avoiding an answer, but to open our hearts to the will the Lord makes known to us.

The healing bestowed among the people who kept silent

Even though the people did not answer, Jesus did not leave the sick man as he was. The word says, *"But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go" (Luke 14:4)*. The Lord took him and healed him Himself. It was not that the sick man removed his illness by himself or that he was healed because the people around him gave the right answer. The work Jesus did became real help and restoration to that man.

In this scene, we see the grace of the Lord, who draws near to a person who cannot resolve his problem by his own strength. In the matter of the remission of sins as well, our hope lies not in our ability to heal ourselves but in Jesus, who came to save sinners. We inherited sin from Adam, and as we live, we commit sins with our hearts and deeds. Since the sins we have already committed do not disappear because we add religious zeal or appear more upright than others, we need the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

Jesus, the Son of God, came clothed in human flesh and received baptism from John the Baptist. Because that baptism was the event in which the Lord, who is without sin, had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all, John saw Jesus and cried out, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. Not only our past and present sins but also all the sins we will commit from now until we die are included in the sin of the world and were passed on to Jesus. It is not that the Lord bore only a part and left the rest for us to resolve with our good deeds.

Bearing the sin He had borne through His baptism, Jesus was hung on the Cross, and by shedding His blood and dying, He received in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive.

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Then He rose again from death and became the Savior who has given us life. The One we are to believe in is Jesus Christ, who bore all sins in this way and paid their price in our place. Just as the man who had dropsy could not remove his illness by his own strength, we too cannot remove our sins by our own strength; therefore, before calculating with our own deeds what is lacking in salvation, we must hear the word and believe what kind of salvation the Lord has completed.

Thinking about this event in which a man received bodily healing, we cannot say that all who believe must be healed of their illnesses right away. The text conveys the work of Jesus, who healed this man, and through that work we look to the Lord. Also, the remission of sins is not something on the level of painful feelings easing for a while, but salvation in which we are rescued from the judgment of sin. When we believe the fact that the Lord bore our sins, the heart that tried to make grounds for feeling secure through its own deeds comes to rely on the grace of the Lord.

Giving our neighbors, too, the help we give ourselves

After healing the sick man, Jesus asked again, citing what they themselves would do in their own lives. *"Then He answered them, saying, 'Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?'" (Luke 14:5)*. If their own donkey or ox fell into a pit, they would not leave it there just because it was the Sabbath. Through what they themselves acknowledged in their own lives, the Lord revealed that His bestowing healing on another person was lawful.

If we hurry to resolve urgent matters that concern ourselves but take issue with the help another person receives, we are not judging by the same standard. Jesus' question reveals the difference between the heart for oneself and the heart with which one treats one's neighbor. Since they could not answer Him regarding this, it was revealed that they could not condemn with their own thoughts the work the Lord had done. What matters to us is not exalting ourselves by blaming their silence, but examining whether the same heart is in us.

We who have received the remission of sins by the grace of the Lord must regard it as precious when other souls hear the word of salvation. We must not block the word because it differs from the ways familiar to us, or decide by people's outward appearance who is qualified to hear the gospel. This is because we too are not people who bought salvation by meeting the qualifications, but people who have received grace by believing in the righteousness the Lord has accomplished. Even when we meet a neighbor who needs help, rather than stepping back because it is not our business, we must consider that person's situation and look for a way to help.

The heart that looked only for something to find fault with, even while seeing the same thing, changes when it knows the grace of the Lord. Know yourself as a sinner standing before Jesus, and accept what the Lord has done to save us. Then you will be able to rejoice together at the grace bestowed on other souls as well. I hope that you will turn away from the gaze that watched closely the Lord, who healed the sick man on the Sabbath and let him go, believe in the Savior who has given us life, and share His mercy with your neighbors. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The best place one takes for oneself and the place to which the host raises one up

< Luke 14:7–11 >

“So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: ‘When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, “Give place to this man,” and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, “Friend, go up higher.” Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.’”

The place one has set for oneself

There are times when our hearts are uncomfortable when we see someone who began a life of faith later than we did being asked for his opinion first or being entrusted with work.

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Outwardly we say nothing, but inwardly we count the years we have labored. It is because we think there is a place that should be prepared separately for us. Today's word makes us, who have been counting how people treat us, look back on whether we are setting our own place before God as well on the same grounds.

Jesus saw the people invited to the meal choosing where to sit and spoke a parable. It says, *"So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them" (Luke 14:7)*. And the guest at the wedding feast whom He went on to speak of is a person who sits in a high place even before the host assigns him a place. Because sitting above the other guests has become more important to him than the grace of having been invited to the feast, he decides for himself the treatment he ought to receive and does not even consider the fact that someone more honorable may come.

We too can take this attitude before God. The word the Lord spoke about the time when one is invited does not stop at a story of a house holding a feast; it is a word that asks with what heart we come forward when God has called us before the gospel. If we put forward the knowledge we have accumulated over a long time and the work we have held and regard ourselves as already sufficient even before hearing the word, that is precisely the heart that sits in the best place. Learning the Bible and serving faithfully are precious, but that labor cannot wash away the sin of our own hearts; nevertheless, if we regard ourselves as right, even in the place where we hear the word of the Lord, who saves us from sin, we put forward only the demand that we be recognized.

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The misconception exposed before the host's judgment

The host comes up to the guest who had sat in the best place by his own judgment and speaks to him. *"He who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place" (Luke 14:9)*. Although that man was sitting in a high place, there had been no word from the host entrusting that place to him, so his own high estimation of himself and the host's recognition were different from the beginning. The reason he moves to the lowest place with shame is that the host did not recognize the place he had taken by trusting his own judgment. It is the same before God. If someone, though there is sin in his heart, believed that he was a decent person and only came to know when standing before the judgment seat that the place was not his, there would be nothing more shameful and grievous than that.

Before this word, what we must examine is not the pride of others but our own faith. If we compare ourselves with people and find points in which we are better than others, our hearts may feel secure for a while, but God does not judge us only by the few good deeds we pick out and show Him. Before God, who knows even our hidden cravings and hatred, we cannot escape the judgment of sin by claiming that we are better than others; therefore, as long as a person who needs the remission of sins insists that he is righteous, he cannot rely on the Savior.

Therefore, humbling our hearts is not calling ourselves worthless and tormenting ourselves. It is abandoning the attitude of defending ourselves by picking out points in which we are better than others, and acknowledging as it truly is our own state that God reveals through the word. Even if we seem all right by our own judgment, when sin is revealed before the word, we

must accept that word. When we know that we have no ability to resolve our own sins, we come to seek the salvation of the Lord with the same mouth that demanded that our place be kept. We must know that rejecting grace because of the shame of admitting our wrongs is the greater loss.

In the place where we hear the word of the Lord, we must also lay down the worry about how we will look to others. If we cannot ask about what we do not know and hide it even when there is something wrong in our faith, then while guarding our outward appearance, we fail to receive the help we actually need. God reveals our sins not to make us remain in our own righteousness, but to make us hear and believe how the Savior bore the sins we cannot resolve ourselves. Therefore, becoming honest before the word is not a path of remaining in despair but a path of seeking the grace of the Lord.

The grace of the Lord, who calls us up higher

The Lord tells what a person who has been invited should do. *"But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you" (Luke 14:10)*. The words that exalt him do not come out of his own mouth but from the one who invited him, and he can sit in that place because the host calls him up. The lowest place is the place of a person who knows his own condition before God as it truly is. The Lord comes and calls the person who sits in that place, the place where he acknowledges that he has sin and cannot but receive judgment, to go up higher. When we know this difference, we do not make

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even the act of sitting in a low place a means of exalting ourselves, but first consider the will of the One who invited us.

How did the Lord call up the person sitting in the lowest place? The One who is God humbled Himself and came in the body of a man, and when He received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. Because all the sins of our whole lives—the sins we committed in the past, our present sins, and even the sins we will commit in the future—were passed on to Jesus through that baptism, the Lord bore those sins, was hung on the Cross, and by shedding His blood and dying, received in our place the judgment we were to receive; and He rose again from death and opened for us the way of new life. The Bible speaks of this, saying, *"He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8)*. The Lord, who said that he who exalts himself will be humbled, first went down to the lowest place and raised us up.

We became children of God not because we had a more humble character than others, but because we accepted the salvation of the Lord, who, calling us friends, told us who were sitting in the lowest place to go up higher. The heart that lays down its own righteousness is not a merit that pays the price of salvation but a heart that receives the grace He has already accomplished. Therefore, we who have now received the remission of sins have no need to gather more evidence to exalt ourselves, and the fact that the Lord has accepted us becomes the firm foundation of our faith.

Serving together in the place received by grace

Jesus concludes the meaning of the parable in a word. *"For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11)*. This word is not a tip for gaining a good evaluation from people right away, but a word telling us to lay down before God the heart that tries to exalt itself. Because even after we are saved, a heart that puts forward our own labor and tries to stand above others can arise, we must keep even now, just as it was, the heart we had when we first came before the gospel, and continually look back on the grace we have received. Peter also urged, *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6)*. The One who exalts is the Lord; it is not that we are exalted because we try to exalt ourselves.

When we are shown through the word what we need to learn, let us not close our ears on the grounds that we have believed for a long time. Even if it is a word we already know, we must examine our own judgments and lives in the light of that word. Let us also not push away the help of others when we need it because of our own pride. Since the grounds on which the Lord made us His children are not perfect knowledge or ability, the grace we have received does not become smaller even if we acknowledge that we need to learn. Rather, because we know that we are people who live by grace, we can learn what we lack and carry out the work entrusted to us more faithfully.

When we serve together, too, if we look only at who has taken a more conspicuous position, our thankfulness disappears. Whatever the work we are entrusted with now, if the word is preached through that work and someone receives help, that labor has a clear meaning; therefore, we must respect the responsibilities entrusted to others and must not take lightly the

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work entrusted to ourselves either. If the people the Lord has called try to be exalted by pushing one another away, they are forgetting the grace that called us.

The hurt feelings we looked back on at the beginning can also be dealt with here. When we feel that no one recognizes our labor, let us first remember with what grace the Lord accepted us. If we entrust our own evaluation to the Lord, who rescued us from sin and made us His children, we can rejoice together when we see others being recognized. Let us not set a high place for ourselves and try to keep it, but rely on the Lord, who called us up from the lowest place, and serve with thankfulness in the place now entrusted to us. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Humble your heart and become one who finds favor with the Lord

< Luke 14:7–11 >

“So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: ‘When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, “Give place to this man,” and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, “Friend, go up higher.” Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.’”

The seats at the wedding feast

The Lord spoke using the matter of being invited to a wedding feast so that anyone could easily understand. When a host invites guests to a feast, he prepares in advance the seats where the guests will sit. He sets apart seats for the village elders and high-ranking people to sit in, prepares seats for the ordinary

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villagers to sit in, and next also prepares seats for the poor. In this way, at a feast there are seats prepared to be given to the guests.

When we are invited to a wedding, we go to congratulate the couple, greet people, give gifts, watch the wedding ceremony, clap our hands, and bless them in our hearts. But at that time, it says that you must not stride right up on your own and sit in the seats that have been prepared for the high-ranking people. Why is that? It means that if you are sitting there and the people who are truly respected in that village arrive, the host, while leading them to those seats, will see that the wrong person is sitting there and say, "Excuse me, please get up and go over there," and how humiliating that would be! The Lord spoke to us in very plain words: *"He who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place" (Luke 14:9)*.

So the Lord said, *"When you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place" (Luke 14:10)*. The lowest place is the very last seat, the seat where the lowest people come and sit. It says that if you go and sit there, the host will come and lead you, saying, "Why are you sitting here? This place was prepared for those people, so please get up and go sit in the place where the village elders gather." How embarrassing it would be to go ahead and sit in the very highest seat of honor and then be driven out! In the same way, when we are invited by the Lord, we must not exalt our hearts and sit in a high place. The Lord is saying that we must come down from the high place, go and sit in a low place, and then go up when the Lord says to us, *"Friend, go up higher" (Luke 14:10)*.

Do not exalt your heart when faced with the invitation of the gospel

This is the word of God and the word Jesus spoke, so we must think about this word by putting it in other terms. It means that when God invited us—that is, when the church invited us to believe in Jesus, when it invited us to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit—the attitude of our hearts must not be high. The Lord said, *"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11)*.

What does this mean? It means that when we have been invited to believe in Jesus, our hearts must not be in a high place. Yet there are people who think, "I already believe in Jesus. I know Jesus. I am already saved. There is not much in me to correct. I hardly commit any sins either. I am a decent person. If I compare myself with the many people here, I belong among the quite decent people." When some people are invited to come to a meeting of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and are given a seat, they sit there with their hearts exalted, thinking, "I am a deacon. I am a pastor's spouse. I am an evangelist. I have believed in Jesus for over twenty years." It says that this must not be. When we are invited before the Lord and come and hear the word, we must lower the place of our hearts.

Dear fellow believers, when we really look into it, what are our hearts like? Our ancestors became sinners by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and those who had become sinners bore descendants, and you and I are ones among those descendants. We became sinners as a matter of course and became people bound for hell as a matter of course, so what is there for us to exalt our hearts about?

"Though I have now come before the Lord, I am a person bound for hell. I am a person bound for hell because I have sin.

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There is no such thing as doing well or doing poorly, being outstanding or being worthless. I do not know how it is before people, but standing before the Lord, I am one who commits many sins, and even in the light of the word of God, I am one of those who have come and are sitting before the gate of hell." We must know this fact. It says that this is why we must humble our hearts.

At such a time, the Lord preaches the word of salvation for us. The word is this: Jesus bore all our sins through the baptism He received from John and received the full judgment for those sins on the Cross. Jesus, who shed His blood and died as the price of those sins, rose again from death and gave us new life. When He tells us that He loved us in this way and removed our sins in this way, this word enters the heart of the person who has humbled his heart and saves him, and not only saves him but also makes him a child of God and establishes him as a worker of God. Just as the word says, *"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:13)*, the Lord saves us from the place of being sinners, transfers us into the kingdom of the Son of God, and even makes us workers there. The Lord is telling us that we must become such people.

Even if we have been in the church for a long time, we can never exalt our hearts before the Lord. We now say that we have believed and become children of God, but where were we bound to go by our origin? Were we not ones bound for hell because we had sin? Are we ones who keep the law of God well? Are we flawless people as we live on this earth? We are not such people. Even when we live through today and quietly think it over, there are things we have done well and things we have done poorly. So whether we are invited before the Lord and come forward to worship, or are in the very place of serving the Lord, whether

when we first believe in Jesus or after we have believed, there is nothing for us to exalt our hearts about. We can only give thanks before the Lord, who has saved people like us and uses people like us.

It is not the virtue of humility but the word of salvation

Moreover, did we know the gospel of the water and the Spirit from the beginning when we believed in Jesus? Those who know the gospel of the water and the Spirit are truly a tiny minority among those who believe in Jesus on this earth. As we preach the gospel in many countries, we meet many people who do not yet know the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even with the Bible open before them, there is no one who properly knows what this Bible is saying. People often simply say that a person must become humble, but when we open this word and look at it, this is not a talk about becoming humble. The Lord spoke the very core. It means that if one puts forward his own righteousness and rejects the word of salvation, he cannot escape judgment, but the person who acknowledges his sin and believes in the Lord's salvation is raised up as a child of God and a worker. Therefore, we must think in the Spirit about this word that the Lord spoke.

This is not talking about human duty, courtesy, humility, and virtue. The Lord tells us to humble our hearts if we want to go to heaven. He says that you are a person bound for hell, yet He loved you and saved you in this way, and if you exalt your heart and say, "I already believe in Jesus. I have sin, but I am a person who has received salvation," you will go to hell; so you must not exalt your heart on your own, but look at what you are. He is

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telling us that if we look at what we are, we could not exalt our hearts, and that we must humble our hearts.

If, even after encountering the gospel of the water and the Spirit, someone puts forward only his pastoral career and his own experience and rejects that word of salvation, he cannot escape the judgment for sin by that career. Those who rely on themselves and reject salvation receive judgment, but those who acknowledge their own sins and believe in the Lord's salvation go to heaven.

Dear fellow believers, when we first believed in Jesus, did we believe knowing the fact that we were going to hell? How many people would have believed knowing that? It is difficult to know that from the beginning. If one met a proper evangelist, he might know that, but usually people say that they committed this sin and that sin, and that there is sin engraved in their hearts, and then they say that they believed in Jesus and were saved. As time passes after believing in Jesus, they come to realize more deeply, "I was originally one who was to be judged, but the Lord saved me." In fact, we are not people who knew all about what kind of people we were from the very moment we heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit and then believed. I know that well. That is why I keep preaching this word to you steadily. As the years pass, one comes to know, "I am such a person, yet the Lord saved me." That is normal faith. If we say that we are people bound for hell who have nonetheless received salvation, there is nothing for us to exalt our hearts about when we do the work of God.

The workers of God are coworkers with one another

Even while working with the brothers, I cannot exalt my heart and shout, as if I were some great person, or act that way. Why is that? Because they are workers of God. We must not treat the workers of God carelessly. I ask their opinions very courteously. I ask, “The purpose of this work is this; how would it be best to do it?” and have them put forward all their own opinions, and I also tell them my opinion. As we talk together in this way, if they say, “Pastor, I think it would be good to do this in this way,” I listen, and even if there was something I wanted to do, if it is a better idea than mine, I say, “Yes, your idea is much better. It would be good to do it that way. Only, the purpose is this, so let us do it in keeping with that,” and we carry out that work. Because our sisters too are workers of God, I cannot point fingers at them, curse them, hate them, or act that way. Nor can I go up front, put on airs, and say, “If there is anything tasty, bring it to me.” We eat just the same. This is because each of them is a worker of God.

I am not the only worker of God. If you ask where such a heart came from, it is because I was one bound for hell, but the Lord met me through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, saved me, and gave me faith, so that I obtained salvation through faith. It is so for me, and it is so for them. They too do the work of God, so they are workers of God, and I too do the work of God, so I am a worker. We are fellow coworkers who join our wills and unite to accomplish the will of God. That is why exalting my heart is something I cannot do. Whether the other person has learned much or little, all are precious workers of God. So, when I do any work, I work with the attitude of heart that God is present before me. In fact, God is Spirit, so He is

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present everywhere in the whole world. He is present in our hearts and present here too.

So, salvation comes when we humble our hearts. We do not need to humble ourselves deliberately. When we look at the word of God, it says, *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*. Then we must understand it as, "Ah, if I have sin, I am a person who goes to hell"; we must not understand it as saying that the wages of sin is merely the death of the body and that everything ends once our life dies. It means entering hell. Our Lord is the One who speaks the word about the world to come by citing stories of this present world. We must understand it in that way and believe it in that way. Only then can we become children of God, become workers of God, be exalted by God, do the precious work of God, and serve the Lord in the place of precious workers who unite with fellow workers in one heart and work together. This word is now speaking about exactly that.

Salvation comes to those who tremble before the word

Through diseases and natural disasters, what is the Lord accomplishing? He is harvesting at the end. When ears of grain are cut, gathered, and threshed, the kernels fall off and the grain piles up high in front. When the harvested grain is tossed in the wind, the wheat and the chaff are separated. Then the chaff flies far away in the wind and the kernels settle right below. The work the Lord intends to do through such diseases and natural disasters is to sort out the kernels after the gospel has been fully spread. He is showing who is chaff. Those who do not believe the word of God in this way now are, in fact, chaff, no matter how many of them there are in the church. Not everyone who

believes in Jesus is saved; as to how many kernels there will be in God's sight, when the number that is fitting in God's sight is filled, He will stop.

It is true that the Lord loves all people and saved all people from sin, but faith does not belong to all people. Faith belongs to those who accept God and the word of God and tremble because of that word. It does not belong to those who say before the word of God, "If I go to hell, so be it." The kingdom of heaven does not belong to such people. If one does not know the word of God, then he simply does not know it, but once he has heard it, he responds to the word *"the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)* by saying, "Then I am going to hell because I have sin," and he trembles violently even though no one said anything to him. He does not tremble deliberately. "If I am going to hell, what is the use of living, what is the use of earning money, what is the use of marrying and living well, what is the use of having children? God tells me that I am going to hell, and I must receive salvation, but I have no way of knowing." God goes to those who tremble because of the word in this way and counsels them. He teaches them through this truth that He has saved them in this way with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That is when one obtains salvation.

What the word of God says is that those who exalt their hearts when invited go to hell, and that to those who humble their hearts when invited, saying, "God, I am a sinner. I am one bound for hell," God gives the gospel of salvation, moves them from their place, and puts them in the place of the people of God and the workers of God.

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People who belong to the genealogy of Christ

You and I, who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, have entered into the genealogy of Christ. The Gospel of Matthew begins with *"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1)*, and the names of the ancestors of faith of old appear one after another as a genealogy. Through faith, I too have entered that genealogy. I am a person who belongs to the genealogy of Christ, not a person who belongs to the world. I do not know how the people of the world may see me, but I am a person who belongs to the genealogy of Christ. In the world, people consider it a great thing to belong to the genealogy of a famous family, but, dear fellow believers, you and I, who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, are people who belong to the genealogy of Jesus Christ. That is truly a great thing.

So when the word of God is preached and believed, we know what this word is saying. Dear fellow believers, those who know what this word is saying when they open the Bible are only those who have been born again. Only those who have been born again through the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit know this; those who have not been born again do not truly know, even though they seem to themselves to know something.

When is a person ashamed? It is when he thought that he had received the remission of sins—when, though he had sin in his heart, he thought that he had received the remission of sins and believed so, and then he dies and stands before God with sin in him; if there is sin, it is hell without exception. That means he did not meet the Lord on this earth. It means he is one who did not meet the Lord, who removed all our sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Then he becomes one who is put to shame when he goes before the Lord. When the Lord says, "You

have sin. Then why are you trying to go to heaven?" he will say, "I believe in You, Lord. How faithful I have been to You, Lord! I am fully confident that I will go to heaven," but the Lord makes him stand in the line of those going to hell. He was sure that he would go to heaven, but he cannot go to heaven and comes to go to hell instead, so how ashamed, embarrassed, indignant, and grieved his heart will be then!

The Lord loves those in whom there is no deceit

Dear fellow believers, our hearts must be honest before the Lord. Whom does the Lord love most? When we look at the New Testament, when Jesus was gathering His disciples, Philip told Nathanael to come and see and brought him along. When Jesus saw Nathanael coming, He said, *"Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" (John 1:47)*. It means that Nathanael had no deceit in his heart and was one who truly waited for the Messiah, held on to the word of God, and because of that word both trembled with fear and rejoiced. When Nathanael said, *"How do You know me?" (John 1:48)*, Jesus said, *"Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you" (John 1:48)*. Jesus knew the center of that man's heart and said that he had waited for Him under the fig tree, that he was one who waited for the Lord's kingdom.

The flowers of the fig do not appear on the outside but bloom inside a round structure that looks like a fruit. A round structure that looks like a fruit forms on the branch, and small flowers bloom on the inside of it. The fig too first blooms and the fruit develops from that flower, but because the flowers are hidden inside, they are not visible from the outside. The Lord's kingdom also is not fully shown. Just as one must open up a fig to see

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what is inside, when the number of the people the Lord will take to heaven is filled, He will show it then. Then He will say, “You are My people. You are not My people.”

The Lord knows our hearts well. He does not speak by looking at whether a person has learned much or little or what his character is like. He looks at whether there is deceit in his heart or not. The Lord hates most those who deceive before the Lord, pretending to know when they do not know and pretending not to know when they know. The Lord loves those who say they do not know when they do not know and say they know when they know, who say they believe when they believe and say they are afraid when they are afraid. Such a person is one in whose heart there is no deceit.

While we live on this earth, we are not ashamed. But think about it, even tonight: Did you humble your heart when you believed in the Lord, or did you believe with your heart exalted? If you believed with your heart exalted, it is still not right even now. Your heart must truly be lowered. “I am a person going to hell. Lord, I am one who absolutely needs You. I am one who absolutely needs the salvation You have given. If You save me, I am saved, and if You do not save me, I am a person going to hell.” Those who have such an aching heart, a heart that clings absolutely to the Lord, receive salvation. The Lord goes to such people and saves them. How does He save them? He saves them through those who preach the word of God. Saying that one believes in Jesus is not itself salvation. Knowing only as knowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, the only begotten Son, and saved mankind from sin does not bring salvation. The Lord saves those who accept and believe the words He spoke, those who both tremble with fear because of that word and rejoice because they believe it.

So we must not act like those who exalt their hearts when invited. If you could not do so in the past, I hope that even now, even tonight, you will stand before God yourself, humble your heart, think about what the word of God has said to you, hold on to that word, and make this an evening of believing anew. I hope that your days ahead will be like that, and that you and I will become people who are saved.

Just as water flows to low places

The most dangerous ones are those who are inside the church. Why is that? Those who are outside can still be invited. They can be asked to come and attend a meeting. But those inside the church have already come and always hear the word, yet because they have exalted their hearts, salvation does not come upon them unless they become low. It means that just as water flows to low places, the salvation the Lord has given comes only to those who have humbled their hearts, and if one keeps his heart exalted, the water flows past beneath him. Then there is no salvation. That is a very dangerous thing. If someone, though in the church, exalts his heart and does not receive this salvation, that person can only go to hell. So we must humble our hearts. We must think in the present tense about how we believed in the past. We must become people who humble our hearts.

This word has such content, so it is so for me and it is so for you. And the Lord dislikes it, not only when we receive salvation but at any time, when we exalt our hearts, saying, “I am this much of a person.” Though He is God, the Lord humbled His heart and became a man in order to be at our eye level, and saved us, and even after saving us, He is the One who does not immediately punish us just because we have done wrong. Yet if

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we, who are insignificant, exalt our hearts, look down on people as if we were great persons, and treat workers carelessly, that is not what the Lord wants.

What the Lord wants is that we humble our hearts to be saved and also do not exalt our hearts when we live a life of faith. If we serve God, we must say, "This person too is a worker of God and my coworker," and if he does not know something, we help him, and we also receive help from one another; we must not become people who lord it over him. We must become people who cooperate together and serve the Lord; one who says, "You must always serve me," is not a person who has humbled his heart. That person is greatly mistaken, and that is something God dislikes. By all means, let us become people who humble our hearts and so become those who are regarded with favor by the Lord. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Set a table for neighbors from whom you cannot hope for anything in return

< Luke 14:12–14 >

“Then He also said to him who invited Him, ‘When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.’”

The heart that waits for hospitality to come back

There are times when, after we have sincerely entertained someone, we feel hurt if there is no return of courtesy at all even after some time has passed. At first we thought we had given gladly, but in one corner of our hearts we had been waiting for the hospitality we would receive next. When that expectation grows, we come to look first for people who can do something for us rather than for people who need help. Today Jesus, speaking to the man who had set the table, makes us look back on whom we entertain and with what heart.

The Lord spoke to the man who had invited Him. “*Then He*

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also said to him who invited Him, 'When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid'" (Luke 14:12). What the Lord warned against is the point that the other person can invite you back and repay you. It is a custom among people that if one is entertained once, one entertains once in return; but once one has been repaid in this way, the two end up even, and nothing remains of what was given. If, even at a place where food is shared, we calculate each other's benefit, giving ends up becoming a way of preparing what will come back to oneself.

We must not take this to mean that the joy of eating with friends or family is itself a sin. The Lord exposes the heart that confines the range of hospitality only to people who are familiar and able to repay. If we go to someone because he is a person who will benefit us, and turn away from someone because he is a person who can give nothing back, then the standard of our help is not our neighbor's need but our own benefit. The Lord's word calls us to change that standard.

Because we spent money on food and put in time and effort to entertain someone, the expectation that the other person will do as much for us easily arises in our hearts. But if, after giving, we put the other person under a debt of the heart, he remains under a burden even after receiving help. There is no need to deny the joy of hearing words of thanks or of forming a close relationship, but we must not demand it as the price for having helped. We must examine whether we can willingly reach out our hands even to those who have no means to repay us.

Inviting to the table neighbors who have no ability to repay

Jesus spoke specifically of the people who should be invited. *"But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind" (Luke 14:13)*. These were people who had no means of repaying the host by holding the same feast, yet the Lord did not tell him to hand them what was left over and be done with it, but told him to invite them to the feast. When we receive such a person as a guest who joyfully enjoys the food at the same place as we do, we also lay down the heart that had kept him at a distance because of his poverty.

We sometimes treat others as lower than ourselves on the grounds that we are giving them help. We talk in front of many people about how difficult their circumstances are, or make them unable to refuse even a small request. But the neighbors the Lord told us to invite are not tools for displaying our good deeds. We must look into that person's needs and take care that he can receive hospitality comfortably. It fits the meaning of the text not to keep reminding him of the help we gave, and to let him receive what he needs without worrying that he must give something back to us.

Also, we must not judge a person's faith solely by the fact that he is poor or that his body is impaired. Wealth or the state of one's health does not take the place of the remission of sins, nor is it evidence that one has more sins than other people. Jesus makes us look back on the people who are pushed out of hospitality for the reason that they cannot repay. The very circumstances we used to calculate are, before the Lord, no reason to turn away from him.

This word also makes us examine our hearts when we preach the gospel. If we look for people only by seeing whether they

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have abilities and wealth that might be helpful to the church, we may pass by the very neighbors who want to hear the word of salvation. We must preach the remission of sins that the Lord has granted even to those who stand far off by themselves because they have nothing to put forward. Where is the place from which the material things and labor we spend will not come back to us? Because no one can repay the material things spent so that souls may hear the word of salvation, spending for the gospel is precisely the feast given to those who have nothing with which to repay. In both helping with material things and sharing the word of salvation, we must think first of the grace that person needs rather than of the benefit that will come back to us.

The person who remembers the mercy received freely

Where does the heart that gives without hoping to receive something back from others grow? We must first look back on what we paid back to God in order to receive salvation. It is not that we, who had no ability to remove sin, offered God enough good deeds and paid the price of salvation. A person who had nothing with which to repay before God, a person who had not a single bit of righteousness to offer—this was precisely us. To such as us, God first sent the Savior.

At the Jordan River, when John declined 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)*, and received baptism. Through that baptism all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus once and for all. Because He thus bore all the sins of our whole lives—the sins we committed in the past, the sins we

commit now, and even the sins we will commit in the future—the Lord, bearing those sins, was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died, thereby receiving in our place the judgment for sin that we should have received, and He rose again from death and gave us eternal life. It is by believing in Jesus, who accomplished this work, that we obtain the remission of sins.

In the salvation we have received in this way, there remains no price of sin for us to pay further. We, who had nothing with which to repay God, have sat down at the feast freely. Therefore, the good deeds we now do also cannot become a means of filling up a price of salvation that is still lacking. Because we know the mercy of the Lord, who freely received us, we come to look at what the other person needs now rather than weighing whether he has the ability to repay. Earlier, Jesus also told His disciples, *"Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36)*. The basis of the love we give lies in the Father, who first showed mercy.

When we remember the grace we have received, we cannot harbor the thought that we are better than the person receiving help. Because before God we too are people who have received grace whose price we cannot repay, we cannot stand above anyone just because we are now in a position to help someone. Also, while preaching the gospel, we must not try to exchange material help for faith. The remission of sins was accomplished by the Lord, and hearing and believing that truth is not a return for a gift received. While giving needed help sincerely and also preaching the word of salvation clearly, we must not bind the other person as someone indebted to us.

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The repayment to be received at the resurrection of the just

The Lord promised that inviting neighbors who cannot repay is not in vain. *"And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:14)*. This is a word that moves our eyes from the return we would receive right away to the resurrection of the just, because even if people cannot repay, the Lord does not forget the service given in accordance with grace.

We must not turn this promise into the meaning that if we help now, we will soon gain more wealth. Since the time the Lord spoke of is the time of the resurrection of the just, we cannot judge the results of service only by the wealth we gain now or by people's recognition. We, who have received the remission of sins and been justified, have eternal life, which we will enjoy with the Lord when even our bodies are changed, and the Lord has promised repayment also for the service done while looking to that kingdom. Therefore, we must not pile up a quantity of good deeds in order to obtain salvation, but must do good relying on the life we have already received and on the Lord's promise.

Just because there is no immediate return does not mean that everything we gave has disappeared. The neighbor who was helped obtained what he needed, and we shared with him according to the Lord's will. Since the Lord has promised to remember that sharing, even if we receive no return at all from people, the meaning of what we gave by faith does not disappear. If we believe this fact, there is no reason to remain bound to the heart that felt hurt because there was no return. Before counting what the other person has done for us, let us remember the life the Lord has given us freely. Let us give our time and our table

so that even neighbors who cannot prepare a return can sit comfortably, and let us look to the Lord, who will repay on the day of the resurrection. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Preach the gospel to the poor in spirit

< Luke 14:12–24 >

"Then He also said to him who invited Him, 'When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.' Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, 'Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!' Then He said to him, 'A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, "Come, for all things are now ready." But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused." And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused." Still another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind." And the servant said, "Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is

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room." Then the master said to the servant, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper."'"

Invite those who have nothing with which to repay

In this word, our Lord said, *"Then He also said to him who invited Him, 'When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just'" (Luke 14:12–14)*.

The kingdom of our Lord is not an earthly kingdom. And the Lord's teaching is not an earthly teaching either. It is the teaching of the Lord's kingdom. To give a human and worldly example here on earth, it has become a custom that if we have been invited once and entertained once, we entertain once in return. But our Lord told us not to give while hoping to receive something back. He said, *"Lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid" (Luke 14:12)*. He said to bring and invite such people in the world who have absolutely nothing with which to repay and to give them everything prepared for the feast. He said that only then, when we the righteous have our bodies changed and rise again, will God repay us the righteous at that time.

He has told us well about such matters as our inviting souls and preaching the gospel, and to whom we should preach the gospel. The gist of the Lord's word is that we must not give while calculating what we will receive back, whether physically or spiritually. He said to give and share with people who have

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absolutely nothing with which to repay. When we preach the gospel and when we give something to people, what the Lord wants is that we not do it for a person who, if we give to him, can repay us in return. It means that giving gifts to rich people and giving food and meat to people who have plenty to eat is not of much benefit. It means that giving something to a person who has something with which to repay, while hoping for something oneself and following the custom of the world, is nothing special. Even if we give an expensive gift to people who are well off, would they be short of money?

The bread of heaven is for those who have set their hearts on heaven

It means that in the kingdom of God, the teaching our Lord spoke of is not that. It is saying to give even food to those who truly have nothing with which to repay. For example, even in care facilities for the elderly, the circumstances of a person who receives sufficient support from his family and of a person who does not are different. If we help people of the former kind, it is nothing. Apart from such people, if you go there, there are people who truly have no children and cannot live unless they receive help. There are people who have no choice but to die if nothing is given to them by the state. It means that if we are to help physically, we should help such people and help those who have nothing with which to repay. And it means that, spiritually as well, when we give the bread of heaven, the food of the life of salvation, we must not give it to those whose hearts are on this world. It means that we should give this gospel to people whose hearts are truly on the kingdom of heaven, people who, though living on earth, have set the hope of their hearts on the kingdom

of heaven, people who are truly poor and thirsty in spirit, people who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Our Lord said here, *"A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses" (Luke 14:16–18)*. One said he could not come because he had bought a field; another said he could not come because he had bought five yoke of oxen and was going to test them; another said he could not come because he had married and was busy—they all declined in this way. Our Lord spoke again, saying, *"Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind" (Luke 14:21)*. And because seats were still empty even after that, He said, *"Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled" (Luke 14:23)*. These hedges refer to people in the outlying areas beyond the original city. So they refer not to people who live in the central part, but to people in the outlying areas, whose living conditions are difficult. He said to go to such people and preach the gospel. This does not mean to preach the gospel to people in some outlying area; it means: do not preach to people whose hearts are wholly attached to this world, but, wherever they may live, seek out people who, though truly living on this earth, have set their hearts on the kingdom of God, people whose hearts are on the kingdom of heaven, and preach the gospel to them—go out and seek such people. That is what He said.

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It does not get through to those whose hearts are attached to the world

Dear fellow believers, the reason we fail when we preach the gospel is this: whether this person's heart is attached to the world, whether he is satisfied with what is in the world, envies the things of the world, likes and loves the things of the world, and is filled with such a heart—to such a person, to a person whose field of the heart is only on this earth, the word of God does not get through even if we preach it. He may accept the gospel, but if what is on this earth is truly everything to him and his all, then this word of truth, the kingdom of God, this gospel of the salvation of life is of little use. It means that later he spits it out again and ends up trampling it into the ground. Truly, many people are living in this world, but there are people who, although they live in this world and take an interest in everything and act the same way as everyone else, are not like that in their hearts. Such people—people whose hearts truly have hope not in the world but in another kingdom, a perfect kingdom, the kingdom of God, in righteous things, people who live the present while looking to the life to come—are the people to whom we must preach the word, and we must go out seeking such people. Not people whose hearts have been completely taken by the world, but people who have truly tried this and that in the world—drinking, singing, dancing, spending money, and doing all sorts of things—yet have not truly found satisfaction in their hearts, people who have no satisfaction: we must seek out such people and preach the gospel to them.

We evangelists must keep in mind this word that our Lord teaches when we preach the gospel. Our Lord said not to give to those who have something with which to repay. He said that when we preach the gospel, we should bring in people such as

these: the poor in spirit, those who seek the kingdom of God, those who truly find no satisfaction in the world, those who are suffering, the blind, and the lame. It means that we must seek out such people—people who are truly wounded in this world and find no satisfaction in the world—and preach the gospel to them, and also invite such people, nurture such people, and give to such people both spiritually and physically. It means that we must give to such people. What use is it to give to people who are simply full and comfortable in this world and have no interest in the kingdom of God? Even if we give, what would they do with it? The word says not to *"cast your pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6)*. Even if you throw pearls to pigs, at first they say, "Wow, it sparkles," and play with them, but then they pour excrement on them and throw them into a slop bucket. It means that a person who is satisfied only with the things of the flesh does not consider that he needs the gospel. It means that we must not give the gospel to such a person. Whether this person truly needs the gospel or not—we must preach the gospel to people such as these: people who surely need the gospel, the poor, people who have wounds in their hearts, people who are poor in spirit and find no satisfaction even in everything on this earth. We must go out to seek such people. And we must compel them to come in, fill the feast of God, within the Church of God, with them, and then nurture them and take care of them. This word our Lord spoke means that if we give to people who truly have nothing with which to repay, our Lord will repay us when the righteous rise again. It means that we will be repaid. It means that we receive a reward through the Lord. We must know whom we are to evangelize, and also for what purpose we must live in this world. Jesus, who first showed grace to us who had nothing with which to repay, had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John,

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and bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and received the judgment in our place. Because we receive the remission of sins if we believe in this salvation given by Jesus, who rose again from death, we preach this grace to those who are poor in spirit.

Two kinds of people the evangelist must seek

Our hearts must be spiritual, and our hearts must not be soaked in this world. Even though we are people who have the flesh, we must become people who truly set our hearts on the kingdom of God, go out to seek such souls, and try to obtain satisfaction not from the things of this earth but from the things of God. Trying to obtain satisfaction from the things of the earth is foolish, and there is no satisfaction in it either. How could there be satisfaction? Dear fellow believers, how many people there are for us to evangelize! In practice, it seems that it would be very good if we brought upright people and preached the gospel to them, and it would be good because our reputation would not be damaged either, but it means that this is not what the Lord wants. What the Lord wants is this: He said to preach the gospel to people who are truly poor in spirit and, though living on this earth, set their hearts on the kingdom of God. Dear fellow believers, what kind of work do you and I like to do? When we invite people, too, do we not have a heart that welcomes only people who look good to show off outwardly to others and shuns those who need help? We must know the Lord's heart and must carry out the master's will. What the master said is very important. We must think about how many people there truly are for us to work for. We must also find again the people we are to evangelize and preach to them again. What

happens when we give to people who are well off on this earth? A person who is satisfied with the things of the world sometimes regards the gospel preached to him as insignificant and rejects it. Usually, when people have no material things, their hearts also become poor. The Bible spoke about the blind, the lame, and such, but it is not speaking about physical things. It means that if one has nothing in this world, or little, one's heart also becomes poor to that extent. There are also those who are not like that, but generally it is so. There are also people who are terribly poor and yet terribly arrogant. But because man was made from dust, when he has no material things in the world, his heart also becomes that way. That is why I think we should pay attention to poor people. In practice, where is a place where, if we lend, there is nothing with which to repay? These days, in most cases, people have something with which to repay. Where would it be? Dear fellow believers, have you been to a home for the elderly? If you go to a home for the elderly, there will be people who truly have nothing. Each place is different, but if you check the number of people and bring even just a few boxes of food, it will be good for preaching the gospel to people whose hearts have been humbled. Also, if you go to a hospital and preach the gospel, many people receive the remission of sins. If you preach the gospel to people lying sick in the hospital, they generally tend to listen well. We must go out to the hedges, invite people, bring them, and fill the church. We must preach the word and preach the gospel to people who truly live without setting their hearts on this earth. We must go to the poor, to the sick, to such people, and preach the gospel. Rather than holding on only to people who are satisfied with their worldly circumstances and reject the gospel, we must seek out and preach to those who long for salvation.

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Dear fellow believers, when we hold an evangelistic meeting, do people come or not? Some do come, but generally they do not come. What is this? It is that they are full. Though they have never heard of this being born again of the water and the Spirit and do not know it, they do not even come to see. Our Lord spoke of this. When the feast had been prepared and the servant was told to invite people and invited them, what did they say? "I have bought a field today, so I must by all means write a contract, pay the money, and go and see whether the land is good or not." And what else? "I have bought five yoke of oxen; I must test whether they are good oxen or not." "I have also married. I have married, so how can I go to a meeting? How can I go to someone else's feast? I have married, so what does the feast of the kingdom of God have to do with me? I have also held a feast; you come to me." He said that not one of such people would enter the Lord's feast. He said that not one of those people who are interested only in their own affairs and only in worldly affairs would enter. It is just as this word says. Many people in the world—not one of these people enters. Such people cannot enter the Lord's kingdom. What kind of people enter? *"The poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind" (Luke 14:21)*—people who have nothing to put forward in the world enter. Dear fellow believers, here we see two kinds of people our Lord wants. One is: bring people who do not have much materially in this world and have wounds in their hearts; the second is: bring people who do not set their hearts on this world. That is what He said. In the kingdom of God there are only these two kinds of people.

The pleasures of the world are like a mist

I, too, actually had no satisfaction. In a word, I had no satisfaction. From childhood I thought: like my older brothers and older sisters there, people grow up, get married, have children, live, and when they die they go into the grave—so in conclusion, isn't it going into this grave? Many people I knew died. In the old days I followed along to many of their funerals. I thought, "When I die I too will become like this, so what is there so much to do in the world?" I suppose I fell into nihilism when I was young. The conclusion for men is obvious. It is obvious for women too. One studies and gets married, and one must have a proper job. One must either run a business or have a proper job. After that one must raise children, and after that comes the grave. Isn't it the same for women too? Even if all of us live studying, working, and caring for our families, we do not obtain eternal satisfaction beyond death through that life alone. Man seems great, and in the world one seems great oneself, but if you look at entertainers, movie actors, or athletes, they live their lives for that one moment, as if the flower of life blooms at its peak for that one season. It means that the popularity one enjoyed for a time does not last long. Even someone who was widely known and enjoyed popularity for a time can fade from people's attention as time passes, so fame, too, is not eternal. What satisfaction is there in the world? What more is there besides eating, drinking, enjoying, and having fun? Honestly speaking, it is a pleasure of one day, a day's enjoyment—what is there? There is nothing. This pleasure of the flesh seems great, but it is nothing. Then one dies and goes into the grave. I was such a person, but our Lord came to meet me. You, too, are such people. But the Lord came to meet you. The people of the world are such people too. But they have not yet met the Lord. Yet they

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swagger about as if they were great people, as if they would live for thousands and tens of thousands of years, but they are nothing. Even if a person has pleasure, does today's pleasure last until tomorrow? It vanishes with today. When you eat food, does your mouth keep watering at the taste of that food just because you ate something delicious? It waters only at the moment of eating. A little later it no longer waters. When tomorrow comes, you must eat new food. There is nothing. The fleshly desires of man seem great, but they are nothing. It is a pleasure like a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. The pleasures of this world are like that, so what is eternal pleasure? It is the kingdom of God. It is the pleasure God gives. He makes us His children and gives us the eternal kingdom, the kingdom of heaven—it is eternal pleasure.

"Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled"

The Lord came to meet me and came to meet you. He came to meet us with the gospel in which He bore all our sins through the baptism He received from John and shed His blood on the Cross and paid the full price of those sins. Among the people of this world, too, there are still many people He will meet. There are so many. And we are now evangelists. We are workers. Here the Bible says that a feast was prepared and a servant was sent; who is this servant? It is you and I. It is you and I, who received the remission of sins first. Where was the servant sent? First, he was told to invite many people, so he invited them, but people did not come because they had no interest in the kingdom of God. Second, he was told to invite the poor and those whose bodies are impaired, and such people came. Third: there was still room

left—go out to the hedges, go out to the outlying areas and bring people, compel them to come and fill the house. Dear fellow believers, we must set up our strategy of evangelism in this way. We must do it this way, as the Lord wants. We want people who are poor in spirit and want to be born again of the water and the Spirit to hear the gospel. We do not want to do it for people who read just to gather knowledge for themselves. We must take the gospel we have received in our hearts and go to people who need help and long for salvation. We must go, meet them, and preach it. Such people are the people who need the gospel. Take the gospel and go to a hospital or a home for the elderly. If you say, "I have come to preach the gospel," they will dislike it. Homes for the elderly have also risen a great deal in standard, so if you just go, they dislike it. When you go, look and do not give to everyone; even in a home for the elderly there will be people who are truly poor. People who have absolutely no one, people who have someone but are not cared for—I hope you will personally take care of such people. Whether you visit once a week or once a month, even if you give just a little, such a person is very pleased. Those who live there live happily all day long even with just one small thing. It means that if you go and visit that person—there are rich people there too, but not those people—and personally give just a little to someone who truly has nothing, you can preach the gospel to that person. It means that you can ask that person to make time for you, and you can preach the gospel.

The problem in this age is that such people are disappearing. It seems that the hospital is a good place to preach the gospel. It seems that the hospital is the place where these two things are met. People who are somewhat wounded, poor in spirit, and at the hedges—there will be others too. If we look around us, there are also people who have been marginalized amid the changes

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of the times and need help. We must preach the gospel to such people. Dear fellow believers, let us do so. If we set our goal on the poor, our hearts become much lighter, and it is doing the will of God. Let us preach the gospel to such people. I hope we will do so around us, and I hope we will do so throughout the whole world. In our church, even if a person with a great deal of money comes in, he cannot obtain a high position with that money. What use is it if a person who has not been born again has a lot of money? Serving the Lord after being born again is what is precious; if a rich person comes in before being born again and says, “I am an elder, so recognize me as an elder,” it is of no use. Because we are brothers and sisters and one family once we receive the remission of sins, even the chairman of a large company does not become higher than other saints because of that position. No one is better than the saints here. That person, too, is someone who must receive the remission of sins, and after receiving the remission of sins, someone who must learn for a long time. Dear fellow believers, I hope you will look around your homes to see whether there are people of these two kinds, people who need God, and seek them out and preach the gospel to them. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The feast is ready, so do not decline but come in

< Luke 14:15–24 >

“Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, ‘Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!’ Then He said to him, ‘A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, “Come, for all things are now ready.” But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.” And another said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.” Still another said, “I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.” And the servant said, “Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.” Then the master said to the servant, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.”’”

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The call to come to a feast that is already prepared

There are times when, even though we know that it is a good opportunity, we put it off, saying that we will look into it once what we have to do now is finished. It seems that we will have some room to spare once the urgent matter has passed, but after that, another matter is waiting. While we keep putting things off in this way, what is truly necessary is always pushed back. If we speak of the blessing of the kingdom of God as precious and yet try to think later about the salvation the Lord gives, the same thing is happening in our hearts as well.

When one of those eating with Jesus said that he who eats bread in the kingdom of God is blessed, the Lord, following on from those words, told the story of a man who gave a great supper. After the master had invited many people, when the time for the supper came, he sent his servant. The word says that he *"sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready'" (Luke 14:17)*. It was not a call for the invited people to come and prepare the feast, but a call to come and enjoy the feast the master had prepared.

In the master who has made every preparation and calls people, we see the grace of God, who, after completing the work of saving sinners, calls us to believe. The words that all things are ready mean that the work of removing our sins has been finished without leaving a single thing undone. The Lord did not tell us to come after washing away our sins on our own. When Jesus came to this earth and received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and all the sins of our whole lives, spanning our past, present, and future, were also transferred to Jesus through that baptism. The Lord, bearing the sins He had borne, was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and so received in our place the judgment

for sin that we were to receive; and He rose again from death and became our Savior.

Referring to that baptism, the Bible says, *"There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21)*. It is not that we must add something to that atonement in order to be saved. The servant's words to come to the feast are none other than an invitation to believe accordingly that Jesus has already removed our sins through the baptism and the Cross, and to receive the remission of sins. Just as one hears the words of the master who prepared the feast and comes forward, we too must put down the thought of trying to qualify ourselves by our own deeds and accept the Lord's salvation.

Declining the same invitation for different reasons

But the response of the people who heard the news that the feast was ready was unexpected. *"But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused'" (Luke 14:18)*. Another person said that he had bought five yoke of oxen and had to go and test them, and one person said that he had married and therefore could not come. Their circumstances differed from one another, but they were the same in that they put their own affairs ahead of the master's invitation.

This does not mean that buying a field, looking after oxen, or getting married is wrong in itself. The problem lies in the fact that they regarded the matters they had as a sufficient reason to refuse the master's call. They did not refuse because the feast had been poorly prepared; rather, even though the master told

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them to come, they said that they would not go because they had matters they considered more important. Thinking of the kingdom of God as a good place and actually receiving the word of salvation part ways here.

We, too, can agree with the words that the gospel is precious and yet give our whole heart to the matters immediately at hand. We say that we will believe after our circumstances improve, and that we will examine the word after our plans have been accomplished. But even though it may seem that we are only setting the order of things, if we keep putting off the word of salvation, in the end we are following the judgment that, for now, we are fine even without the Lord. The problem of sin and judgment is not solved by itself because our property increases or our life becomes stable. Nor is it that one becomes a person who needs the Savior only after everything has been put in order.

Therefore, we must not use this parable merely to condemn a person who once missed a meeting. What the Lord warns against is the heart that, because of its own circumstances, takes lightly and refuses the salvation God has given. Even while fulfilling the responsibilities of our livelihood and family, we can hear and believe the word of the Lord. We must not use those responsibilities as a pretext to push aside our need for salvation.

A place opened to those who have nothing of their own to put forward

When the servant came back and reported the words of those who had declined just as they were, the master ordered him to bring in other people. *"So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of*

the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind'" (Luke 14:21). The feast the master had prepared was not canceled just because the people first invited had refused. According to the master's will, the invitation headed to the streets and lanes.

The people who were newly invited had no ability to repay the master with a like feast. Nevertheless, the reason their lacking circumstances did not keep them from entering the master's feast was that the master had invited them and the servant had brought them in according to his will. The grounds for sitting in that place did not lie in property they could offer or in honor they could show to others.

This scene makes us look back on the heart that, unable to put forward its own righteousness, seeks only the grace of the Lord. The person who knows that he needs the gospel is not one who regards himself as all right, but one who knows that he is a sinner and that, if left as he is, he cannot but receive judgment. A person who knows that he cannot stand before God because of sin has no reason to hide his shortcomings and reject the invitation. He need only acknowledge the fact that he needs salvation and receive the remission of sins the Lord has already accomplished. There is no need to draw back from the word of salvation as well just because one is in a worse condition than others in the world. Conversely, it is not that one has no need of the Lord's grace merely because one has property or health.

Since the grace of salvation does not depend on human ability, we who preach the gospel must not decide the possibility of salvation in advance by outward appearance. Even a neighbor who has nothing to show others is a soul the Lord wants to save. If he is looking for a way to resolve his sins, rather than showing him abilities we can boast of, we must let him know how the

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Lord bore all sins. This is because conveying the will of the One who prepared the feast is the work entrusted to the servant.

The room that remained and the end of those who refused the invitation

Even though people had been brought in as the master commanded, there was still room. *"And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room'" (Luke 14:22)*. Then the master sent the servant farther out, and the word says, *"Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled'" (Luke 14:23)*. The servant could not say that he had finished his work while looking only at the people he had already brought in, for since the master wanted his house filled, he had to go also to those who had not yet heard the invitation.

The word to compel contains the earnest will of the master, who wants people to take part in the feast. Therefore, we too must not be satisfied merely with the fact that we have preached once, but must urge our neighbors sincerely again and again, wishing that they may understand the news of salvation and believe. Faith cannot be produced by dragging a person forcibly or by pressing him to say that he believes. It is a matter of listening to what makes him hesitate, explaining the word of the remission of sins so that he can understand it, and urging him to believe in the salvation the Lord has accomplished. To a neighbor who hesitates because of his own shortcomings, we must preach the Savior, who has resolved those shortcomings.

However, the master's generosity does not make even the refusal of the first invitation a light matter. *"For I say to you that*

none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper" (Luke 14:24). They were invited to the prepared feast but declined of their own accord and in the end did not enjoy that feast; so the mere fact that they had heard the invitation did not mean that they took part in the feast. Not tasting the feast of the kingdom of God means receiving judgment while still having one's sins, so this word is by no means a light warning.

Looking back on the blessing of the feast that the invited people missed, we too must not stop at speaking well of the kingdom of God, but must believe the word of salvation today. The Lord has completed the work of removing our sins and is now calling us to believe in that salvation. Rather than following the habit of putting things off, saying that we will look into it once the urgent matters are over, we must see clearly before the word what is most urgent for us. Let us who have already received the remission of sins not forget this grace either, and let us preach it to our neighbors who have not yet heard it. Let us earnestly urge them to enjoy together the salvation the Lord has prepared, and let us remain in the place of answering that call by faith. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

He wants us to live by faith

< Luke 14:25–33 >

“Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, “This man began to build and was not able to finish”? Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.’”

Can we follow the Lord with our own resources?

There is something we must first consider in following the Lord. It is whether we can really follow the Lord with the resources we have. If we judge that we have the strength and the ability to follow the Lord as much as we want, then we can simply follow Him in that way. Now, a person who builds a

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tower must first calculate whether what he has will be enough for him to complete the tower and hold its completion ceremony. Even with building a single house, though one has planned it, one must calculate whether one's property is plentiful enough to build the house; if one has done the design and obtained the permit, but has resources only enough to lay the foundation, will one not end up stopping in the middle of building the house, so that things go wrong? Would it not be shameful in front of people? It means that one must calculate that first and then do it. Likewise, when a king goes to make war against another king, should he not also consider whether he can fight against that other nation and win, and go out if he can win, and if he cannot win, go early and ask for peace?

It is the same in following the Lord. It means that we must calculate whether we can follow the Lord with what we have, whether the strength we have is sufficient or not, and if it is not sufficient, surrender early and follow the Lord by faith. We must lay down the heart that relied on our own talents, will, or material wealth, and follow while believing entirely in the word the Lord has spoken.

What it means to forsake one's possessions

This word says, *"So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33)*. The Lord said that, in following the Lord, one must forsake one's own possessions. Then what on earth are the possessions we have? We must calculate which is more precious and which is more right, what you have or what God has. On the one side are the kingdom of heaven that God has spoken of, the salvation God has given us, and doing the right work of God that serves

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Jesus Christ; on the other are the parents, brothers, sisters, relatives, children, wife, or the wealth of this world that belong to you. We must consider and calculate which of these two is more right and more precious, and which is more fitting to follow. If we think that what we have is more precious than what the Lord has, we can simply not forsake it but follow it. But if the Lord is truly more precious than ourselves, than the wealth we have, and than the parents, children, wife, or husband who belong to us, and if all the words the Lord has spoken are the truth and are actually better, then it means that we must give up what is ours, forsake our own possessions, and follow the Lord.

Without faith, one cannot follow the Lord

But does following the Lord happen just in theory? No, it does not. It is not possible in theory; it means that it truly cannot be done except by faith. The Lord said, *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26–27)*. Dear fellow believers, unless we have the faith that believes all the words the Lord has spoken, unless we have the faith that believes this word that the Lord has given us the kingdom of heaven, has given us life more precious than the whole world, and has given us salvation, and unless we feel that the work God has entrusted to us is precious, we cannot follow the Lord. What is most needed to follow the Lord is faith. The reason we cannot follow the Lord with our own strength and ability, with our will, wealth, and stubbornness, is that the Lord is truly the truth and we are not the truth, we are perishable and the Lord is imperishable forever,

and what the Lord has given is eternal while what we have is limited and perishable. Therefore, this word that one cannot follow the Lord unless one forsakes one's possessions means that one follows the Lord only when one has something truly good. It means that because we truly believe in the Lord and believe the word of God, we can follow the Lord by faith. The Jesus on whom we rely is the Savior who rose again from death, so the life He has given us is also not something that stays for a while and then disappears like the possessions of this world.

It is just like a little child who, eating snacks with both hands, keeps one fist tightly closed. If you try simply to snatch the snacks from that child's hand, he cries and makes a fuss and never lets go. Then what do you do? When, in the child's eyes, what the other person gives him is better than the snacks, he lets go of the snacks and takes hold of that. It is the same when we follow the Lord. When we have the faith that this word the Lord has spoken is truly more right, true, and certain, and that it is right to believe and follow as the Lord has said and to live for the Lord, we can give up what we have and follow what is right through faith.

In the Bible, the Lord spoke a great deal about disciples. The Lord gave His last will to His disciples, saying, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20)*, and ascended to heaven. He told them to make disciples. For people who have received the remission of sins, following the Lord is the life of a disciple. Becoming a disciple means respecting and following one's teacher, and if we truly try to follow the Lord, we cannot follow Him except by faith. If one says that one's brothers and sisters in this world, one's own life, or the wealth one has is more precious than the Lord, one

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cannot follow Him; but if we come to believe in our hearts that the Lord is more precious than what we have, we follow Him. No one in this world can follow the Lord by his own strength.

Long ago, a certain president of a bus transportation company received the remission of sins. This man owned a building, and he lent that building to the church. And he said that whenever the church had any difficulty, he himself would make the offering for all of it. Because the small amounts the saints each gave did not satisfy him, he was the kind of person who would say, "How much has been set for the offering this time? I will pay it," write a large sum on a check and drop it into the offering box, and tell those who had no money that they did not even need to give an offering and should all stop. He was the president of a large bus company who had a great deal of money and also owned a building. In his own way, he did follow the Lord, as he saw it, and also served. But when one comes to church, there are things that call for yielding one's heart, things to be taught, and at times things for which one is rebuked. A minister spoke to him. He told him that the brother should not do things that way: that since all the saints are God's people, all of them have the duty and responsibility to serve God, and since a person's faith grows when he serves the Lord, the brother should not try to do it all alone. Then, finding that uncomfortable, he blew up, saying, "I am doing this much—what is wrong with saying that the poor should not pay and I will pay the money?" and told them to vacate the building; and after the building had been vacated, he said that he could no longer go to that church, went off to the Catholic Church, and kept attending there until he finally passed away. If that man had truly compared the money he had with the Lord and believed this word, saying, "The Lord is more precious than my money. The Lord revealed in the word is precious," if he had believed that the Lord was

truly his King and his God, that what the church does is right, and that the kingdom of heaven and the salvation the Lord gave him are right, then, when he was rebuked, he could simply have said, "Oh, is that so? In my own way I thought I was doing well, but now that I hear it, that is so. I was wrong. From now on I will not do that. I will serve in my way, and you can serve in your way." The Lord said, *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26)*.

Are parents precious, or is God precious?

Dear fellow believers, are parents precious, or is God precious? Are your wife and children precious, or is God precious? You must compare them. This is a practical problem. When parents who have not received the remission of sins cling to you and say, "It is either you or me. If you are going to go to that church, cut all ties and then go. You are not my child, and I am not your mother," what should you do? It means that at such a time you must calculate, and only by following by faith what you believe to be right can you follow the Lord. In the life of faith after being born again, there are times when one must make very cool-headed decisions. When your parents say they will die, your wife and children say they will die, and your brothers say this and that, if all their words are contrary to the word of the Bible and to following the Lord, what should you do?

At such times, following the Lord is right. Only when we follow the Lord can we preach the gospel to them as well and preach the gospel to those who want it. Though we have now inherited the blood of the same lineage, will we be able to meet

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them when we die and go to heaven? Then whether we follow the Lord or not depends on faith. Which is really right? Is it right to listen to and follow the words of one's brothers and sisters, or is it right to listen to and follow the word of the Lord? The Lord has given us this salvation of the eternal kingdom of heaven and of becoming children of God, of being born again of water and the Spirit. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus bore all our sins and shed His blood on the Cross to save us. Is this salvation precious? The Lord said, *"For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50)*. Which word is really correct?

Following the Lord takes faith. Without faith, one cannot follow, and there is no other way. According to human situation ethics, one can do this or that, but if you truly want to follow the Lord after being born again, it is not situation ethics but faith. It is decided according to what we believe. This is precisely faith.

It is no exaggeration to say that, living while following the Lord up to this day, I have gone through nearly all of these things. At first it was very hard. This is something everyone goes through. After receiving the remission of sins, whether one follows the Lord with the faith that the Lord's word is truly right or not is a problem that actually comes upon us. After I was born again, my mother said she would send me to study abroad. She said, "If you do that, I will send you to study in America and buy you a car; we have a lot of property, so I will put it all in your name. Just stay at the church you were attending." But since the word says that unless one hates his own parents, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot become a disciple, I flatly refused, saying that no matter if they were my parents, my wife and children, or my brothers, if they hindered me from following God, that was not right. I could have stayed there, but if they rejected me, or if they said no to the God

I believe in according to the Bible and to this word without even being able to refute it, I could even cut ties with them. I would not forsake them first, but even if they forsook me, even if they would not give me a single penny, it was all right. In fact, I refused all of it. Dear fellow believers, it is not just me; it is the same for you too.

The point is what we really believe as we live in this world. We go after what we believe. When we serve and follow the Lord, if our unsaved wives and children, parents, and brothers and sisters hold us back from behind, how can we shake this off and go this way? It is not that we must go unconditionally; it is a matter of what is right, and of what faith is right to live by. When you reach a certain situation, a time comes when you must make a decision. When you make a decision, the decision is made according to what you truly believe. The word says that unless one forsakes all that he has, he cannot be a disciple; this does not mean to throw everything away, but it is a matter of what we truly rely on, believe, and follow. It is a matter of what is truly worth believing, what is worth believing and following, working for, and serving. Then it depends on which of the two, God or this world, we believe. If we want to follow the Lord, we must truly believe in the Lord. We must know that the Lord is precious. Following with the faith that what the Lord has given is more right, that serving the Lord is right, and that, even if we have nothing at all, only what the Lord has spoken is right—that is what is right.

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The one faith that remains when all strength has run out

Dear fellow believers, as we follow the Lord, there are times when our own strength runs out completely. We serve the Lord, give offerings, serve by offering our bodies, give our time, and follow by devoting all our thoughts and strength, but this hits a limit. Even then, unless there is faith, we cannot follow the Lord. We followed with all our might, but everything we had has run out and hit bottom; there is no property, no health, nothing, not even any pride left; everything has collapsed and been ruined. What do we do at such times? There is nothing but believing and following what the Lord has said. It means that there is nothing but truly believing in our hearts what the Lord has said and following the Lord by faith. At that time, nothing remains but faith alone. When Christians reach a certain point after being born again, what remains is faith alone; nothing of what they have remains. At that time, if they have faith in the Lord, the faith that believes all these words the Lord has spoken, then even though they have nothing at all, they can follow the Lord by that faith alone, can live eating and drinking with the Lord, and can do the Lord's work. Without faith, one says, "Now I am done for," and simply collapses. One can neither receive what is the Lord's nor receive grace. If one has faith, one receives grace, and indeed, when one truly has nothing, one can receive grace all the more. Through the Lord, one can live together with Him. The word *"I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20)* is fulfilled just as it says.

Why is that? It is because we believe and follow the Lord alone. But if there is no faith in the Lord, one cannot follow. Like a man who, when building a tower, does not draw up a budget but simply charges ahead and lays only the foundation of the

tower, and then all the property he has runs out, so that the tower cannot go up and he is mocked by people, or like an army that has to fight against another army but, without even calculating, charges recklessly and loses the first battle and is captured and killed—can we really follow the Lord with what we have? Can we become the Lord's disciples?

The wealth we have, the brothers, sisters, and blood relatives God has given us, our own life, strength, and talents—can we follow the Lord with these things? We lack strength. The Lord is too great and too perfect for us to follow Him with our own strength. And He demands too much. He demands even our lives. We simply cannot follow the Lord with what we have. Then how can we follow Him? We can follow Him when we have the faith that everything the Lord has said is right. Dear fellow believers, we must have faith. Without the faith that serving the gospel is right and that preaching the gospel just as it is is right, we cannot possibly serve the Lord, follow Him, or keep our faith. Without faith, we can do nothing. Without the faith that believes that this word the Lord has spoken is right, we cannot follow the Lord with our own strength. Do you believe so? It is because the Lord is right and because what the Lord has said is right that we follow and believe in the Lord; it is not that we believe in and follow the Lord even though He is not right. We follow because the Lord truly is right. I say to you who serve the Lord and to those who want to follow the Lord: whoever has been born again must become a disciple of Jesus Christ. If, after being born again, one does not follow the Lord, one will come to ruin in the world like Lot. Faith is absolutely necessary for following the Lord.

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The gospel that must be preached even when there are difficulties

The Lord said, *"And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27)*. Everyone has difficulties. When you try to do faithfully the work entrusted to you while serving the Lord, are there difficulties or not? There are, for everyone. Just because one follows the Lord, are there no difficulties, and does everything only go well? Only when we follow the Lord by faith, when the faith is established that this word is truly right and the truth, and we follow with that faith, do we receive a reward of thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold on this earth. When we first truly follow firmly with our hearts by faith, the Lord rewards us. If one follows without faith because one has no choice, that has nothing to do with reward or blessing. But if one follows with true faith, the result of faith will surely appear.

It is the same with our ministers too; if everything went well and there were no difficulties at all, what problem would there be? If this were just a religion, what problem would there be? If it were all right to believe, quit when one wanted to quit, and believe again later, what would be wrong with that? If one could quit everything and then, when the Lord comes, say, "Lord, I believe. I believe no matter what. I clearly believe that Jesus saved me through the water and the Spirit. Do not worry," who would keep on doing it this way? But the word says, *"And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes" (Luke 12:47)*. Is it not plain to see? All the people throughout the world who do not know this gospel go to hell; honestly, who among them would go to heaven? Among those who believe in Jesus, who is without sin? Those who are not born again, those

who do not believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, all have sin, whether they believe in Jesus or attend church or not. Knowing all this, how can we not do it? Even if there are difficulties, we must do it, and because we know the fact that, if they do not know this gospel, all the people of the whole world will go to hell, we must preach the gospel to all the people of the whole world. If all the people around us believed in this way, I would hold a feast with you every day. If there were no work to do, we would just rest and enjoy ourselves; why would we toil and labor so hard? But that is not the case. Because there are people who do not yet know the gospel of salvation and are under the judgment of sin, we cannot but preach. We do it because we know. We must do it because no matter where one searches throughout the whole world, there is no place that preaches such a gospel. You must believe this gospel that people who have received the remission of sins preached to you, because it is right. There is nothing other than this. There is no other gospel. Apart from this gospel that caused you to be born again of water and the Spirit, is there a real gospel? Is there even an approximate gospel? There is not. If there were something else that was right, why would we do this?

If one does not hold that, after being born again, it is right to be united with the church and to unite one's heart with the servants of God and go forward with the same heart, the same faith, and the same purpose, then there is no need to unite one's heart or to live a life of faith together. Being born again in the first place is by faith, and every step after that is all by faith. That is so because this is right. You must live with faith and follow with faith. Only then will there be fruit and will you receive blessings. If you follow without believing in your heart, there is a limit to your strength. When circumstances are good, you can follow, but when things become difficult, you cannot. Once

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things become difficult or one becomes too rich, that is the end of it. It is faith. Do we hold feasts and eat and drink every day because we have much? It is because we have faith that we live this way and save people, and it is because we have faith that we talk to people.

Live with faith

Since the word says that if you are to become His disciples you must forsake your own possessions, we must forsake our own possessions. Will we truly believe in the Lord and follow the Lord's Church and the servants of God, or will we believe in our brothers and sisters in the flesh, our parents, wives and children, ourselves, our own strength, and wealth? We must follow what is truly worth believing, deciding which of these we will believe. This world of having received the remission of sins is not theory. It is reality. Even coming forward to worship cannot be done without faith, and when listening to a sermon, unless one has the faith that says, "That is the real truth; it is true," one cannot come and sit there. Even living without starving to death is faith. Faith is believing that God feeds us and keeps us alive. Without faith, we come to worry, saying, *"What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" (Matthew 6:31)*. It seems that if we do not work to earn money, we will not be able to eat and live. But as I truly did the work of God, I became so busy that eventually I could not do worldly work, and when I believed this and acted by faith, God gave me everything I needed. Dear fellow believers, you must act by faith and live a life of faith by faith.

There are people who serve and follow the Lord but, not having in their hearts the conviction that this is truly right, end

up quitting later. This world is dark, and if one abandons faith now, one becomes truly pitiable. We must live with faith. We must live with faith in the last days. If a person who has received the remission of sins, while possessing the gospel, does not live by faith but gives up faith and lives eating and drinking with the people of the world, he will be severely disciplined before God. That is what happens if a born-again person does not live by faith, if he does not truly believe the word of God and does not truly believe the word that the church preaches. God knows the center of my heart and yours all too well. God knows whether we truly believe in God, accept the word of God, and believe and follow the word the church preaches. If we follow with true faith, He causes works to take place, bestows grace, and also gives blessings. Why is that? It is to make us do more work. But if we follow formally without believing, He tests us. He shakes us to see whether we are genuine or not. If we do not have true faith, we fall away. The word says, *"Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7)*. We must have faith. Whatever our circumstances and whatever our situation, we must follow the Lord with faith. So we must become disciples of Jesus Christ and become people who live eating and drinking with the Lord, with what is the Lord's being ours and what is ours being the Lord's. Do you truly believe that Jesus is your Savior? Do you believe that the Father of Jesus Christ has become your Father? Do you believe that all the words spoken in this Bible are the truth? We must live with faith.

If we do not live with faith but live shallowly, with just one blow from God, everything a person has piled up over a lifetime is blown away. God is that powerful. Dear fellow believers, we have received the remission of sins. By all means, we must live with faith, receive blessings by faith, drive back the enemy by faith, save souls by faith, please God by faith, and serve God by

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faith. There are many times when I am truly at a loss. There is a lot of work, and there are many times when I am at a loss. But each time, I pray, asking Him to give, and I believe the fact that He will give and believe the fact that He will resolve it. Because I live by faith in that way, I may go through difficulties, but in the end things turn out well. They turn out well, just as the word says, *"All things work together for good" (Romans 8:28)*. After all, we Christians must follow by faith. We must have the faith that believes this word of God, the faith that truly believes when we hear the word. Since it is written, *"Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6)*, let us live with faith. ✉

Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

A crowd that goes along, or a disciple who follows?

< Luke 14:25–35 >

“Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, “This man began to build and was not able to finish”? Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’”

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The way of a disciple that He asked of the crowd walking with Him

When many people share a life of faith with us, it is easy for us, too, to think that we are following well among them. Since we hear the same word and sit in the same place, we assume that the direction of our hearts will also be the same. But whether we still try to follow Him even when the word of the Lord collides with what we want to keep is another matter. Jesus turned and spoke to the great multitude that was going with Him. This is because whom they were following mattered more than the fact that many people had gathered.

"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). Since He spoke even of family and one's own life, following the Lord does not end at the level of paying brief attention to Him in one's spare time. Even the relationships we hold most precious and our own lives are placed before the word of the Lord. Receiving the remission of sins is easy, because we need only believe in what the Lord has fully accomplished; but the way of a disciple who follows the Lord after being saved is not that easy. Because there is a price to be paid on that way, the Lord did not hide it but spoke of it first.

We must not use the word telling us to hate our families as an excuse to hurt our families and refuse to care for them. It means that when a loved one demands that we abandon the gospel, we cannot go so far as to follow that demand. It is being grateful for our parents' labor and caring responsibly for our children, while not denying the salvation the Lord has given us in order to avoid their opposition. Not abandoning the word of salvation that we are to preach to someone close to us, even

when there is the pain of losing his approval, is the attitude of a disciple who follows the Lord when facing his family.

Our cross, and the Lord, who bore our sins

If we say that we will follow only after all that pain has been removed, we end up stopping our steps every time difficulty comes; but the Lord said, *"And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27)*. Because one's own cross refers to the suffering and self-denial to be endured on the way of following the Lord, we must lay down the heart that says it will follow while being guaranteed, to the end, the approval and comfort it wants.

The reason we must distinguish here between the sufferings we undergo and the atonement the Lord has accomplished is that we cannot wash away even our own sins by our sacrifices. The Bible says of Jesus, *"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 –ASV" (1 John 5:6)*. The water is the baptism He received from John. Through that baptism Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and the sins we committed in the past, the sins we commit now, and even the sins we will commit as we live the rest of our lives are included in the sin of the world that He bore. The blood is the Cross. Jesus, bearing that sin He had borne through the baptism, was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and thereby received in our place the judgment we were to receive; and He rose again from death and became our Savior. What saved us is not the cross we bear, but this Cross the Lord bore.

Therefore, the cross a disciple bears is not merit added to the Lord's salvation, but the sacrifice that comes from following the

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One who saved us. We may be misunderstood while preaching the gospel clearly, or we may have to yield our own convenience for the work we serve together. At such times, it means not pushing the Lord away on account of the difficulty, but asking for help from the One who has already saved us and carrying out the work entrusted to us.

So as not to become a tower of which only the foundation remains

Through the parable of the tower, the Lord showed the crowd where zeal that does not look ahead leads. *"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—" (Luke 14:28)*. A tower cannot be completed with only the confidence that one can begin. If one lays the foundation and still cannot finish, one comes to be called, by those who see it, a person who began and could not finish.

On the way of a disciple, too, if we think only of the emotion we felt at first and do not see the cravings we must abandon and the difficulties we must endure in the future, then when a loss actually arises it is easy to complain as though we had been deceived by the Lord. The Lord did not gather people by hiding the difficulties of the way of following Him. He spoke first of both the opposition of families and one's own cross, and let people follow knowing that way. We, too, when we say that we will serve the Lord, must examine whether we are not attaching along with it the condition that our own plans must always come first.

Next, the Lord spoke of a king who considers whether he can meet twenty thousand soldiers with ten thousand soldiers. If he

cannot win, he must send a delegation while the other is still far away and ask for peace; so to think highly of one's own strength and go forward recklessly is not courage. Likewise, we cannot guarantee that we can follow to the end just because our own resolve is great. Before the Lord, this making of peace is laying down our own strength and asking the Lord for help. When we follow, telling Him that we cannot follow the Lord by our own strength and that He must help us, we come to accept the word of the Lord and follow by His strength instead of boasting of our resolve all the more.

The possessions to lay down before the word of the Lord

After the two parables, the Lord drew a conclusion. *"So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33)*. The word telling us to count the cost of the tower and the number of soldiers did not mean that only those who have gathered much wealth and ability become disciples. Rather, He was telling us to abandon the heart that holds on to its possessions and tries to follow only as far as they allow.

This word does not speak only of thoughts in the heart that have nothing to do with actual wealth. Because preaching the gospel and helping those who will carry out that work together with us require time, material resources, and labor, there are also times when we must give up our own interests. However, the act itself of getting rid of one's property or giving away all the money one has does not create the qualification of a disciple. This is because if one, while giving up wealth, still tries to move everything according to one's own will, one is still making one's

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own thoughts and stubbornness one's master. We must learn from the Lord even the decisions about using what we have, and the Lord does not leave a person who has forsaken things in that way only to suffer loss. *"There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:29–30)*. This means that when we forsake, the Lord fills.

When our plans go against the word, we must change our plans, and when we cannot serve together because of a heart that insists that we are right, we must lay that stubbornness down. It means faithfully doing what is necessary for living, while not continually putting off the place of serving the gospel because of the craving to have more. Saying that we entrust things to the Lord must not become an excuse for letting go of responsibility. Let us use our wealth and strength according to the word of the Lord, bring what is lacking to Him in prayer, and discuss with our brothers and sisters the work that is hard to carry out alone and carry it out together.

The flavor of salt that remains in the disciple who hears and follows

Lastly, the Lord said, *"'Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'" (Luke 14:34–35)*. Just as salt, even if it bears the name of salt, cannot be used if it is mixed with worldly things and loses its flavor, so if we keep rejecting the word of

the Lord while being called disciples, we cannot live a fitting life by that name alone. In the face of this warning, we must examine the heart that has felt at ease because of the fact that it is in the crowd.

We must not treat lightly the path of saying that we believe in the Lord's salvation while hiding that gospel and following only our own interests. The gospel given to us is the word to be preached so that others, too, may receive the remission of sins. If we leave aside the intention of following the Lord and try to use only the word "salvation" to protect our own comfort, the warning about salt that becomes useless for the spread of the gospel and is thrown out becomes precisely our own matter. The Lord demands that the crowd who hear actually accept that word.

However, there is no need to think that the Lord's atonement has become insufficient every time our weakness is revealed. We must admit our wrongs, return to the Savior, who fully bore our sins, and follow His word again. Let us lay down the stubbornness we must lay down today, not avoid the labor we must undertake, and preach the gospel we have received to the people beside us. Let us walk not as a crowd that feels at ease because many people walk with it, but as disciples who hear and follow the word of the Lord, who saved us. ✉

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Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

If you wish to follow the Lord, you must have a reverent heart

< Luke 14:25–35 >

“Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, “This man began to build and was not able to finish”? Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’”

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What it means to revere God

If we sum up in a word what the Lord is saying to us through this word, it is a word about revering God. To revere God means to respect, love, and fear Him. We can love and respect God, but we must also know how to fear Him. It is because we fear God that we can worship before God, humble ourselves, follow God, and obey and submit. Without a heart that fears, that does not happen. We must know how to fear the One whom we ought to fear. The Lord once said, *"Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28)*.

Here, as the Lord was going along with the crowd, He turned and said, *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26)*. What are the things that must be hated? It is saying that unless one hates even one's own life, the brothers and sisters born together with one, and one's own household, and on top of that, one's parents and even one's own wife, one cannot become the Lord's disciple. Adding one more thing to that, He said, *"And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27)*. He is speaking of the conditions for becoming the Lord's disciple, for revering the Lord, and for following the Lord, and those conditions truly seem to be conditions that are hard for a human being to fulfill. One must follow the Lord even amid hardship, must obey and follow the Lord's commands and the Lord's will even while hating one's own life, and must reject even one's own household, one's own wife, and one's own parents if they are not fitting for the Lord's will. There is just one thing that makes it possible to do all of this. It is revering, knowing how to fear God. When we have that heart that loves

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and respects God and yet knows how to fear Him, we can do this. By the faith that believes the word of God, we can follow God in any situation. This word is telling us that only when we have a reverent heart—such a heart that loves while fearing and trembling—can we do this. That is why the Lord said, *"So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33).*

To follow the Lord, one must forsake all that one has

The words "becoming a disciple" and "revering God" are exactly the same. It is saying that if one wants to become a person who follows the Lord and a person who resembles the Lord, one must be like this. What is it like when we follow the Lord? First we meet the Lord, hear and believe the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and receive the remission of sins; and what comes next? Is it not all that we have? If we try to follow the Lord, we must abandon this, must abandon many of our old friends as well, must keep our distance from those among our family members who oppose the faith we have—our parents too—and must keep our distance even from our own wives, who live with us, if they oppose this. It is saying that He is truly speaking to us of many things. Perhaps because of that, there are many people who believed in and followed the Lord but then quit halfway.

Today, yesterday, and throughout this past week, as we have done the work of serving the Lord, we meet various situations, and joy and sorrow alternate. There is joy and there is sorrow. When we face such situations, if we revere and respect God and live with the heart that says, "Today, too, I follow the command

of God," most problems all pass. But if there is no reverence for God, things arise such as "This is good, and this is not good; this pleases me, and this does not please me." Then our emotions move accordingly, and sorrow and joy cross each other. That is very hard. So there are times when our life of faith is very good at one time and very bad at another, with many ups and downs; the way to overcome all of that is to have a heart that reveres God—that heart that knows how to fear, knows how to respect, and knows how to love. It is saying that if we just keep that heart in our hearts, we can get through all of it and overcome it. But if we have no reverent heart, we come to be shaken accordingly.

Therefore, we must respect God. It is saying that we must become people who respect, love, know how to fear, and revere the Lord: God, who said that we should have no other gods before Him; God, who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth and made us human beings in the image of God; the Creator, who caused you and me, who were in the loins of our physical parents, to be born into this world; that Lord, who becomes our Master, our Savior, and our shepherd. We need only have such a heart.

Dear fellow believers, have we received the remission of sins by hearing the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit? Because the Lord loved us, He came to this earth to remove our sins, and by receiving baptism from John He bore our sins, was hung on the Cross, rose again from death, and saved us. He took away all our sins. Therefore we are saved through faith. We were saved by believing this. Then we must follow the Lord, relying on faith in the Lord rather than on our own strength. After saving us, the Lord causes us to follow Him; as a result, He does the work of saving through us other people who have not yet been saved as well; and as a result, He takes us into His own kingdom and lives well with us forever. This is the Lord's purpose, but

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there are many times when we have merely been saved and do not know well how we can follow the Lord.

God is love, but He is also stern

That is why the Lord is saying this here. It is saying that a person who wishes to follow Him must have a heart that reveres God and must also know how to fear Him. If we do not know how to fear, then after being saved we may not serve God, may live as we please, may oppose Him, and may even curse according to our moods. But when we become those who fear God, we come to be freed from many things. It is saying that even when we have thought wrongly, we can follow the Lord while rebuking ourselves, saying, “I must not be like this; this is not right.”

So we must learn. I lived for the gospel yesterday and live for the Lord today as well, but would I be any different from you? When I get up in the morning, I have to eat on time, eat with gratitude for the labor of those who cook, come and work, and also take care of church affairs, and joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure are all there. When the work of God goes well, it is joyful and glad; but when it does not go well and is difficult, and the brothers also have a hard time, and the work of God goes wrong, I cannot tell you how hard it is on my heart. And when I see what some people say or how they act, there are times when I think, “They really do not know how to fear God.” Dear fellow believers, the Lord is not One who merely saves us from sin and says that everything is done.

The Lord tells us that we must also know how to fear Him. It is saying that if you say that you have been saved and yet live on this earth as you please and willfully, preventing others from

receiving the remission of sins and hindering the work of God, and then stand before Him, He will say, *"I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:23)*. We must know the fact that God is not unconditionally a good-natured One, One who has only love, but is God who is also stern and who also judges. We must know that He is One who speaks in this way.

So some people know only the gospel and live believing only the gospel, while other people know the gospel and also know God, and are people who know how to love God and also know how to fear Him. It is saying that a person who knows how to fear God, whatever happens in whatever situation, believes, accepts, and acts according to the standard of what God says about this matter. Only when one becomes such a person does one become a person whose faith is mature. One must not say that something is good when God hates it, or say that it is not particularly good when God says that it is joyful and good. We must become of the same heart as God. We must be united with Him. If God rejoices, we too must rejoice, and if God grieves, we too must grieve. Such a person is a person who believes in God, follows Him, reveres Him, loves Him, and respects Him.

A disciple is one who follows his master while fearing him

Therefore, we must both respect God and know how to fear Him. When we look at this word, He said that even after being saved, if one does not forsake all that he has, he cannot be His disciple. What is a disciple? The word "disciple" means a person who respects, loves, obeys, submits to, fears, and follows his teacher, his master, his savior. It is saying that he truly wants to

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resemble his teacher and wants to become like him, and although he cannot become like him, he still wants to be a disciple who pleases him at least to some degree. Such a person is truly one who loves the Lord and follows Him. But, for example, if a person meets the Lord and, because he is a person with a lot of money, refuses to follow, saying that he does not want to because it seems that if he follows the Lord he will have to give a lot of money to serve the Lord, that person is one who betrays the Lord on this earth. It is saying that the person the Lord wants must be someone who, although the Lord has remitted all his sins, also knows how to fear Him while following the Lord.

Dear fellow believers, this appears both in the parable of the talents and in the word of the parable of casting a net into the sea. A certain person cast a net into the sea and caught fish, and when he drew up the net, there were good fish and bad fish. This word says that they *"gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away" (Matthew 13:48)*. When useless and inedible fish are caught, they are thrown onto the ground; at first they flop about, and then they simply die. It is saying that they throw them all away like that.

It is the same in the parable of the talents as well. The master gave talents of ability—two talents and five talents; the one who received two talents traded and came before the master with four talents and said that the master had given him two talents and he had gained two talents, and the one who received five talents gained five more talents and brought ten talents, saying that he had done such work and served the master well. Then the master says, *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:21)*. But the one who received one talent thinks, "My master is a very wicked man and a bad man." He thought that, having given him only one talent,

the master seemed to want him to trade a lot and gain a lot, and that the master was a bad man, like someone who only collects debts; so he quietly kept the talent put away in his own heart, and when the master asked him to give back what he had entrusted to him, he took it out of his heart and gave it, saying, "Here it is." He did not put a single thing into action. Then the master said, "Do you regard me as such a wicked man?" and said, *"Cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness" (Matthew 25:30)*. It is saying that he said to subject him to the punishment that those who are not saved receive—to deal with him according to that law. Therefore we must also know how to fear the Lord.

One follows the Lord with the heart of a debtor

After I first met the Lord, if I had simply remained in the world, I might have achieved great things in the world. I, too, had the desire to accomplish great things in the world. Since the Lord met me, I must not confine the gospel of the water and the Spirit only in my own heart or use it for my own gain, but must preach it to other people. The Apostle Paul said, *"I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise" (Romans 1:14)*. What debt did the Apostle Paul owe them? Does it mean that he borrowed money? He did not borrow money, and yet he says that he is a debtor. What this means is: "I have a duty to preach to them this gospel of the water and the Spirit, the love of God, and the salvation God has given, and I have a duty to fulfill this." And God said that if he did not do this, He would require from him the price of their lives when they went to hell. That is why the Apostle Paul said, "I will forsake everything and, according to the command of God, preach this gospel to the

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whole world," and lived the life of an evangelist to the end and went before God.

I, too, followed the Lord with that heart. From then on, I met various things while following the Lord, but in any situation, with a heart that reveres God, thinking, "What would God be pleased with in this situation? Today God would be pleased in this direction," I have tried to do so whether things went well or not, whether profit came back to me or not, and whether others called me a fool or not, and I have come this far. I must go on doing so in the future, too. This is because, would God not be pleased only when I follow the work that my God, my Master, my Savior, and my shepherd wants? Would God look favorably on it if I did what God does not want—not serving the gospel, whether others go to hell or not, just grabbing money, driving around in a nice car, committing sins, and doing all sorts of things? So I do not want to fall out of God's favor. If one falls out of His favor, nothing goes well on this earth either. Whether things go well or not all depends on the hand of God.

So what I hope for you is that you live revering God. I am not saying that you have not revered God or served Him until now. I am confident that as we live on, God will give us many blessings, but it is also certain that we will suffer hardships because of God. Then, when we suffer hardships because of God, can we betray God? It is saying that we must become people who obey the will of God through fearing God. Only then can we receive God's help and grace and live well until the day the Lord comes. I am telling you that we should become such people. Even after being saved, a life of following the Lord with reverence must continue. When we are saved and live a life that pleases God, and live obeying the will of God, knowing how to fear Him, and respecting Him, God gives us many blessings, protects us, and bears many fruits of salvation through us, and in

the end we enter the kingdom of God and come to live enjoying eternal happiness with God. I am saying this not because you did something wrong, but because hardships may also come to us.

Hardships are overcome with a reverent heart

When we serve the Lord, there are times when it is so hard that we feel we could die. The work has been started and must be finished, but when it has been started and cannot be finished, it feels maddening. Whether one is farming, doing construction, or raising livestock, when a person starts something and it does not go well, it is that hard. When I look at the brothers and sisters here, it is the same for all of them. Because I do not know all of your pain, I cannot comfort you fully, but my way of comforting is to say that we should at least eat something delicious together. That is all I can do. It is one way of expressing the thought that when things are too hard, if something sweet goes into one's mouth, it might be a little better; that is how hard it is. The Lord comforts us, but that is comfort for the heart; we receive comfort for the heart, but we also want to receive comfort physically, so that is why we do so.

We are having that hard a time. Although it is hard, to live on each day, day after day, we must have a heart that reveres God. This means that we must know how to respect, love, and fear Him. It is saying that then we can overcome and endure those hardships day by day with a heart that reveres God. We must pray, asking for a heart that reveres God, a heart that knows how to respect, love, and fear Him. Then we can live on sufficiently until the day the Lord comes. That is so, no matter what changes come to this world. But if we have no heart that knows how to fear and no heart that respects, we give up halfway.

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We become people who stumble and fall away. We become those who sometimes fall into the enticement of Satan the devil and sometimes fall away by ourselves.

So, although we believe the gospel and believe the love of the Lord and the salvation the Lord has given, we must know and believe that God is the God of love but is also stern and is also a fearsome One. If you do not have that faith, I hope you will pray, asking for the faith to believe. Even when we are about to go the wrong way, we take care, thinking, "I will go wrong; God will discipline me." We pull ourselves together in body and in heart as well. Only then do we not leave God and go down a strange path, the path God hates. The word says, "*But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:2)*. The words "meditates day and night" mean that one loves God but also knows how to fear Him. Because he fears, he keeps searching for what pleases God, for what the word of God has said about this matter. Because we may go the wrong way and may have wrong thoughts and actions, we must keep thinking about and searching for what God has said each time, and if we ourselves do not understand well, we must have fellowship with those who have gone before us and follow the will of God. Then we can follow. So let you and me live on, fearing God, respecting Him, loving Him, and doing the things that please God.

Only then is God pleased and does He bless you and me; and when you and I are having difficulty and a hard time, God takes our side, guides the way ahead of us, drives back our adversaries, protects us, is with us in the things we do, gives us wisdom, understanding, power, and blessing, and enables us to carry them out, to serve the Lord, and to bear fruit. That is precisely the blessing of God. We must know that it is God's blessing that He lets us eat what we have labored for. Simply eating what we did

not sow is not necessarily the blessing of God. The blessing of God is that He lets us reap the fruit of what we have labored for. The Bible says, *"When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you" (Psalm 128:2)*. Are we not now reaping what we labor for and also using it for the work of God? Then that is the blessing of God. It means that God loves us and blesses us.

How many hardships have we had until now? Living a life of faith has been hard, but how hard it has been for us to work as well! The hardships were beyond words. But in the end God made our work bear good fruit and let us eat of it. In fact, there is nothing that is not hard. Then do you think it is not hard for those who preach? It is all hard. There is no one here for whom it is not hard. Is it not hard for those who farm? Go and try it once. You will find out that it is truly all hard. If we respect one another, know that we each do precious work, know that God blesses us, know how to fear God, know how to believe and respect Him, and live as God wants, then please believe the fact that God blesses us so that we *"shall be like a watered garden" (Isaiah 58:11)* and like *"a tree Planted by the rivers of water" (Psalm 1:3)*. It will surely be so. When the hardship passes, God is with us even in that hardship and also blesses us. I have lived that way until now. I believe that when there is hardship, God also gives blessings through it. Because I have had many such experiences, the harder it is, the more I do that work. I do it, saying, "It is hard, it is tough—did you think serving God would be easy?" Then, when it is too hard, I have lived until now by eating something delicious with the brothers and sisters, telling silly jokes, playing some music, and playing pranks with the brothers, and I know that He will let us live well in the future, too. I hope that you, too, will believe so.

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Just as the seasons God has set surely return, the blessings of God that we have sown abundantly will also surely return. The blessing of God comes upon the Church of God. Dear fellow believers, do not say, like those who are immature, “I am going to live well.” If you want to live well, please follow the Lord. ✉

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CHAPTER

15

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

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Do not block the place where sinners draw near

< Luke 15:1–2 >

“Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them.’”

The sinners who came to hear the word

There are times when, even though we want to hear the word, our past wrongs come to mind and we cannot draw near. Because it seems that the Lord will accept us only if we first show a changed appearance, we hide the sin in our hearts and stay on the outskirts. But in today’s passage, at the very place where sinners come to Jesus, it is revealed how different human judgment and the heart of the Lord are. Here lies the reason we must first look at the Lord, who welcomes them, rather than at the qualifications of the people who drew near.

“Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him” (Luke 15:1). These people came near not to complete their own righteousness and be recognized, but to hear the word. The names tax collector and sinner do not mean that there were no problems in their lives. They were people whose sins had been exposed, and people who, as those sins pricked their consciences, came before the Lord with a heart that longed to receive the remission of sins. Because the Lord had come

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precisely for such sinners, the way to hear the word was open to them. If a person who needs salvation because of sin had to stay away from the Savior because he has sin, to whom would he take the sin he cannot resolve by himself?

The more we, too, hide our wrongs and try to look like decent people, the harder it is for us to accept that the word of the Lord is a word given to us. Coming before the word is not a matter of wrapping up our circumstances and showing them to the Lord, but of hearing how the Lord speaks of sin and salvation. As we see the tax collectors and sinners drawing near, the first step we need also becomes clear. We must not try to create the basis for the remission of sins within ourselves, but must incline our hearts to the word of the One who came to save sinners.

The people who complained that He received sinners

"And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, 'This Man receives sinners and eats with them'" (Luke 15:2). Even when they saw sinners hearing the word, the Pharisees and scribes could not rejoice at their salvation. That Jesus received them and ate together with them became, on the contrary, a reason for complaint. Because they regarded themselves as righteous, they did not think that they needed a Savior, and so they could not see why the Lord had come near to sinners, either. Their gaze remained only on judging the Lord, who kept close company with sinners.

Approving sin as right and receiving sinners in order to save them are different from each other. The fact that the Lord ate with them does not make their sins a good thing, nor is it a declaration that they had become righteous by themselves. The

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Lord let people bound by sin hear the word of salvation. If someone boasts of his distance from sinners without knowing the will of the Lord in dealing with sin, then even though he may outwardly seem to be keeping holiness, he ends up going against the work the Savior is doing.

This complaining heart is not unfamiliar to us, either. When a person whom we regard as having more faults than ourselves hears the gospel and rejoices, we may first recall that person's past. But we must look back at whether what made us stand before God was conduct better than that of others. If our salvation, too, was accomplished by the grace of the Lord, we have no grounds to be displeased that the same grace reaches other sinners. We must lay down the heart that seeks mercy for ourselves while blocking that way for others.

While we hear the word of the Lord, we must focus on the facts the word conveys rather than on the name tag of the one who hears it. If we hold on only to the question of what kind of things that person used to do, we miss the reason that person, too, needs the Lord's salvation. Even so, we cannot say that every choice and action is right. The reason we can preach the way of salvation while discerning people's wrongs is that the Lord Himself bore the judgment for sin. Making known that work by which God resolved sin is our part; sending to the Lord only those who fit qualifications we have set ourselves is not our part. When we keep this order, the church does not remain a gathering that confirms its own righteousness, but becomes a place where we hear the word of the remission of sins together.

The physician the sick need

The reason the Lord is with sinners was already made clear earlier at the house of Levi as well. At that time, too, there was this challenge: *"And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, 'Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?'" (Luke 5:30)*, and the answer the Lord gave on that occasion is recorded. *"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick'" (Luke 5:31)*. The person who needs a physician is not someone who will hide the fact that he is sick and pretend to be well, but someone who will admit his illness and receive treatment. Just as a physician is of no use to a person who regards himself as well, to a person who regards himself as righteous the Savior, too, ends up being One he does not need. Therefore, we, too, need the faith that abandons the heart that puts forward our own righteousness and relies on the Savior, who resolves our sins.

Jesus did not stop at pitying sinners from afar, but Himself bore the responsibility for sin. When He received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and those sins include all the sins of our whole lifetime, spanning our past, present, and future. Bearing the sins He had borne in this way, the Lord was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and thereby received in our place the judgment for sin that we should have received. Since Jesus, who rose again from death, is the Savior who has rescued us from sin and death, the basis of the remission of sins lies not in our reputation or our improved appearance, but in the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

Believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a sinner judging for himself that he has changed into a person

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worthy of being received. It is accepting with the heart Jesus Christ, who accepted our sins through the baptism He received from John and paid the price of those sins on the Cross. Because what the risen Lord has accomplished is certain, we do not need to recalculate that salvation by yesterday's failures or today's feelings. The boldness to come to the Lord even while admitting our own sins comes precisely from this perfect remission of sins.

Open your heart before the call of the Lord

"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:32). The Lord did not call sinners so that they would go on living as they were, boasting of their sins, but called them to turn back from their own ways and believe in the Savior. Repentance does not stop at the feeling of regretting wrongs, but goes as far as abandoning the thought that one can become righteous by oneself and accepting the righteousness the Lord has accomplished. The person who brings his sins to the Lord is not someone who regards sin lightly, but someone who knows that he cannot remove that sin by his own strength and seeks to receive salvation.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, we must not forget the meaning of this call. Even when we correct someone else's wrongs, we must speak hoping that the person will hear the gospel and return to the Lord. Covering up wrongs is not love, but bringing up past matters again and again and taking away even his place to hear the word do not accord with the heart of the Lord, either. While helping him bear the responsibilities he needs to bear, we can clearly preach the fact that the Savior bore even that person's sins.

To us, who want to hear the word but hesitate because of our sins, this scene teaches where to go. Jesus did not drive away the sinners who came near, and even in the face of the voices complaining that He received them, He did not change His will to save. Let us, too, not hesitate while trying to dress ourselves up, but come before the word of the Lord, and when others come to hear that word, let us gladly hear it together with them. The place where we accept the will of the Lord, who receives sinners, is the place all of us need. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing

< Luke 15:3–7 >

"So He spoke this parable to them, saying: 'What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!" I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.'"

Why the one who has lost one sets out to search for it

When many people are gathered, it is easy to forget the one person who cannot be seen. Because there is also much work in caring for those who are already together, the fact that one person is missing is sometimes regarded as no big deal. But Jesus, while speaking of the reason He receives sinners, showed a man who sets out to find the one lost out of a hundred sheep.

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When we know how the Lord regards that one, we, too, can no longer measure joy merely by whether people are many or few.

"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?" (Luke 15:4). The reason he sets out to find the sheep is not that the ninety-nine are not enough, but that the one that was lost is his own sheep. Just as anyone feels the loss when he loses something that is his own, God, too, regards a person whom He made in the image of God, who has sinned and left God, as lost. The fact that many remain cannot take the place of the lost sheep. The Lord asked those who had been complaining about His receiving one sinner how fitting this heart that seeks what was lost is. Therefore, with the thought that since there are ninety-nine, it is fine to be without one, we cannot understand the heart of the Lord, who receives sinners.

As we hear this word, we come to look back on where we were before we were saved. To say that a sheep is lost does not stop at saying that it has lost its way; it means that if it is left as it is, it will die. Therefore, a person who has left God, even if he outwardly has much, cannot remove his sins by himself and obtain eternal life. The judgment that one can get along without depending on others does not mean that one has no need of salvation before God, either. Whatever situation a person is in in the world, a person who is in sin needs the Savior, and we, too, were those who could not have become righteous by ourselves and returned had the Lord not come to find us.

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The joy of returning with the sheep that was found laid on the shoulders

"And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing" (Luke 15:5). What appears after he has found it is not a scene of scolding the exhausted sheep, but a scene of laying it on his shoulders, rejoicing. With this short word, the Lord reveals His heart toward sinners. It means that receiving sinners is not a burden reluctantly endured, but the joy of gaining one who was lost. As we look at the sheep laid on the shoulders, what we must first pay attention to is not how much strength the sheep put forth on the way back, but the labor of the one who brings back the one he has found.

Our salvation, too, depends in this way on what the Savior has borne. When John declined to give Him baptism at the Jordan River, Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and by receiving baptism He had the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all; and because of the sin He had borne in that way, He shed His blood and died on the Cross. That death was the death in which the Lord, who had no sin, received in our place the judgment for our sins. The sin of the world that the Lord bore includes not only the sins already committed but also the sins of the present and the future, all the sins of the whole lifetime we live. Therefore, the remission of sins is not completed by good deeds we gather while we return, but has been accomplished by the work of the Savior, who bore all our sins.

The Lord, who rose again from death, has given eternal life to us, who were bound by sin and death. As we hear this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we believe in Jesus Christ, who came to find us, accepted our sins, and even finished the judgment for those sins. The reason we can lay down the burden of our hearts

when we rely on the salvation the Lord has accomplished is that the responsibility for our sins has been resolved through the Lord's baptism and the Cross. The image of the sheep laid on the shoulders of the Lord leads us to give thanks for what the Savior has done rather than to boast of our own strength.

Heaven rejoices over one person who repents

"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). Jesus connected the joy of finding the lost sheep with the joy of heaven when one sinner repents. Here are revealed the heart that thinks it needs no repentance and the heart that admits it is a sinner and turns back to the Savior. If someone thinks that he has no need to be saved because he has lived better than others, he fails to see his own place properly even before the Lord, who came to find sinners.

The word repentance means turning back. It does not end with recalling a few sins and being distressed or with confessing wrongs, but is admitting that the path on which we lived according to our own will after leaving God was not right, and turning our hearts back to Jesus, who bore our sins. A person who looks for a way to repay by himself whenever he sees his own sins is still trying to return by his own strength. If someone believes only in the Cross of Jesus and does not know that He had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, that person, too, is still a lost sheep that must turn back. But if we accept the word of the remission of sins that the Lord has already accomplished, it becomes clear who the One is to whom we should look. The confession that admits sin and the

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faith that believes in the Savior are connected to each other in this way.

The Lord spoke of the repentance of one sinner; He did not say that heaven rejoices only when a person first produces great results. If, while preaching the gospel, we calculate only how much work the other person will be able to do in the future, we can easily miss this heart that first rejoiced over the sheep that was found. Helping young faith to grow is necessary, but we must not evaluate the person being helped according to our expectations. A life together begins with valuing one soul that has received the remission of sins and returned to the Lord.

Share in the joy of the one who found what was lost

"And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'" (Luke 15:6). The one who found it did not keep the joy to himself, but called his friends and neighbors. He was saying that they should hear together the news that he had found the sheep that was lost and rejoice together. This word opens the way to take part in the joy of the Lord to the people who were complaining about the Lord, who received sinners. It makes them look back on whether they will stand outside, going back over only the sinner's past, or rejoice that he returns to the Lord.

When we, too, set our hearts on what the Lord rejoices in, the meaning of the labor of preaching the gospel changes. Rather than spending our strength arguing with people who say they are fine, we come to pay attention to people who are distressed over their own sins and seek salvation. We must approach not with a

heart that wants to be recognized for speaking well, but with a heart that hopes that a person who does not yet know the remission of sins will meet the Savior. Because we value that person, we can bear even the work of listening to which part of the word he has not understood and opening the Bible together with him, or of waiting for an opportunity to talk again. We must lay down the impatience that tries to drag people in by force, but we must also not remain in the indifference that thinks we have done all we had to do because we have spoken once.

When one of us labors to preach the gospel, others can also pray and help with what is needed. There is no reason to divide the value of labor by how many or how few people one has met in person. If we share the Lord's will to find those who are lost and serve so that the gospel may be spread, then when one soul realizes the word of the remission of sins and rejoices, we, too, can share that joy. Even if people's praise is little, the Lord's heart toward that soul does not change.

The Lord did not forget the one person who could not be seen among many people. Remembering that we, too, were once people who needed to be found, let us preach what the Savior has done to those who do not yet know the gospel. When we lay down the heart that passed by one person because one is few, and rejoice together that he returns to the Lord, the joy of the Lord, who returns with the sheep that was found laid on His shoulders, becomes our joy. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Why did the woman light a lamp and sweep the house for one drachma?

< Luke 15:8–10 >

“‘Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, “Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!” Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.’”

The heart that searches for the lost drachma to the end

There are times when we give up searching for something we have lost. When the thought that we can get by without it grows larger than the effort of searching further, even the regret we felt at first gradually becomes smaller. But the woman of whom the Lord spoke lost one drachma, and she lit a lamp, swept the house, and searched diligently. When we think about what made her search so hard, the heart of God, who deals with the salvation of one sinner, also comes into view anew. With our eyes, which

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used to evaluate people according to their usefulness, we cannot fully fathom the meaning of that effort.

"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?" (Luke 15:8). The woman did not wait for the lost drachma to appear on its own. In the act of lighting a lamp to look around and sweeping the house to search, there is a heart that wants to gain it again. When one loses what is one's own, it feels like a loss, and because it feels like a loss, one does not stop the effort until one finds it. Instead of being satisfied with the nine that remained and giving up the one that was lost, she kept on doing what was needed to find it. Through this familiar scene, the Lord taught those who were listening what the work of seeking sinners means to God. When God seeks one lost soul, He labors like this.

In this parable, what we must see before calculating how much the drachma was worth is the heart of the woman who searches for it. Because the woman valued what she had lost, she labored, and she kept up that labor until she found it. The salvation of a sinner, too, is not a matter of gaining God's attention by proving one's usefulness on the human side. Even if a person who has not met God has many possessions and a healthy body, his soul is empty and sorrowful; and God had pity on us, who are like that in sin, and bestowed salvation on us. That is why even a person who has nothing to boast of in himself can come to the Lord. God's will to save us stands ahead of our insufficiency.

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The repentance of one sinner becomes the joy of heaven

"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). Jesus made the meaning of this parable clear through the repentance of one sinner. In this word it becomes clear what the effort of searching is for, and why one rejoices after finding. It means that heaven rejoices when a person who had left God and was in sin turns from his own way and accepts the word of salvation. In the word that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, there is also the joy of the servants of God and the saints who, while preaching the gospel, watch one soul turn back. Nothing is more joyful to us than seeing a sinner realize his own sin, believe in the gospel, and turn back. This joy lies in a place different from the success familiar to us or the recognition of many people.

There are times when a person thinks there is nothing useful in himself and regards even the Lord's salvation as something that has nothing to do with him. Conversely, a person sometimes does not feel the need to be saved because he has much to put forward before others. But the reason one comes to the place of repentance does not depend on which way one evaluates oneself. When a person knows that he has sin before God and that he cannot remit that sin by himself, he lays down his own judgment and comes to rely on the Lord, who bore sin. What is needed is the faith that accepts the words the Savior has spoken rather than words that exalt or lower oneself.

We must also take to heart the fact that the Lord spoke of one sinner. Though it seems a very small number compared with the number of people in the whole world, the repentance of that one person becomes joy in the presence of the angels of God. Therefore, we must not regard as trivial the time we spend

explaining the gospel to one person. If there are parts he does not understand even after hearing the word several times, we can listen to his questions and explain step by step. Remembering the fact that God rejoices over the salvation of that soul comes before judging the other person quickly.

The work of the Savior, who came to seek us

This heart toward sinners is connected with the purpose for which Jesus came to this earth. When the Lord spoke of salvation having come to the house of Zacchaeus, He said, *"The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10)*. It is not that we obtained salvation because we were wise enough to find the Savior; rather, the Lord came to seek us, who were lost, and to save us. The way by which sinners can hear the word and believe was also opened by this grace of His coming to seek us first.

The salvation Jesus bestowed is not a matter of simply letting sin go without calling it to account. Because God does not regard sin as nothing, Jesus Himself stood in the place of sinners and bore that responsibility. When He received baptism from John, the Lord had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. Not only the sins we committed in the past and our present sins but even the sins of our whole lives reaching into the future were passed on to the Lord at that time. Bearing those sins, the Lord was hung on the Cross and died shedding His blood, and thereby received the judgment for sin in our place; and He rose again from death and rescued us from sin and death.

How precious God regarded us is revealed precisely in this salvation. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish*

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but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). God did not comfort us with words that exaggerate our worth, but gave us the remission of sins and life through His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, the heart that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not stop at checking how many good points one has in oneself. It relies on the Lord, who accomplished salvation through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and accepts the remission of sins God has bestowed as grace given to oneself. The purpose for which He sought us lies, in this way, in resolving sin and letting us live with God.

A life that shares the joy of finding with one's neighbors

"And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!'" (Luke 15:9). The woman let her neighbors know the fact that she had found it and asked them to rejoice together with her. She did not complain, thinking only of the time she had spent laboring; rather, because she had gained what had been lost, she wanted others also to share in that joy. This is also the meaning of Jesus telling this parable in the setting where He was receiving sinners. He was calling those who had been complaining about sinners coming to the Lord to rejoice together over that salvation.

For us who serve the gospel, too, this joy becomes the strength that keeps us going in our actual labors. When we see someone hear the word and realize the remission of sins, we come to know that the time we spent explaining the word and helping has not been in vain. But we must not place the center

of our joy on our ability or achievements. This is because it is the Lord who remitted sins, and the word of salvation we preach is also a word that testifies of what the Lord has accomplished. Those who prayed and helped together over one soul can give thanks together for the grace of the Lord rather than weighing who played a bigger part.

When we know this joy, the way we approach those who have not yet heard the gospel also changes. We do not know who is a lost soul before God, but because God knows, we must not preach only to the people we know, but must preach widely so that anyone can hear. Rather than showing off what we know, we come to preach the word the other person needs and to help him examine it sufficiently. Even small labors, such as making opportunities to read the Bible together or delivering writings that contain the gospel, can be done in the hope that the person will come to know salvation, and a person who has truly been seeking God meets the Lord while reading those writings. We must not regard the other person as worthless because there is no immediate response, and we must also abandon the heart that tries to move him according to our own will by forcing him. A heart that values souls is shown in an attitude of being patient with the other person for a long time while clearly preaching the content of the gospel.

The reason the woman lit a lamp, swept the house, and searched was that she did not give up on the lost drachma. God's salvation toward us, too, was not something He stopped after weighing people's usefulness. Remembering the grace of the Lord, who bore sin and gave us life, let us continue the labor of preaching the word for those who do not yet know that grace. With the same heart with which she called her neighbors to rejoice together when she found what had been lost, we too must share together the joy of one soul receiving the remission of sins. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

God’s one lost soul

< Luke 15:1–10 >

“Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them.’ So He spoke this parable to them, saying: ‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!” I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, “Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!” Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.’”

God’s labor in seeking one thing that was lost

Luke chapter 15 tells the story of seeking the lost sheep and finding the lost drachma. Two things are spoken of here. It speaks of how difficult and hard it is on God’s side, when one

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sheep out of a hundred has lost its way, to go out and find that lost sheep, and how great the delight and joy are when it is found. I cannot tell you how hard it is for God, too, to find the lost sheep. It means that even though He is One with great power, it is that hard for Him. But it says that when one lost sheep is found, the joy is so great that all the people of the neighborhood are gathered together and a feast is held.

Also, a certain woman lost one drachma coin, and to find it she turns everything upside down in every direction. How carefully must the woman have searched every corner of her house to find the lost drachma? She would have lit a lamp, swept the floor, and searched diligently until she found what she had lost. She searches through the bowls in case it went into a bowl, and shakes out the clothes thoroughly in case it went into the clothes. How hard that is! We too make such a fuss when we have lost something precious. The Lord said, *"Does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?" (Luke 15:8)*. With this word God is telling us that it is that hard for Him, too, to find one thing that was lost. God seeks our souls in that way. It means that, on God's side, He seeks the souls that have not received the remission of sins, the lost souls, by sweeping, wiping, and turning things over like that. And it means that when He finds them, He rejoices just as the word says: *"And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!'" (Luke 15:9)*.

One soul among a hundred people

There are truly many people in this world. But the Lord says, *"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of*

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them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?" (Luke 15:4). If there are a hundred people, not all of those hundred are lost souls. It means that one soul among them is a lost soul. Do you know how hard it is to find that one soul mixed in among a hundred people? It is a hundred to one. It is extremely difficult. That one soul is precisely what we are seeking now as we prepare to preach the gospel. It means: among so many people, who is the lost soul?

From God's side they are lost souls, but when we meet people, they themselves do not know whether they are lost souls. They think they are righteous. Ninety-nine out of a hundred say, "I'm fine. I believe well, so why are you telling me that? Tell it to people who don't believe." But the Lord says that He left the ninety-nine in the wilderness and went out to find the one lost sheep, and that He rejoiced after finding that one. Who was saved? One lost soul was saved. Then were the ninety-nine saved? It says the ninety-nine were left in the wilderness. As for the sheep left in the wilderness, packs of wolves come and bite them all to death. In this way, among so many people, those who think as they please and say as they please that they have received the remission of sins all go to hell. God seeks us this meticulously. He is saying that it is this hard to find a lost soul. But God surely finds the lost soul and saves it. Though it is hard and laborious to find, He finds it. He crosses waters, goes over mountains, and searches through the woods, looking behind big trees, on top of small trees, and among the sheep, wondering whether the lost sheep is there. And when He finds it, He holds it to His chest, lays it on His shoulders, comes back, and joyfully holds a feast, eating and drinking with people. It is exactly as the word says: *"And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and*

neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'" (Luke 15:5–6).

When God seeks lost souls among mankind, do you think you just happened to receive the remission of sins? That is not so; on God's side He had sought and sought. When I myself was studying theology, I felt that I was a lost soul before God. I learned later the fact that I was by no means a soul that had met God. So I searched, but there was no way to find Him. But I can now know that God was seeking me in order to meet me. Because I was seeking God and God was also seeking me, we met right then. That is how I was saved. When I was attending seminary, too, I had a great many friends and many acquaintances, but among those many people God found me. I was a person who had lost his way. It is the same with you. You did not know the fact that you yourselves had lost your way, but because, from God's side, you were people who had lost their way, He came to find you. When some people knew the fact that they had lost their way and that they had not yet met the Lord and were wandering, the Lord came to them through the Church and through His servants with the word, and met them. And so the Lord, after finding you and finding me, was glad and held a feast. Jesus, who came to find us, had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and received in our place the judgment we were to receive. Since Jesus rose again from death and gave life to us who were lost, the fact that the Lord found us means that we have received this love of salvation.

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Meeting God is hard from the human side as well

We must know the heart of God—how much labor He spends in seeking these lost souls, and how much He rejoices after He truly finds them. But do you know how hard it is also for a lost sheep to try to meet its master, that is, for us to try to meet God from our side? When we try to meet God from our side, there is nothing we do not try. When a person tries to find God by his own strength, he may also wander from one religion to another. Only after suffering through many things does he meet the Lord. A person who seeks God by himself hardly ever meets the Lord. In this way, a person also wanders, searching many paths by his own strength. A person must know what kind of human being he really is, find no satisfaction even after trying this religion and that religion, and feel the emptiness of life himself; only then does he become one who seeks God, and God meets such a person. Meeting God is not that easy from our side either.

You have met God, and I have met God too. This is grace indeed, but when we look at this word, we can see how hard a thing it is. Many people, while trying to seek and meet the Lord themselves, wrongly think that they have reached the threshold of meeting Him, or that they have already met Him, even though they have not yet met the Lord. Those who are satisfied while believing in some religion even though they have not yet received the remission of sins have not yet searched enough. They have not yet labored enough. Those people must still realize the limit of their own strength and know that they need salvation. We must think about how hard it is for a truly lost soul to meet its Master. Even if one strives one's whole life, one does not meet the Lord. A person who has suffered a fair amount, a person who has clearly realized that it does not work even if he tries, comes to meet Him, but a person who still thinks he can do

it cannot. If a person has suffered only a moderate amount of hardship, he does not readily take hold of this gospel even when it is preached to him. It means that only after he passes through the brink of death several times—passing several times through a crisis severe enough to depart this world—will he take that hand, saying, "Oh, Master, thank you," when the Lord comes with the word, saying, "I have saved you like this," and holds out His hand. Otherwise, it means that even when the Master holds out His hand, he cannot believe whether it is the Master's hand or not and keeps shaking it off.

Among those here, there are older people and young people, but whether old or young, you truly suffered much hardship and searched for God a great deal. It is not that it turned out this way without your searching. When you look into it, you went through countless hardships. It means that all the life you lived in the past was a process for meeting God. The Lord held out His hand, and we also held out our hands and clasped His. This is salvation. I was able to see that human beings do not accept this gospel with only a moderate amount of hardship. If you have accepted this gospel and are in the Church without having gone through such hardship, you should be truly thankful. And if one has truly not met this gospel, one suffers all one's life. Working hard does not make one rich. When one has gathered plenty, problems arise and one loses it all. Some problem arises and it disappears here and disappears there; life is such that what one has worked hard to build vanishes right away. Life is like that, and we have met the Lord. If you met the Lord without going through such hardship, you must truly be united with the Lord and give thanks. If you met the Lord after suffering as much as you had to, you must keep this gospel. And you must preach this to truly lost souls. It is not to be preached cheaply; you must preach it as something precious, making them know its price. How many

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people are going against this gospel! It is because they have not yet suffered enough.

God, who paid the price and found us

I am a person who nearly died because of sin and came back to life. It was not because of something about my body that I nearly died and came back to life, but because of sin. That is why I love the Lord so very much. Have you ever agonized over sin to the point of wanting to die? Or did you just happen to hear the gospel and receive the remission of sins? That may be so for you, but on God's side, He sought you with all His might, and He saved me and you by paying the price of death, by paying a tremendous price. You must know that. Because it is said that we are saved by grace, people simply treat it as if it were nothing, but this is a salvation received by the payment of a price. On our side we obtained it for free, but on God's side He paid the price.

Dear beloved saints, we must know the heart of God, who saved us, and we must know how, on the human side, we should truly seek God. On the human side, too, a person must feel for himself the fact that he needs God. A person who still says he does not need God must realize the limit of his own strength. He must pass through many such crises in his lifetime. Only then does he become a person who seeks God's help, saying, "Oh, God, please save me." There are people whose own strength is still vigorous, who say, "I trust only myself. I trust my own fists." I was like that in the past, and you were like that in the past too. We trusted only ourselves. That is because one's human strength has not yet drained away enough. Do not preach the gospel too quickly to such a person. Tell him and teach him in advance that he will suffer much hardship in the future. Tell him that from

now on he will go through such hardships, and even the hardship of nearly dying because of sin and coming back to life, and that if he dies as he is, he will go to hell and suffer forever. A person needs to know something of hardship, too. He must know how miserable a being he is. You must also tell him about that misery. Because we tell it just too easily, I cannot tell you how much people oppose it. Do you know why God gives hardships to mankind? Do you know why He does not let everything go well as we intend, but surely makes things not go well? He did so in order to make us seek God.

"Leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness"

In this word the Pharisees and the scribes appear. *"Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, 'This Man receives sinners and eats with them'" (Luke 15:1–2)*. Then Jesus spoke to them the parable of the hundred sheep. What is this saying? It means that if the ninety-nine say that they are not lost sheep, the Lord leaves the ninety-nine in the wilderness and goes out to find only the one lost sheep. Even if the ninety-nine go to hell, it has nothing to do with the Lord. The ninety-nine are not in the Lord's view; only the one is in His view. What is that one? It is the lost sheep. Some people say this: "Then do you mean that all these many people who believe so well go to hell?" But those people are not in the Lord's view. Why is that? It is because they think that they are righteous—righteous people who have sin—that they are not in the Lord's view. Compared in numbers it is ninety-nine to one, so which is more precious? "What does it matter if that one measly sheep dies?" No. It means that to the Lord this one is precious. This one is the person

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who says, “I am a sinner, and because I am a sinner, I go to hell and perish. Please save me. I am lacking. I am weak. I am nothing. I am a sinner.” It means that the Lord saves such people. Even we righteous people, by thinking wrongly, may come to have the thought, “There are so many people like that—could it be that we are the ones who are wrong? Could it be that those people are the real ones?” It is not that we have it deliberately, but as we think, we may come to have it.

The Lord is the Lord who came to save lost souls like you and me. It means that He is our Lord, who came to save not the ninety-nine righteous people but one lost sinner. He came to save people who know their own insufficiency and are honest before God. Therefore, have pity on people, but have pity on the lost sheep. Those who truly know nothing—who, though they are sinners, know so little—and follow a bogus guide without even knowing that he is bogus, such church members and such sinners are the lost sheep. But as for the person who, on his own part, knows doctrines and knows a little something and thinks he is all set, after talking about the word with him a little, do not pity him too much. If there is something you must tell that soul, the most joyful news for that soul, it is the words, “If you go on believing like this, you will go to hell.” For that soul, those words are better news than the words, “If you accept Jesus, you will go to heaven.” What that soul truly needs to hear is the words, “If you go on believing like this, you will go to hell. If you die as you are, you will fall into the fire of hell.” Those words are the gospel to that soul. Because he does not know that he is going there, you must tell him that.

I cannot tell you how hard it is for God to go around seeking us. Therefore, we too must diligently preach the gospel for one lost soul. But the ninety-nine who call themselves righteous hide that one soul. I cannot tell you how much labor God spends to

find this one lost soul. He leaves those who call themselves righteous in the field and seeks it; and where has the lost sheep gone? It must have gone somewhere—to the mountains, to a cliff, or to the seashore. As it goes along and comes to a precipice, if there is just grass, it goes on. If the grass stretches down below the slope, it goes down even while slipping. It goes down without knowing that it will fall to its death. The nature of sheep is so ignorant. You have probably seen many pictures of a shepherd coming to find a sheep clinging to a cliff and about to fall, a sheep in a perilous place, and grabbing the sheep by its horn. We too must preach the gospel so that such souls may be saved. The souls that have not met God have a hard time, but through this word He is telling us how hard it is on God's side, too, to save lost souls.

The joy when one sinner returns

The Lord said, *"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7)*. Here the ninety-nine are those who have already come into the sheepfold. We are worn out to death serving the Lord, but when one sinner repents and receives the remission of sins, God's heart goes entirely to that one. When a person who had always said it was all right to have sin comes back and says, "Do I have sin or not? The Lord took it all away," He simply lays him on His shoulders, rejoices, and is delighted. That is how the Lord's heart is. When we too preach the gospel and one person receives the remission of sins, we forget our labors up to then and rejoice together. How glad we are! God is gladder than we are. When one sinner repents, He is truly glad.

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We too were sinners. We too repented, believed in Jesus, and received the remission of sins. When we received the remission of sins, did God rejoice? He rejoiced. A person who has just received the remission of sins may think that he is someone great, but that is not so; he is joyful because he has received the love of God, because he has returned to God's bosom. When someone in the Church receives the remission of sins, the whole Church takes on a festive atmosphere. Whoever that person may be, if it is said that he has clearly received the remission of sins, there is a festive atmosphere. Usually there is a festive atmosphere for a month or two months. We ask him every day, "Do you have sin or not? You don't, do you?" and celebrate every day. The one who should actually be glad is that person, but the ones who are actually glad are God and we. In our hearts we are so happy, and we find him so dear that we can hardly stand it. Do you understand God's heart a little?

The book of Habakkuk records that we rejoice in the God of salvation. *"Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls—Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:17–18)*. Then how much does the Lord rejoice over us? *"He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17)*. It means that the Lord cannot contain His joy over us and loves us quietly. He rejoices over us that much, yet it means that when one sinner returns, He rejoices even more than He rejoices over us. After we receive the remission of sins, are our hearts not joyful? Our hearts being joyful is God rejoicing in heaven. When we look at this word, we can fully know the heart of God, and we can know how the Holy Spirit works in our hearts. *"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10)*.

Find the lost sheep and connect them to the Lord

It was hard for all of us to meet the Lord. It was truly hard to meet the Lord. Had we made the slightest mistake, we would have followed a false shepherd and nearly died. Had we not kept our wits about us, one day we would suddenly have been devoured by Satan the devil and nearly gone into the fire that is never quenched, forever. Think how horrible that is. Had we made the slightest mistake, we would nearly have suffered that, but the Lord came to us and said, "I have saved you like this." How thankful we were for that! When His hand came down just a little at the word that the Lord had saved us, we grabbed it firmly. However hard we search on this earth, there is no one who has removed sin except the Lord. There is no one but God. Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River, had the sin of the world transferred to Him in its entirety, and died in our place, and thus He removed our sins. Though it was a brief moment, would it not have been a disaster if at that time we had not yielded our hearts and accepted God's salvation? It means that if our Lord, who is the shepherd, leaves us in the field and goes away, He heads toward other lost sheep. It means that when He has found a lost sheep but that one says that it is not lost, the Lord waits, but if it holds out to the end, He leaves it in the field and departs. We very nearly ended up that way.

If you have truly met God while suffering only a little, that is fortunate. But if the Lord had come to you when you were eating well and living well and said, "I have removed all your sins," would you not have snorted at it? "What need is there for God? What does God have to do with anything? God is someone you look for after you die; why look for God while you're alive in such a nice world to live in?" If we had been happy and perfect while living on this earth, we could not have met the Lord. But

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in order to meet us, the Lord shaped us through various circumstances and came to find us. Like a miracle, we received the remission of sins as one person out of a hundred. If you count among your families, your clans, and your kin, there are not that many. God met us. We are truly ones chosen from among countless people.

A soul that is truly seeking God has a heart that earnestly longs for God to meet him. We must find such souls. Finding such a soul, sitting him down, letting him hear the word, and so helping him meet the Lord is our work. Whether there truly is such a soul around us—finding such a soul is our work, the work of shepherds, and the work of us righteous people who have received the remission of sins first. Do you see such souls around you? We must find such souls. Many people hear the gospel, but among them those who receive the remission of sins are few. If so, we have no need to be disappointed. If we preach the gospel to a hundred people and two receive the remission of sins, there is no need to be disappointed, is there? The Lord said one out of a hundred, so according to the word, we have been blessed twofold. If we preach the gospel to ten people and one or more receive the remission of sins, that is a great blessing from God and something remarkable. The Apostle Paul also preached the gospel on this earth, but it was not that so many people received the remission of sins. In the age of Acts, several thousand people received the remission of sins, and after that, people who received the remission of sins were rare.

I hope that we remember that, just as it was hard for us to find God, it was truly hard for God, too, to find us; that we give thanks that we have met that God; that we give thanks that God met us; and that, in any case, you and I give thanks before the Lord that we have met the Lord. What grace and what blessing this is! Even though we are lacking, we are people who have met

God. Even though we are lacking, we are people in the Church of God and people who have received the blessing of God. We are such stars, chosen before God one in a thousand, one in ten thousand, among the countless stars of heaven. How thankful we are! I hope that all of us saints will, giving thanks and rejoicing all our lives, follow the Lord and serve the Lord in the Church, which is the body of God, preach this gospel, and, toward the lost sheep, truly search them out carefully, seeking until we find them, and connect them to the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

He was lost and is found

< Luke 15:11–24 >

"Then He said: 'A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me." So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'" And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for

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this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." And they began to be merry.'"

What it means to waste

Luke chapter 15 speaks of three parables about finding what was lost. The last story among them is the story of the younger son who returned, and this word presents the parable of the two sons. Through this word, I wish for us to share grace together. It says that a certain man had two sons, and the younger son asked his father for the portion that would fall to him, obtained all of that portion, went out, and wasted all the property with prodigal living. *"And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living" (Luke 15:12–13).*

All the people who believe in Jesus know this content well. However, rather than the storyline, we must know the meaning of what God is saying in this word. Like the younger son, who took the portion that would fall to him, went off, and wasted all that property with prodigal living, we must examine how much people waste with prodigal living what they have received from God.

God has given us the portion that would fall to us. God has given us much grace. He has also removed our sins and has given us the opportunity and the ability to live rightly. But it says that he wasted it all with prodigal living, and this story is a story about our committing sins. The grace God has bestowed on us is truly great and amazing, and it is saying how much we ourselves

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waste the grace and love we have received from God, that righteousness.

We, the righteous, have received the remission of sins, cleansed as white as snow. The righteous have received the love with which God the Father saved us by sacrificing even the life of His Son. If we speak of what we have received from God, there is truly much to talk about. The righteous have also received the strength to live for God, and besides that there is truly so much more. There is also the righteousness we have received from God. We have received not our human righteousness but the righteousness of God. It means that we truly received everything, yet we used it all up in committing sins with prodigal living and lost all the righteousness of God. It means that we consumed it all. It means that we squandered it all by committing sins.

Wasting means that although the righteous have received much of the grace of God, while living on this earth they keep committing, repeatedly and with prodigal living, the sins that God does not want, and so they completely squander that righteousness of God which they inherited through the word of God. Later, they themselves do not even know whether they believe in God or not. They certainly do believe, yet there are times when they do not know whether this faith is truly believing in God or not. Such a thing is wasting. It is not that God did not give it in the first place.

Just as the younger son here received all the portion that would fall to him and left, we too have already received everything from God. God has removed all the sins of all people, has given us the right to become children of God, has given us grace, has made us righteous, and has given us everything abundantly. But it means that we took all of this, went out into the world, drank it all away as we pleased with prodigal living,

and wasted it all in committing sins. Since we have wasted everything we had, have we not become utter beggars? This is speaking of us human beings. It is speaking of us human beings who live before God.

Among those who have received the remission of sins, there are truly many people who waste in this way. Born-again people waste all the grace of God. It means that they waste it by committing sins until they become utter beggars. People who have not received the remission of sins are like that too, but those who have received the remission of sins are worse, and very much so. It is not that one particular person is like that; rather, it means that, as they live, all the saints, in ways not visible to the eye, waste all the grace of God. They keep doing things that God is not pleased with, get irritated and lose their temper and follow the flesh, and, being stubborn, keep on even though they know it is wrong. They do it until they have wasted everything, until the bottom is completely exposed.

The grace of God is so great, and God loved us and made us righteous. He has given us the right to become children of God and has granted the righteous all the conditions under which they can truly live righteous lives. He has also granted us the Church and has given us the grace to be able to serve the gospel. He has given us sunlight, has given us every environment our bodies need, and has given us everything we need both spiritually and physically. God has given us all the portion that would fall to us. Among that grace, what we must remember first is the fact that through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all and bore even the sins of our entire lifetime. Bearing those sins, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and was judged in our place, so the righteousness we have received is something the Lord has given us by sacrificing Himself in this way. But it says

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that we took this, went out, and wasted it all with prodigal living, and here wasting means not committing sins once or twice but committing them very continuously. Until when? Until the bottom is completely exposed, saying, "Let's go as far as it goes. Let's see how far it goes." If you get on a local train, say, "Let's go as far as it goes," and keep going, there is a loud noise, and then you hear, "This is the last stop. Passengers getting off, please get off." If you go as far as it goes, you reach the last stop. It means that after we have received the remission of sins, we say, "Let's just go as far as it goes and see what happens," and keep on repeatedly committing what God hates, commit sins again even though we know it is wrong, commit them because we are bored, commit them saying we are testing things, commit them because we are weak, commit them because we are proud, commit them because we are arrogant, and keep committing sins. This is what wasting means.

If one has even a speck of something to boast of

All of us human beings are like that before God. Are those who have received the remission of sins not like that? Those who have received the remission of sins are like that too. They waste all the grace of God. It means that he wasted everything and became an utter beggar, attached himself to a Gentile and got a job feeding pigs, and, trying to get even a little of the pigs' slop to eat, put his mouth into the slop trough together with the pigs, was caught by the owner, and was driven out. *"And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything" (Luke 15:16)*. Because he was hungry, he came to do the work of carrying the pigs' feed, and when the owner mixed the feed and said, "Take this to the last

pen over there," he tried to scoop some into his mouth while carrying it, but the owner was keeping a close watch. So when the owner was not looking, he stuck his head in and ate together with them, and he was caught by the owner.

No one gave him anything. If he had been able to eat even that, if he had eaten it and become full, he would not have come back to God; but since no one gave him even that, now he was so hungry that his stomach stuck to his back and he was about to die. That is why he seeks God. The younger son would not have returned under ordinary circumstances, but he returned because he truly could not get even the slop to eat. This is how evil we human beings are before God. I cannot tell you how evil the carnal thoughts of us human beings and this flesh are. As for how far down we humans go, we go down without end. The righteousness we received from God disappears completely, and we come to die. We reach the point of being about to die. It means that we reach the point of saying, "Oh no, I have surely received the remission of sins, but it seems I am going to hell." It means that only when one reaches that point—when one has no righteousness of one's own at all and no righteousness received from God, and human rightness has completely run out, so that one is in a state of being completely bound for hell—does one call on God.

If he had even a speck of something left, he would have tried somehow to make a living with it, but now that the bottom was completely exposed, he could not possibly go on living, and since he found himself bound for hell, he came to think, *"How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" (Luke 15:17)*. This word tells us that we humans are this evil, that we humans are this worthless.

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When the saints who have received the remission of sins are first clothed with the righteousness of God, they are so full that they sing hymns and float about on the clouds, their feet barely touching the ground. When asked to come forward and give their testimony, they quickly come forward and say, “I used to live this way and that way, but Jesus took away all my sins at the Jordan River, so I have no sin,” and they go out and preach the gospel—how well they do it!—handing out gospel tracts with great excitement. They preach the gospel so well like that, and when they hear the word of God, they are ever so glad. But as time keeps passing after they receive the remission of sins, they should be more thankful, joyful, and glad as the days go by, yet it means that as the days go by they go downhill. At first after receiving the remission of sins, they go up to the very top of heaven and sit right beneath God, and then, just as the man who fell among thieves went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, they begin to come down.

“The grace of God is something to be thankful for, but—I suppose it’s ‘no sin’ again, I suppose there’s another meeting, I suppose we’re gathering again, why are there so many meetings, and they’ll say again, ‘You’re fleshly,’ it’s the same old story every day, oh, what on earth do they want me to do now, fine, I confessed that it is so, oh, I’m sick and tired of it, sick and tired.” In this way they lose the joy of salvation and forget that they are people of God, and they keep committing sins because they themselves do wrong, and they slowly begin to forget that righteousness God gave them, the fact that they have no sin, the fact that Jesus took away all their sins. “Isn’t it the case now that I have sin? I keep repeatedly committing sins by going against the will of God like this, so don’t I have sin then? Am I not going to hell?” They have completely squandered the righteousness of God.

The more we believe in Jesus Christ, the better we should become, but it means that the longer we believe, the more we squander. This word is speaking of exactly that part. When they first received the remission of sins, they were like the sun, but a little later they change into the moon, later into darkness, and into formlessness. *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day" (Genesis 1:1–5).* The very first thing God did for us on the first day is the remission of sins. Our souls, which were in formlessness, the souls that were bound by sin and locked in darkness—our Lord removed all our sins and saved us, thereby giving us freedom and making us His children. This is the work He did on the first day, so how can one go back down after receiving the remission of sins? This is not true of just a few people in particular; everyone is like that. Everyone squanders it. Those who realize this quickly come back quickly, say, "How many hired servants with plenty of bread there are in our father's house! Oh, I would be thankful even if He used me as just one of the hired servants," follow along, and live like hired servants every day. They become those who pray before God and receive, live united in the Church, and live like that every day. Those who do not do so and go as far as it goes squander it all completely.

It means that they forget the grace of God, and eventually, to the point of wondering whether they are going to hell, there is not one bit of the righteousness of God left in their hearts, nor any righteousness of their own, and nothing remains but

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emptiness, shame, despair, and pain. It means that nothing remains but darkness. What do we need? What do we ourselves look like? The righteous have received the remission of sins and have been living a life of faith, but how much have they lost? This younger son makes this confession: *"I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants'" (Luke 15:18–19)*. This means that he has lost all the grace of God. He has completely lost all the grace of God by committing sins. So even though God says, "You are My son; you are righteous," even though God has called him righteous and made him righteous, he cannot be thankful for it. This is because he is so lacking, commits so many sins, and has so wretchedly kept wasting the righteousness of God. When the grace of God remains in our hearts, we live the life of faith well, but when the grace of God does not remain in our hearts and we have squandered it all, we are ashamed even to say that we are righteous before God.

Now we cannot even do that. If we were sinners, there would rather be hope, but now, because we have received the remission of sins, we cannot go back and forth, becoming sinners again and then righteous again; we have truly sinned against heaven and against the father, so now we cannot possibly be thankful. It means that you have wasted the righteousness of God in your hearts to this extent. It means that you have come to the point of dying. In this way he returns to the father. When he returns to the father, what does the father say? *"It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found" (Luke 15:32)*.

The one who had died because of the price of his own sin

In fact, we are those who are dead. We are all those who have wasted the grace of God. We are those who are completely dead. It means that we are truly those who have wasted everything, who are worthless, and who have died. The father said that your brother who returned was dead and is alive, and it means that we are those who were dead before God. God has made alive those who had nothing, like us—us, who had consumed all the righteousness of God. We were dead and are alive. He said, "I lost him and have found him," and we are those who had left God. If you quietly consider how much you yourselves and I myself fail to live according to the will of God, how much we go against Him, and how much we are wasting the grace of God through the sins we have committed, we cannot say a word before God. It means that there was truly no hope and we were dead without a doubt, but God made us alive. *"Was dead and is alive again."* We are those who were dead because of the price of our sins, because of going against God, and are alive again. We are those who wasted all the grace of God, those who used up the grace of God through the sins we commit, yet God has still, without change, made us alive.

When we look at the word, we are lacking, truly worthless, dead, and those who have wasted everything—how then does our God receive us? The younger son returned, saying, *"I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:21)*. The word says that when he returned, the father saw his son coming back from far off while he was still a great way off, and ran to him. *"When he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him" (Luke 15:20)*. He

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ran to him, embraced him, kissed the lips of the son who had put his mouth into the slop trough with the pigs, brought him home, changed his clothes, put a ring on his hand, put new shoes on his feet, and said: *"Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:22–24)*. Through His Son Jesus Christ, God has cleanly resolved all the sins of people by the baptism Jesus received from John at the Jordan River and by the Cross. Therefore, He has opened the way for all human beings to be saved.

There is no one who has not been lost

All of us human beings were those who had been dead. But the love of God, the salvation of God, has come upon us human beings through God. He has given us new life. In fact, we were those who had been lost before God. There is not a single person who has not been lost before God. We are those who consumed all the love of God, the grace of God, and the righteousness God gave. Do you believe? Do you believe the fact that you yourselves were dead and God has made you alive again? Do you believe that we are those who boasted loudly and went out, gave our parents a hard time, and wasted with prodigal living everything our parents gave us? That we were all entirely prodigal means that we did not spend money on what was right but spent it all on the wrong things. Whenever we do something, we pick out and do only what God hates, and when we come to church we are somewhat sound, but when we go into our own thoughts, we keep God at a distance. In fact, it is because by

birth we are, from the start, that kind of seed. Human beings are that kind of seed. This applies equally to those who have received the remission of sins and to those who have not.

Even among those who have received the remission of sins, there are many who, seen from God's side, are now lost. The people of the world post notices on telephone poles saying, "Looking for a lost child," and we, the righteous, should also post notices saying, "Looking for a lost righteous person." We too must look after the brothers and sisters whose hearts have grown distant from God. "Looking for a lost righteous person. If anyone sees this righteous person, please contact us." In fact, we are those who are lost before God.

When we look carefully at our brothers and sisters, we see that the longer time passes, the better they become spiritually. The word says, *"Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16)*. However, because we do not see what we look like before God, on our own side we say that we are doing well, but deep within ourselves there are evil things, things that go against God, and we do not know them well. Not knowing the things we have inside, we live thinking, "I have made it," but the evil things within come out from time to time and keep doing what God does not want, so our hearts are grieved. And later we completely die. So we become completely lost children. The younger son left home, became a lost child, and said that he was not worthy to be called his father's son. Are we like that too? Yes, we are. God looks at us and calls us righteous and calls us His children. But are we unashamed before God? When our human lives go as far as they go, when all that we are at root comes out and all our evil pours out, we become the lost. We become the dead who are not worthy of being called the father's son before God. We become like those who are completely

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going to hell. We are that kind of seed. We are not a seed that is somewhat useful; when everything is completely exposed down to the bottom, we are not worthy to be called sons of God. How can we, being so lacking, be called sons of God? If He says we are dead, that is a very righteous judgment and fitting. We can agree with that, but when the Holy One says, "You are My son; you are righteous; you are My child," we have no confidence. If we have a conscience, we have no confidence.

We must know ourselves. We must know that we were those who had been dead. God has made alive those who had been dead. *"Was dead and is alive again."* We must know that God made us alive when we had been dead, so that we have come to life. We must know the grace of God. It means that there is nothing decent in us. We were one hundred percent sinners, we were those who had squandered one hundred percent of the grace of God, and we were those who could not help but go to hell. God rescued such people out of hell and made them alive.

The reason I can come before you and speak is that I too am a person just like you. If I were not a human being and my body too had been transformed just like God, I could not possibly understand you. Before God, there is God, there are the people, and in the middle there is the priest. The priest is just the same as the people. The priest is not a special person. Because the priest, being just the same as the people, sympathizes with them, he takes the side of the people before God. The priest also hears the word of God, knows the will of God, asks Him to save the people, and conveys righteousness to the people.

As I pastor in the church and look carefully, what is truly strange is this: the saints should become a little better after receiving the remission of sins, so why do they become worse? As time passes, their height should grow and their knees should become healthier so that they follow better, so why is it that the

farther they go, the more they sink down and become unable to walk? When they received the remission of sins they ran about, so it is incomprehensible how they have come to be like this. When that brother received the remission of sins, he was so glad and sparkling, but less than three days later he sinks down and goes about deflated. Then, when the word is preached to him, he goes around grinning with joy. "Why is this so? Is this not the remission of sins?" As it turns out, it is that they do not know what they themselves are like. They do not know that they were those who had been dead and that God made alive those who had been dead. They do not know that He saved human beings soaked in sin, who were originally dead, completely without righteousness, and capable of consuming all the grace of God. Because they do not know this, when they fall short, they sink down and become worthless human beings. It is because there was evil within them that they received salvation from God, but they do not acknowledge that.

They thought that now that they had received the remission of sins they would be good, everything they did would be right, and something would happen all at once; but darkness comes out of them, and although God loved them so much, they have a great deal of the heart that loves their own flesh, and as such things rise up wildly, they lose heart and sink down. As a result, they keep growing distant from God, and so they come to commit sins, and because they are originally the seed of sin, they come to bear the fruit of sin; and as they keep going out, they begin to grow more distant step by step. It means that eventually they grow infinitely distant and become those who have completely lost God. But what we, the righteous, must clearly know is that God has surely made alive those who had been dead. The son who returned is one who was dead and is alive, and was lost and is found.

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Dear beloved saints, the servants of God and the saints are all the same. If one does not know one's own evil, one cannot help but grow distant from God, and if one does not know the fact that one was dead, that one is a seed of evildoing, one cannot return to God. To return to God, one's own righteousness must be completely broken, and it means that breaking that righteousness needed a great deal of time. We are so deceived by ourselves. We are truly worthless and truly going to hell, not the least bit better than a vicious murderer, yet we keep saying to ourselves, "I am better than a murderer. I have never even hit someone on the forehead once with a spoon. I have never hit my own child, and I have never hit my friend. So how can you compare me with a murderer?" It is because we have our own merits, our own righteousness, that we do not acknowledge God. Because we have the righteousness of our own merits, we go little by little toward committing sins. And so eventually we go as far as it goes. When we get there, we say, "Ugh, I'm dead, dead. I'm ashamed to be called a son of God, and maybe this isn't even salvation; my salvation will probably be canceled. Even if I were God, I would not call myself a child of God. I should have some shame—how can I go to church, look at the servant of God, and call the brothers and sisters? How can I live committing sins like this and then suddenly turn around and say that I live a life of faith? I can't do it, I can't."

God, who could not help but give life

The saints fall into corruption over time. However, by believing the word, we must acknowledge once and for all that we were dead. We must confess by faith, "I am one who cannot help but go to hell. I truly have no righteousness at all. I am one

who has come to life because God made me alive." If God had not made us alive, no one would go to the kingdom of heaven. If God had not removed all our sins, if God had not become our Father, if He had not become our God, if He had not removed sin, we could not return to God. Isn't that so? Yes, it is.

If God were not our God, how could we return? We were able to return because that God is our God. We were able to turn back at any time. Why is that? Because God is our God and our Father, and because we are His sons and children, we can at any time recognize what has gone wrong and turn back. He is our God and our Father, and although we were those who had been dead because of our fundamental sin, we have become those who have received salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ, through the love of God. Because we have become His children, we have received the grace to be able at any time to know what we ourselves are like, to know the love of God, and to turn back. This younger son was able to turn back because he believed God to be his Father as he said, *"How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare" (Luke 15:17)*. God the Father is the Father of all human beings. He has removed all the sins of all people. All people cannot help but be judged and go to hell because of sin, but God the Father has given new life through His Son. So He has opened the way for all human beings to be saved. Since Jesus rose again from death and gave us new life, we must not avoid the Father, weighed down by our own wrongdoing, but believe in this grace that has made us alive and return.

In fact, do the people of the world have sin? They have no sin. When I say this, people call it crazy talk, but it is truly talk that brings one to one's senses, and it is the truth. However, as we, the righteous, go on living, more and more fleshly things come out. We lived that way in the past too, but because we have

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received the remission of sins and have no sin, we can now go wild as the flesh desires. The flesh wants to prosper and wants to shine at all times, and since the grace of God has already been received and, without crying and wailing anymore, it has already been done, we now want to live as the flesh desires. But please know that following the flesh is sin. The word says, *"The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7)*. It is the exact opposite of God. When we follow the Spirit, God also gives us what we need for the flesh. We could care for both the flesh and God, and we could make good use of this body God has given us and use it well for the work of God, but it means that we push God aside and serve only this body. It means that we care only for ourselves. So, just as an angel became proud and became a fallen angel, we become those who fight against God. It is not that the enemy of God is someone else; we ourselves become the enemy of God. That is why it says that we must not follow the flesh.

It is written, *"With the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10)*. But it means that even though the saints who have received the remission of sins have faith, no matter how much, believe in Jesus, and have reached salvation according to this word, because they could not do everything the flesh wanted to do because of the law before they received the remission of sins, after receiving the remission of sins they want, rather, to try everything the flesh could not do, precisely because they have no sin. If that happens, they come to live like people who have completely lost the righteousness of God. Then what must we, who have the flesh, do? Our souls must wake up, and we must know what is truly right. We are slow to learn, and even when we learn, we lack the faith to accept it, so we accept some things and do not accept others. But what we must clearly know is that, although it is true that we sometimes follow the flesh,

God has made the dead alive. *"This my son was dead and is alive again" (Luke 15:24)*. Here the son refers precisely to us. We were those who had been dead, but our God has made us alive.

He said that because he was lost and is found, it is right that we should make merry and be glad. Because we have the flesh, we cannot help but be that way, but what about God? God cannot help but make us alive. It was because of God's love, His being God, His character, and His heart that loves us that He could not help but make us alive.

Confess with your heart that you believe in these two: the baptism and the blood of the Cross

The righteous who have received the remission of sins cannot help but be like this, and God cannot help but be like that. Do you believe? That is why we must return and give thanks to God by faith. We are those who were dead and have come to life. We are those who were dead and have come to life by faith. Therefore, we must follow the Lord by faith. Within the word 'Christ' in Jesus Christ there are three offices. He is King, He is Priest, and He is also Prophet. Through the word of God He has taught us wisdom, has taught us the way by which we can live by the Spirit, and has taught us how we can live happily both spiritually and physically. We must follow by faith the word God has taught us. When we follow by faith, we become not servants of sin but servants of righteousness, not servants of sorrow but servants of happiness. We must follow by faith.

We must acknowledge that we are those who waste the righteousness of God. There are some who have not yet gone all the way to the end, aren't there? Even those who say, "I was about to go this far, but I came to my senses a little and came

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back," look with the eyes of faith. You must look with the eyes of faith at yourselves, who, like this younger son, received the remission of sins before God but keep committing sins with what you received both spiritually and physically until you go right up to the gate of hell. You must know that you are such people. Is there anyone who, having somehow been held on to by the guide and by the brothers and sisters and dragged back this far, still thinks, "I am not the younger son. I am different from you"? How are you different? Those who have firmly become people of faith, saying, "I am just the same as the younger son. I am this kind of seed. I am dead. If it were not for Christ, I would go to hell. Jesus Christ has surely saved me. I have been saved by faith, and God has made me alive, so I live a life of faith," escape from that part by faith, even though they are people who go against God because they have the flesh. They escape from themselves by faith, follow the Lord by faith, and serve God by the Spirit; although they have the flesh, they do not use it for committing sins but bring the flesh into submission and offer it to God as an instrument of the righteousness of God. They live such lives by faith. It means that we must not splash about at the water's edge of shallow thinking.

Having received the remission of sins does not mean that we say, "He took away this sin too," only when we have actually committed a sin; rather, even regarding sins we have not yet committed, we must confess ourselves by faith, saying, "Jesus took away all this sin too. I have not actually committed such a sin, but seen through faith, I am a person who has actually committed it." By faith we come before God, believing that we are truly, like the younger son, those who waste the grace of God, who are prodigal, and who were dead, but that we have come to life through Jesus Christ and have obtained life. We rise up by faith, saying, "I am such a dead person and have wasted all the

grace of God, but God has made me alive. He has surely removed my sins and has surely made me His child." Rising up by faith, we follow God and by faith do the things that please God. In the past we were servants of people and servants of the devil, but now we live the rest of our lives as servants of God. We live the rest of our lives by faith as soldiers of God. This is faith.

The salvation in which He washed us with the water of baptism of the laver so that we could come back again

It is not that we acknowledge that we are such people only after we have gone all the way to the end; rather, it is acknowledging the word of God by faith. Dear beloved saints, let me ask you a few things. Do you have the flesh? Do you keep wasting the grace of God? It is not a good thing, but in fact it is so. We must acknowledge that we are such people. But our God has made those who had gone far, far away come back. He has opened the way so that they could come back. He has already removed all that sin too. Having already removed all that sin, while the son was still a great way off, He had compassion on him, ran, fell on his neck, and kissed him.

The father waits with the door open. "You rascal, when will you ever come back? You are out there suffering hardship to the point of death—didn't you know that you would suffer once you left home? Even so, do you know how much I am waiting for you? My son, my son, it is time for you to come back; just come back. I have removed all your sins. Come back, come back. How can you grieve your father's heart like this?" And then the son came back. The father runs out from the porch into the yard

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without even putting on his shoes. “My son is coming back. My son!” The son, unable to face him, hangs his head low and says, “Father, I am ashamed even to be called your son.” The father pats that son on the back and kisses his forehead and kisses his cheeks, saying, “You rascal, you have done well to come back. You have done well to come back. You haven’t changed a bit.” To the son who says, “Use me as one of your hired servants,” he says, “You have done well to come back, done well,” and at once takes off his clothes, has the servants bring out the best robe and put it on him, puts a ring on his hand, and puts shoes on his feet. Then he says to the servants, “My son was dead and has come back; he was lost and is found. Kill the fatted calf and strike up the music,” and holds a feast. It means that he was lost and is found. It means that he was dead and is alive.

This is what believing in Jesus is. When we were sinners, we could not help but go to hell, and even if He called us sons of God and righteous, we were lacking people who, with our flesh, could not possibly answer; yet our God abundantly, with His love, His righteousness, and His rightness, abundantly made us righteous. And He embraced us in His arms and let us work in the kingdom of God. Dear beloved saints, God has made us alive out of death. To the dead, who had no joy, no righteousness, nothing to boast of, and could not help but go to hell, our God gave His Son, gave new life, and made them alive. Do you believe?

He has made us alive. He did not use us as one of the hired servants but let us live in the Father’s house as sons. We would be thankful even if He used us as one of the hired servants, but He let us live as sons. Everything of the Father has become the son’s. It means that the son and the Father, never dying, have come to belong to each other forever. The righteous must know that they are now living in the kingdom of God. I hope you will

know that you and I, within the grace of God, have been brought to life again by God—God having made us alive from among the dead—and that we, the righteous, are living a life of faith in the Church of God and enjoying glory together with God. And I hope you will know that we are serving God in faith.

We are now those who were dead and have been made alive. We can never die again. How much grace God has given us! Now the younger son who has returned will never leave home. Whether he dies, he dies at home, and whether he lives, he lives at home, and truly all the father's work is his own work, and everything of the father is his. He has now become such a person. The first son could leave home, but the younger son can never leave home. Because he went out, suffered hardship to the point of death, and learned that this place is good, he will never leave. But the first son has the possibility of leaving. Because the father holds a feast for the younger son, the first son protests to his father, "That worthless fellow has come back—why is Father so glad? Father never even killed a single calf for me, yet that fellow who wasted all of Father's property with prodigal living has come back, so what is there to feast about?" Then the father says, *"It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found" (Luke 15:32)*. The older brother was discontented.

The second one to run away from home is the older son. It means that those in the Church who do not know what they are like and say, "I have something good. I haven't committed sins like that person. I am not like so-and-so. I am upright, but the church doesn't recognize me. Bah, I'll just quit," are very likely to leave home. Being very likely to leave home means that they have already left. Those who have left must come back. They must know that they have already wasted everything. They must come back by faith. In the Church there will be many in the

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future who will leave home—first sons. Come back by faith. This word is speaking of exactly that.

He gave new life to sinners

God speaks to us. He tells us that we were dead and are alive, were lost and are found. He tells us that we were dead, but God gave us life and made us alive. You and I were those who had been dead. It means that although we are servants of God and people of God, we were those who had been dead. We are fundamentally dead. *"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1)*. God has made alive those who were dead in sins and trespasses. He sent Jesus to this earth, and Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River, had all the sin of the world transferred to Him, and died in our place on this earth, thereby saving us. He has made alive you and me, those who had been dead. We were those who had been lost to God. God has found us with His love, with His truth, with His life. Having been loved by God, having obtained new life from God, the righteous have become those who will live forever and who now live before God. We have become those who have received the grace of God. We who have become righteous give thanks for the grace of God. We give thanks for the grace of making the dead alive. We could not possibly have lived.

Before God we cannot help but commit sins and are weak, and fundamentally we are friends with sin and in league with sin. When we were formerly sinners, we were those who were far from God, but our God separated us from sin and gave us His life, thereby making us His children. He has made us alive. We have become those who have obtained new life. We have obtained new life through the baptism Jesus received from John

and the blood He shed on the Cross. The rest of our lives, too, is within God's bundle of life, and our life is within the grace of God. We have become such people and have received such grace. As those who have obtained new life before God, we must truly be thankful. It is not at the childish level of arguing in the Church about who is better or worse, or about whether one yields one's heart or not; we must know that God has made alive those who were fundamentally dead. It means that He has given us new life. It means that He has found those who were lost. We must be thankful for the love of God and for His giving us new life.

Our God has given new life to the righteous in this way. It is not a matter of committing many sins or few sins. It means that He has given the righteous fundamental life. It means that we have met God again. This younger son obtained new life from God and lived. That he lost his first life, received a second life from God, and lived forever—this is the word of God. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Only when one's own goodness is broken is the goodness of God revealed

< Luke 15:25–32 >

"Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'"

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What must first be broken in a born-again person

This part of Luke chapter 15 tells us truly many things, and among them it tells us that only when a born-again person's own rightness—that is, the part where he says that he himself is right before God—is broken can the Lord use him. We cannot say that our rightness is more right than the righteousness of God, than the rightness of God, just because we do the work of God well or because we preach the gospel of God. No matter how much a person lives for the gospel, and no matter how excellent a man of God he is, he cannot say that he is better than that love and that righteousness of God, who saved us through Jesus Christ. It is that righteousness by which Jesus received baptism from John in the Jordan River, had all the sin of the world transferred to Him, and died for us in our place, and so caused us to be born again. But many people, while believing in God, live with a heart like that of the first son and act in such ways. That is why many people make the heart of God feel hurt and commit many wrongs before God.

"Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing" (Luke 15:25). When this first son came back from working in the field, he found that a feast was being held in the house. So he called one of the servants and asked, and the servant said, *"Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf" (Luke 15:27)*. If, after we have received salvation, we think that you and I have rightness or have something to be proud of, that is a great wrong before God. There is a heart like that of this first son in us born-again people, and we must abandon this kind of part.

Every person lives by taking pride in himself and has something he is proud of. But because of what he is proud of,

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there is a corrupt heart that puts forward his own righteousness, his own rightness, more than the righteousness of God. Man is man, and God is God. No matter how right a person is, no matter how excellent he is, and even if he is a servant of God, he cannot be better than God. What is it that comes out in us born-again people after we are born again? It is what we are proud of, the things we do well before God. God is not pleased with a person who has much righteousness of his own. We must know about that kind of part.

Human goodness opposes the goodness of God

People oppose the rightness of God with their own righteousness, with their own rightness. This is the symptom that first appears in a born-again person. When people look at themselves, saying, "After all, I have believed in the Lord well and followed Him well; I do this well too, and I serve this well and obey well," everyone has that kind of thing. But that is not right and not fitting before God. Before God, one's own rightness opposes God. It is human goodness that opposes God. Within human righteousness there is human goodness, and that is precisely what opposes the goodness of God. For a born-again person to regard himself as very good is precisely what is evil, and it is more evil than committing murder and robbery. So, in a way, after receiving the remission of sins it is better to know that one is wicked. Because such a person is wicked, he exalts the righteousness of God and serves God well. But a person who has many good things of his own opposes the goodness of God because of his own good things, and thinks that even without the goodness of God he can live well and serve well by his own goodness as much as he likes.

Before God, of these two kinds of people, the one who knows that he is wicked and evil is rather the better one. Why is that? It is because this word says that the younger son is better than the first son. The first son is a good-hearted person who never once went against his father's words. Yet before God we see a part where he hardly unites his heart with God. What is extremely evil is precisely human goodness. You must know how evil it is that human goodness opposes the goodness of God. The more good-hearted you are, the less the goodness of God is revealed and the more only your own goodness is revealed, and in the end your goodness is broken. I hope you will know the fact that believing in God is goodness and following God is goodness, but human goodness is not true goodness. Human goodness turns into evil someday.

We must know how much human goodness has opposed God on this earth. What is good in human terms and what is done well in human terms all opposed God. Among the many people who live on this earth, who opposes God? It is precisely the person who has many good parts of his own who opposes God. A person who is evil in himself does not oppose God. Rather, he longs for mercy, longs for the remission of sins, and asks to be saved. People who have many good things of their own oppose God, cover the glory of God, and reveal their own glory, and they live going against God and slandering the truth to the very end. Please keep this in mind. If you do not know your own shortcomings and have more of the heart that says you do well and have good things, you must know that this is evil. That must be broken. We must look back at ourselves to see how much of that kind of part there is among our sisters, among our brothers, and also in ourselves.

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The good-hearted person is the most evil before God

Knowing the fact that human goodness becomes evil before God, we must break the thought that we are good. We must say that we are evil. We must say that we are not good. Between the goodness of God and human goodness, the goodness of God is by far better; but if we set aside the goodness of God and put forward only human goodness, we will claim that we alone are right and become first all by ourselves. But if the goodness of God and human goodness ran a race, human goodness would be no match at all. Yet because the goodness of God is set aside and only human goodness is talked about, I hope that you will not think of yourselves as good and will not try to become good-hearted people. A person who is good-hearted in this world is the most evil and the most wicked before God. It is the same even after receiving salvation. Being good-hearted is the greatest evil before God. That kind of part is hard to think of, isn't it?

There were an older son and a younger son, and the older son kept serving his father without ever going against his father's command. He said, *"Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time" (Luke 15:29)*. But what happened? He did not unite his heart with his father but rather opposed him in his heart. You, too, have precisely that kind of part. Do you know that each of you personally has that kind of part? You must get out of it. What we must follow is the goodness of God and the righteousness of God; we must not follow human righteousness. Even among people who stepped forward saying they would help others, there are those who at first are said to be good people but later use that position and cause a public scandal in society. Human goodness appears upright on the outside, but if you go down deep, there is

not one bit of goodness in man. It is the same even after receiving salvation. You must know how deep into sin and evil people fall even after receiving salvation because they think that they are good. We must live within the measure of the word of God, and in that respect each person must live rightly. If someone is so good that he thinks of people more than of God, and if people care for people more than God cares for people, that is evil.

Human beings, who have nothing useful at all

Human righteousness opposes God. What people do well, their own goodness, their sense of being right, what they take pride in, their self-approval, and their human abilities—all the things they put forward as their own merit—oppose God. If someone asks whether man has anything useful before God, he has nothing useful at all. A donkey's colt is useful only because God takes it up and uses it; if He does not take it up and use it, the donkey's colt is of no use at all. Truly we have nothing to be proud of, nothing we do well, nothing good—nothing at all. Yet people put themselves forward before God, put forward what they are proud of, and oppose God; and until when do they oppose Him? They oppose Him until they die. Abandon all human goodness, all that humans are proud of, and all human rightness. I hope you will hold on to the righteousness of God, pursue the goodness of God, and pursue the love of God and the justice of God. That is when we do well. That is when the church becomes a righteous kingdom and our homes become righteous families before God. But if we go on pursuing human rightness and goodness, the church becomes precisely a den of the devil and an object of the curse. That is precisely what is in you and

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me. Because you and I yield little by little, in the end we yield endlessly and come under wrath before God.

Abandon your own good things. I hope you will look back at yourselves before God. Rather than finding fault with others, look back at yourselves. Before God, we have nothing to be proud of, nothing good, and no rightness. Our own righteousness, our own rightness, and human goodness must be broken and must disappear. We must confess and acknowledge before God that we are evil. From then on, God will be pleased, reveal His goodness, love, and righteousness to us, clothe us with that goodness, love, and righteousness, and reveal His glory to us. Saints who have much righteousness of their own after receiving salvation do not submit to the righteousness of God and end up falling into opposing God. We must acknowledge that the righteousness of the Lord is better than our own righteousness. Among born-again saints, a person who has much righteousness of his own opposes God. He is displeased with the church, and not merely displeased—he comes to oppose God, is displeased with God, and blames only others. Because he does not know the fact that this is so because his own righteousness is higher than the righteousness of God, he enters a position where he will receive that kind of chastisement.

What must disappear from us first after we are born again is our own goodness. Are you good? A person who thinks that he is good has a part that says, “I am good in this part. I am better than that person,” doesn’t he? Each one of you has it. That very thing of saying one is better is evil before God. It is better to say, “I am worse.” Saying, “Still, I am better in some parts,” is precisely what is evil. Who knew that this is evil before God? It seems that humans have something good, but in fact they have nothing good; everything is evil, dirty, and ugly. After being born again, who opposes God? Those who say that they have

many good things of their own. I hope you will abandon the thought that you are superior and good, the thought that "I am better than other people in this part." That makes a person challenge God before God, oppose Him with evil, and in the end become one who opposes the grace of God. We must never be like that. We must know that it is by the grace of God that we come to do all things, and that it is also the grace of God that we form the Church after being born again. If you are being used or are in some position, you must know that it is the grace and the gift of God and give thanks. You must know that this is not your own merit, nor your own righteousness, nor your own goodness, nor your own ability, but the grace of God, and you must give thanks in that place and live keeping your own position within the statutes of God, within the ordinances God has established. What saved us was not the good things we did, but the work in which Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and bearing those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross and received judgment in our place. Would we, who live by the life that Jesus gave us by rising again from death, put forward our own goodness?

One's own standard blocks the blessings of God

There are truly many things that are not truly right before God. It is looking and judging by one's own standard, not by the standard of God. People do not measure by the measure of the word of God, but simply measure by what is good in human terms and by a human yardstick who is superior or inferior and who does well or poorly, and that is precisely what is blocking the blessings God gives. Even if God tries to give you more, you

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are blocking it because you have a human standard, because you have not equipped yourselves with the standard of the word of God. There are truly many such parts, but people do not abandon them.

If you follow the truth of God, you may be judged by people to be harsh. If you go against the truth of God while trying to gain only a good evaluation from people, it is wrong before God. If you yield the truth because you fear people's evaluation even though you must stand on the side of the truth of God, you are opposing God. You ought to hear people say, "How can such a wicked person be a servant of God? It is strange how God takes up and uses a person like that." You ought to hear such words from people who have a human standard, but because people are so good, they do not hear such words. They are not cursed at by people because they cannot break their own goodness and do not have the goodness of God, and that is precisely what is evil. You are people who can even hear it said that you are wicked in human terms. If it is for the Lord, if it is for righteousness, if it is for this gospel, if it is for the will of God, you must put the will of God before human ethical standards. Only then are you approved before God. The rich young man who said he had kept the commandments came to Jesus, and after hearing the word of the Lord, he went away sorrowful. Human goodness—that very goodness—made him turn away from the Lord. It made him oppose God. I am speaking about the part that one's own righteousness must be broken before God.

"All that I have is yours"

The older son had gone out to the field and came back in. Since he came in after working, perhaps he came in carrying

farm tools on his shoulder. When he came home, he heard the sound of music, so he asked what was going on, and he was told that his brother had come back safe and sound, and his father was holding a feast and a welcome celebration. "What are you talking about? I worked hard, but Father would not kill even one young goat for me or for my friends, and now what? If he had left the calf alone and raised it a little, it would have become a big cow and given birth to calves, yet he killed it for no reason. Father is not behaving rightly." Irritated, he does not even go into the house, and with steam coming out of his nose, he goes outside. *"But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him" (Luke 15:28)*. Then the older son answers his father. *"Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him" (Luke 15:29–30)*. Then the father says, *"Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found" (Luke 15:31–32)*. The father is saying: why are you getting angry because one calf was killed, and what could be more joyful than this, that your brother was dead and has come back alive again safe and sound? Yet the older son thinks that his father is not behaving rightly. He is saying: why hold a feast for a brother who took all the property, went out, squandered it all, and came back; if a feast is to be held, it should be held for me.

This is precisely what the heart of God is like. Serving the Lord within the church, we go on serving the Lord with great difficulty and with all our strength. At such times our Lord does not want to give us mere words of credit for all that we have

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done. He does not want to give us a part and pay us empty compliments, but wants to repay everything at once and give us all that the Father has. Therefore, we must break our own righteousness. We must break those good parts of the individual. We must break our own standard, and no matter what anyone says, we must break human goodness. After being born again, when people come into the church and look around, they pass all kinds of judgment, saying, "Do even pastors act like that? Do saints who say they have no sin act like this?" Also, there are people who, even while staying long after being born again and serving the Lord, have a heart like this older son's before the Lord—people who have many good parts in human terms. We are ruined because of human goodness. On this earth the Church of God cannot shine its light because of human goodness. If we acknowledge that we are evil, the righteousness of God will be revealed and we will hold on to the righteousness of God and boast of it, but because of human goodness, we are blocking the righteousness of God.

Abandon your own goodness and follow the goodness of God

In this kind of part, each of us—I myself and each individual—must lay bare our own human good parts, acknowledge what is wrong in us, and get out of it. Then the church becomes bright, the righteousness of God is revealed before God, and the truth and righteousness of God become full. Do you now see parts in yourselves where you have much righteousness of your own? We must become people who can lay those parts bare before God, truly say that we are evil, and pray before God, asking God to resolve those parts. Our sisters,

our brothers, and I, too, are truly wicked and have far too much human goodness. That is why we are being ruined. To receive grace before God, and so as not to be ruined, we must abandon human goodness and follow the goodness and righteousness of God. Are you not this kind of first son? You are the first son. Then was the first son right, or was he wrong? He was wrong. Do you have much righteousness of your own? Do you have much goodness of your own? Must you abandon it, or must you not abandon it? Do you understand that it is evil? If you know it, you can unite your heart with God the Father, and if you do not know it, you cannot unite your heart with the Father.

I, too, have something of the first son in me. I must abandon it. I must know that it is evil, but I am growing dull to it. I truly desire that God would have pity on me and hold on to my soul. I do not say that it is precious just because I am serving God. The word says, *"God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (Luke 3:8)*. God is the One who has the power to cause anyone to be born again and use him as His servant. Let us not boast that we serve God, that we do the work of God, or that we serve the Lord within the church. If that becomes righteousness of our own, yours and mine, God will take away all those parts. I hope you will know that it is the grace of God and His gift, and give thanks. And I hope you will abandon human goodness. I hope you will do good within the truth of God and live speaking and acting within the truth. That is what is right, and that is the way to do well. When we look by the word of God and by the righteousness of God, we must look carefully at whether something is human goodness or the goodness of God, whether it is human righteousness or the righteousness of God. I am the same. Rather, since I am in a high position in human terms, I may have more of that human element.

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I know that there are such parts in me. I know that they are evil and that God is not pleased with them.

I hope you will know the fact that we truly must not be in the position of the first son. I hope you will know the fact that only when your own righteousness is broken will the righteousness of God be revealed to you from that time on. Only when human goodness is broken is the goodness of God revealed; only when human kindness is broken is the kindness of God revealed; only when human righteousness and rightness are broken is the rightness of God revealed. Only when human love disappears is the love of God revealed. Let us follow God. Let us unite our hearts with God. Let us abandon what is evil in humans. Rather than telling someone else to do so, let us abandon those parts ourselves, and let us love one another—loving, cherishing one another, and serving the Lord within the goodness of God and the love of the truth of God—as we go forward. Let us abandon human love and those kinds of human parts, and please God. Why did God record in this way what this first son did? It is to show how wrong it is. I hope you will know the fact that human goodness is precisely what is plunging you and me into destruction and into the curse. I believe that there will be blessings upon those who truly realize their own human evil. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The father, who embraced the son who returned and went out to the son who stood outside

< Luke 15:11–32 >

"Then He said: 'A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me." So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'" And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck

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and kissed him. And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." And they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, "Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf." But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, "Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him." And he said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."""

The son who thought of the way back to his father

Even when a feast is held in one house, not everyone rejoices together. Someone is welcomed for the reason that he has returned, but a person who thinks he has kept the house for a long time may feel that the welcome is unfair. In today's text the

father embraced the son who returned, and he also went out and pleaded with the son who would not come in to the feast. Only when we look at these two scenes together can we know what made the father glad and what made the son distant from that joy.

The younger son received his share of the property, went to a far country, and wasted it with prodigal living. A person who tries to leave God and live as he pleases with what God has given him has never obtained true satisfaction. After the son had spent everything he had, a famine also came, and he began to be in want; while feeding swine, he wanted to fill his stomach even with the pods that the swine ate, but no one gave him anything. These pods are like the man-made religion that a person who has left God leans on: it only makes people work, telling them to live good lives, but does not give satisfaction to the soul. Only then did the son look back on the abundance of his father's house and his own hunger. In his want he realized the fact that the way he had lived after leaving his father could not keep his life.

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you'" (Luke 15:18). As he returned to his father, the son intended to acknowledge his sin. He also thought of saying that he was not worthy of the name of son, so his father should regard him as one of the hired servants. Instead of making excuses for his wrongs and demanding his former position, he intended to entrust himself to his father. The son knew where to return because that house was still his father's house, and the reason we can return to God is also that God becomes our Father. We, too, find it hard to accept grace as long as we insist that the life in which we left God and followed our own will was right. The way to acknowledge our sins and return to God lies not in saving face, but in relying on the Lord, who grants salvation.

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The father, who ran to the son who was far away

"And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). Even before the son brought out the words he had prepared, the father had compassion, ran, and embraced him. It was not because the son had brought back any property, nor because he had sufficiently proven his promise to do well from then on. Because the father had never forgotten the son in his heart even after the son left, and had been waiting for him to return, he recognized him even from far away and ran to him. The fact that the son he had lost had returned moved the father's heart.

When the son confessed his sin and said that he was not worthy of the name of son, the father would not even listen to the words asking to be regarded as a hired servant, but gave orders to his servants. *"But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet'" (Luke 15:22)*. The best robe is the robe of righteousness. Taking off the dirty clothes and putting the robe of righteousness on him means making a sinner a righteous person; the ring is the sign that the son's status was recognized again; and the sandals are the shoes of the gospel, put on him so that he would go about doing the father's work. In this scene there is no condition that the son must first earn and pay back what he had wasted before he would be received. The father welcomed the son who had returned as his son and expressed the joy of gaining him with a feast in the house.

We must not misread this grace. It does not mean that the son's prodigality was a good thing, nor does it mean that everyone must lose all their property in order to come to God. We must see the mercy that the father showed to the son who

returned acknowledging his wrongs. The thought that we must first fix ourselves and present ourselves in order to be saved keeps us staying far away, but the faith that believes in the remission of sins that God has granted makes us, lacking as we are, come to the Lord.

The feast for gaining the son who had been dead

"For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:24). The father spoke of the son's return as one who had been dead living again and one who had been lost being found again. The reason for the feast was not that the property had increased but that he had gained his son. The grace by which God saved us, who were in sin, is likewise a matter of life. It is not merely that He took away a few of the sins we committed; He rescued us, who were bound by sin and death, and made us His children.

Just as the fatted calf had to be killed for the feast to be held, there was also the sacrifice of the only begotten Son in our coming to sit at the feast of God. Jesus' receiving baptism from John was precisely the work by which He bore the sin of the world once and for all in order to accomplish this salvation. *"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6)*. Just as this word says, all the sins of our whole lives, spanning our past, present, and future, were passed on to the Lord at that time, and the Lord, bearing those sins, was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died. Because Jesus received in our place the judgment sinners should receive, we who believe in Him receive the remission of sins. The Lord rose again from death and became the Savior who rescued us from

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sin and death. The way to return to the Father is not opened by our merits, but has been opened by the salvation that Jesus Christ completed.

We who have accepted the gospel of the water and the Spirit do not present our own conduct as the price of salvation. We believe in the Lord, who had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and bore the judgment for those sins on the Cross, and we obtain the new life that the risen Lord gives. Even if our faults are revealed after we have come to know this grace, the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished does not disappear. We must acknowledge our wrongs and correct them, yet not try to build up our own righteousness again, but serve God relying on the word of the Lord, who gave us life.

The son who stood outside, putting forward his own labor

The older son, who returned from the field, heard that the feast was for his younger brother, became angry, and would not go in. When the father came out and pleaded with him, the older son spoke of his own labor. *"So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends'" (Luke 15:29)*. The son put forward the years he had served and the thought that he had received nothing, and judged his father's conduct. The treatment that should have come to him looked greater to him than the joy of the father, who had gained his younger son.

The place of the older son is our place—we who received the remission of sins first and have served in the church for a long

time. The problem is not the labor of serving for many years itself, but the heart that makes that labor its own righteousness and thinks that the father cannot receive another son. If we have much righteousness of our own, we cannot be of one heart with God, and grace shown to other people feels as though it takes away our share. But the life and the status of children that we have received from God were not bought by collecting the wages of our work. Only when we remember that we could serve because we first received grace can we also rejoice in the grace shown to a person who returned later.

The older son referred to his younger brother as the son who had wasted the father's livelihood. It shows him speaking of the relationship between the father and his brother while keeping at a distance his own relationship with his brother. If we call a person only by his wrongs and do not see the fact that he has returned, we, too, can stand in the same place. We must look back at ourselves so that the heart that seeks recognition for our own labor does not come before the mercy of the Lord.

To the place of rejoicing together with the father

The father told the older son that he was always with him and that all that the father had was his. To the protest that the father had given the older son nothing, the father made him see the life of being with the father and what had already been given. God, too, has already given us the remission of sins and the kingdom of God, so there is nothing greater than this as a reward for serving and laboring. And the father again made clear the reason they should rejoice. *"It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found" (Luke 15:32)*. The father called the one who

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had returned the older son's brother and urged that it was right to rejoice together over that life.

If we know the grace of God, we cannot hold on only to the fact that He has been good to us. We come to value also other souls whose sins the Lord has borne and to whom He has given life. When someone has returned from a wrong path, what is needed is neither letting him make his past wrongs something to boast about, nor constantly digging them up and leaving him no place to stay. It is hearing the word together, helping him live by faith, and giving thanks that the Lord has given him life.

The feast was held, but the older son stood outside because of his own calculations. The father went out to that son as well and told him the reason to rejoice together. We, too, must lay down the heart that counted only the treatment we should receive, and see the grace of God, who gave life to sinners. Let us accept the heart of the father, who embraced the son who returned and pleaded with the son who stood outside, and join together in the joy of gaining a life that had been lost. ✉

The father, who embraced the son
who returned and went out to the son who stood outside

◇ About the Next Series

The ***'Biblical Exposition & Sermon Series from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit'*** will continue to be published following this book.

We sincerely hope that the books by Pastor Paul C. Jong, which will continue to be published, will serve as spiritual nourishment to strengthen your faith.

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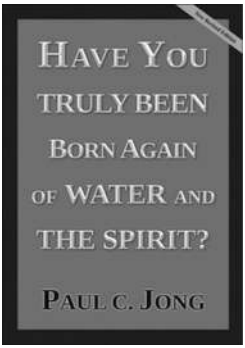
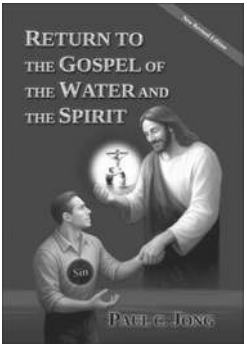
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

HAVE YOU TRULY BEEN BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT? [New Revised Edition]



Among many Christian books written about being born again, this is the first book of our time to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in strict accordance with the Scriptures. Man can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit. To be born again means that a sinner is saved from all his lifelong sins by believing in the baptism of Jesus and His blood of the Cross. Let's believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven as the righteous who have no sin.

RETURN TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT [New Revised Edition]



Let's return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Theology and doctrines themselves can't save us. However, many Christians still follow them, and consequently have not been born again yet. This book clearly tells us what mistakes theology and doctrines have made and how we can believe in Jesus in the most accurate and certain way.

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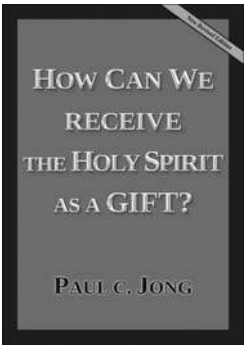
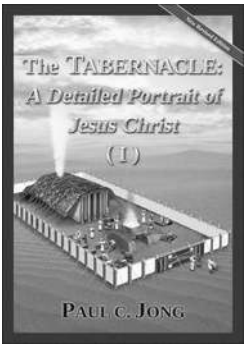
HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]



In Christianity, the most significantly discussed issue is salvation from sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However, few people have the exact knowledge of these two topics. Nevertheless, in reality people say that they believe in Jesus Christ while they are ignorant of true redemption and the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the true gospel that makes you receive the Holy Spirit? If you want to ask God for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then you must first know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and have faith in it. This book will certainly lead all Christians worldwide to receive the Holy Spirit through the washing away of all their sins.

The TABERNACLE : A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (I) [New Revised Edition]



How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

In fact, the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen manifested in the gate of the Tabernacle's court show us the works of Jesus Christ in the New Testament's time that have saved the mankind. In this way, the Old Testament's Word of the Tabernacle and the Word of the New Testament are closely and definitely related to each other, like fine woven linen. But, unfortunately, this truth has been hidden for a long time to every truth seeker in Christianity.

Coming to this earth, Jesus Christ was baptized by John and shed His blood on the Cross. Without understanding and believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, none of us can ever find out the truth revealed in the Tabernacle. We must now learn this truth of the Tabernacle and believe in it. We all need to realize and believe in the truth manifested in the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen of the gate of the Tabernacle's court.

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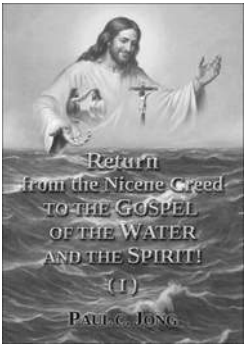
Return from the Nicene Creed TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT! (I)



-Why must we return from the Nicene Creed to the gospel of the water and the Spirit? –

The gospel that the early church preached was precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That gospel was the gospel that Jesus actually shouldered and washed away the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John.

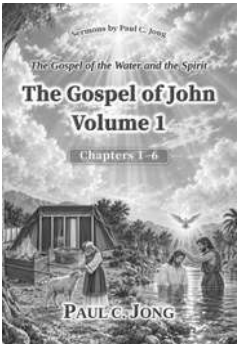
The baptism Jesus received from John was to fulfill the law of the sacrificial system found in Leviticus. That is, just as sin was transferred to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, the substance of that sacrificial law was fulfilled through Jesus's baptism.

However, in the process of the Nicene Creed's formation, the ministry of Jesus having the sin of the world transferred to Him by being baptized by John was deleted from the creed's contents. As a result, this truth has been passed down in a hidden state within Christianity for about 1,700 years, reaching the present day.

Today, many people are struggling to receive the removal of their sins without knowing when their sins were transferred to Jesus. Because of this, even while saying they believe in the gospel of the cross, they fail to reach true assurance of salvation and live amidst repetitive repentance and the pangs of conscience.

The reason we must return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit is clear. This is because only this gospel allows us to meet the Jesus who became the sacrificial offering as the sin of the world was transferred to His body, and thereby have assurance of salvation.

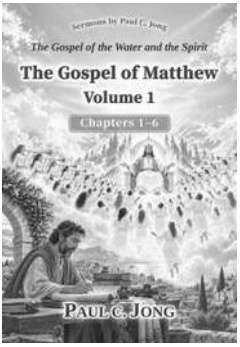
The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of John (3-Volume Series)



"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

John chapters 1–6 reveal who Jesus is. He is the Savior—the God who created all things, who Himself came in the flesh, received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, bore the sin of the world, received its judgment on the Cross, and rose from the dead, thereby saving us perfectly once and for all. The testimony of John the Baptist, the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus' words to Nicodemus about being born again, the Samaritan woman, the sick man at Bethesda, and the bread of life all point to the same One, and the Word is unfolded in light of the salvation accomplished by Christ Jesus. Those who believe in the work of salvation accomplished by Jesus, who is God, are born again of water and the Spirit and receive eternal life.

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Matthew (4-Volume Series)



The very first thing Jesus did as He began His public ministry was to receive baptism from John at the Jordan River. Through that baptism He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and after He was judged through the blood of the Cross, He rose again and fulfilled all righteousness. This book proclaims, in order, the baptism of Jesus, by which He fulfilled all righteousness; the promised salvation and the assurance of the remission of sins; Jesus, who called His disciples and gave the Sermon on the Mount; and a life lived by believing in the righteousness of God. Through the sermons of Pastor Paul C. Jong, which expound the genealogy and the birth, the worship of the wise men from the East, the temptation in the wilderness, the calling of the disciples, the Beatitudes, and the Lord's Prayer, it proclaims the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is the basis of the remission of sins, and the way of living by believing in that righteousness and praying to the Father.

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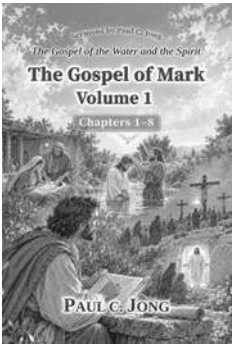
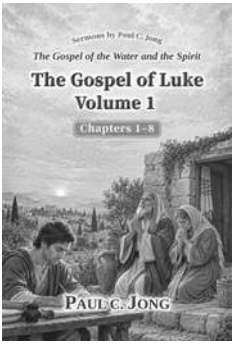
The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Mark (2-Volume Series)



Mark chapters 1–8 lead us to the confession, "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29). Christ means 'the Anointed One.' Jesus is the King who rules over us, the High Priest who remits sins, and the Prophet who preaches the truth of salvation. Jesus, the High Priest, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. I hope that, through the word of the Gospel of Mark, you will accept Jesus Christ, the Savior who is the King of kings, into your hearts.

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Luke (3-Volume Series)



Where does the assurance that we have received the remission of sins come from? This book, which follows Luke chapters 1–8, looks at the birth of the Savior and the beginning of His work, and finds the answer in the written word. Jesus, who called sinners, is the One who came to take those sins upon Himself. Because all the sins of the world were passed on once and for all to the body that received baptism from John, Jesus received the judgment for our sins on the Cross by shedding His blood, overcame death, rose again, and accomplished salvation. When we know and believe this work He did for us, the assurance that wavered according to the state of our hearts becomes grounded in the word.

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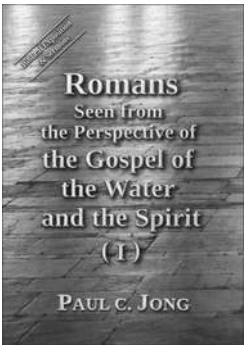
Paul C. Jong's Biblical Exposition & Sermons

Romans seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)



When Looking at Romans from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit,

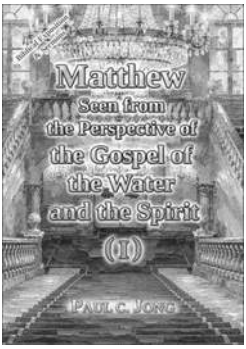
A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and resurrected, it finally begins to be seen why Paul introduced himself as a "debtor to the gospel" and so boldly declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel."

The Apostle Paul, after revealing the sins of the Gentiles and the hypocrisy of religious people in turn, proclaims the righteousness of God manifested apart from the law. That righteousness is not a righteousness built up by human moral effort, but the righteousness completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection. The righteousness Abraham received when he was uncircumcised is the evidence of it, and the "blessing of not imputing sin" that David sang of is the result of it.

A person who believes this gospel knows that he is one who has already been justified. Only upon that conviction does peace with God reside, and the path opens where even tribulation leads to perseverance, character, and hope. This mystery—that a life which was placed under the reign of death over sin through one man, Adam, has received the removal of sins through one person, Jesus Christ, and has been transferred under the reign of righteousness—takes its place within us.

Salvation has already been completed at once. Now, what remains is the matter of receiving that gospel with the heart and living as a righteous person.

Matthew seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)



Why does sin still remain in your heart, even after believing in Jesus, reading the Bible for years, and attending church faithfully? Through Matthew chapters 1–4, this book answers clearly from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Tracing Jesus' birth and the wise men's worship, the ministry of John the Baptist as the last high priest, the saving work Jesus began with His baptism in the Jordan, the temptation in the wilderness, and the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, this book testifies that through His baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus took the sins of mankind upon Himself, was judged and died on the cross, and rose from the dead, overcoming sin and death.

If you know the blood of the cross but not when and where your sins were passed on to Jesus, look to the unchanging word of salvation rather than your feelings. In the Bible-based gospel of the water and the Spirit, see what the 'all righteousness' God fulfilled truly is.

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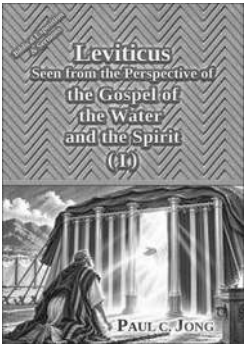
Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

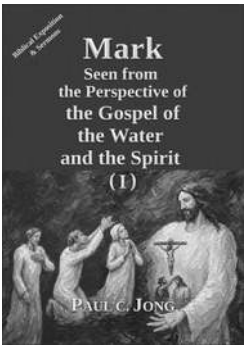


Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) examines how the Old Testament law of sacrifice prefigures the salvation of Jesus Christ, looking at the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering, as well as the consecration ceremony of the priests, Aaron's first sacrifice, and the incident of Nadab and Abihu.

The author, Pastor Paul C. Jong, has long preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and in this book, he also explains the eternal atonement Jesus completed with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, connecting it to the sacrifices of Leviticus.

How can a sinner be made sinless? This book gives a clear answer to that question through the Bible.

Mark Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)



Who do you believe Jesus to be? Through Mark chapters 1–4, this book testifies to the beginning of the gospel, the Lord's authority to remit sins, and the ground of the heart that hears the Word.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed onto Him, bore the punishment for those sins in our place on the Cross, and rose from the dead and gave us eternal life. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins at once and the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Do not read this book merely to add to your knowledge. Examine what kind of ground your own heart is, and lay down your own righteousness and religious stubbornness. Receive the Word of life just as it is and enjoy true rest, and relying on the Lord even in the storms of life, bear the fruit of faith.

John Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

John seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) is a book that examines, through the entire Gospel of John, how the Word, who is God, came to this earth clothed in flesh and saved sinners from sin.

The author, pastor Paul C. Jong, has long preached, through the word of the Bible, "the gospel of the water and the Spirit" that Jesus Christ completed with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection. This book does not explain the signs and words of the Gospel of John as mere knowledge of the Bible or records of miracles, but guides readers to the faith by which they are saved from sin and obtain everlasting life by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

May everyone who opens this book meet Jesus Christ, of whom the Bible testifies, and obtain true life.

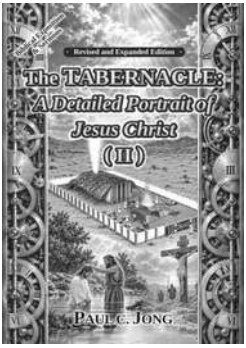
Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)

"Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)" expounds the Word from Luke chapters 1 through 6 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Each chapter is composed of three parts: Biblical Exposition, Questions and Answers, and Sermons. The central message conveyed by this book is clear. Salvation is not accomplished by human goodness or merit. Rather, Jesus, who is God, received the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died on the Cross to pay the price for those sins, and rose from the dead, thereby giving complete salvation from all sins to those who believe in this truth.

Pastor Paul C. Jong of The New Life Mission is a servant of God who has devoted his life to preaching the true gospel. Through the Word he preaches, this book will lead souls held captive by sin to the joy of the remission of sins and to eternal life in Jesus.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

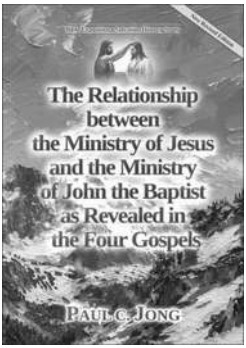
The TABERNACLE: A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (3-Volume Series)



God had the tabernacle set up in the wilderness in order to dwell among the people He had delivered out of Egypt.

Through the Biblical Exposition of Exodus chapters 25–31 and the sermons on the tabernacle, this book conveys the heart of God, who wants to make His sinful people holy and keep them near. The promise of salvation contained in the tabernacle was fulfilled when Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of that sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again. Looking into the utensils and sacrifices of the tabernacle and the office of the high priest, we come to know the meaning of the remission of sins received by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and of the eternal atonement. Through the tabernacle, we seek to know God's love for us and to share the joy of living together as His people.

The Relationship between the Ministry of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptist as Revealed in the Four Gospels [New Revised Edition]



The Ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist — Preparation and Fulfillment: The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit, Believed in the Order the Bible Records It

Why do the four Gospels introduce John the Baptist before speaking of Jesus' public ministry? Matthew records the baptism by which He fulfilled all righteousness; Mark, the messenger who prepared the way; Luke, the birth into a priestly family; and John, the testimony of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. These four books of the Bible—the four Gospels—together shed light on the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist.

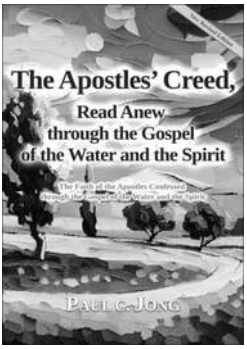
This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete our salvation.

We must believe in the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist exactly as the Bible records them, receive the remission of sins, abide in the assurance of this completed salvation, and live as witnesses to it.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Paul C. Jong's Special Features

The Apostles' Creed, Read Anew through the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit [New Revised Edition]

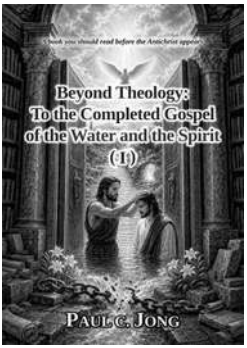


As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission of sins and been born again.

This book examines this confession of faith, shaped and refined by people, article by article in the light of the "gospel of the water and the Spirit" to which Scripture testifies. In the light of this gospel—the gospel in which Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world by being baptized by John, bore the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead on the third day—this book points out what the Apostles' Creed leaves out.

The aim of this book is not to help the reader recite the Creed more skillfully. "Have I truly been born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit?" When we come to answer this question through the Word, we will at last offer a living confession as those who have received the remission of sins and been born again.

Beyond Theology: To the Completed Gospel of the Water and the Spirit



Even as we confess that we have been saved, why does the weight of sin still remain in one corner of our hearts?

Countless saints live carrying this question. Each denomination has a different answer, but the Bible testifies to one story from beginning to end.

This book does not belong to any denomination. It sets out what each tradition—Calvinism, Lutheranism, Methodism, Catholicism, and others—teaches, acknowledges their contributions, and then brings them all before the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the gospel by which Jesus bore the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John, was judged on the Cross, and completed our eternal salvation through His resurrection from death.

This book does not condemn any church. It only invites you to lay down your familiar theology for a moment and to discover anew, before the gospel of the water and the Spirit, where unshakable assurance begins.

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Our The New Life Mission is distributing Pastor Paul C. Jong's spiritual books in 'printed book' form through coworkers who have been born again by water and the Spirit.

If you wish to possess printed books to build up spiritual nourishment, or if you sincerely wish to participate in our gospel spreading ministry, please apply by writing your reason, name, contact information, and address to the email address below.

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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.

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Contact: John Shin, General Secretary
E-mail: newlife@bjnewlife.org

Recommendation for E-book and Audiobook Storage and Downloads

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Sincerely,
The New Life Mission

Pastor PAUL C. JONG

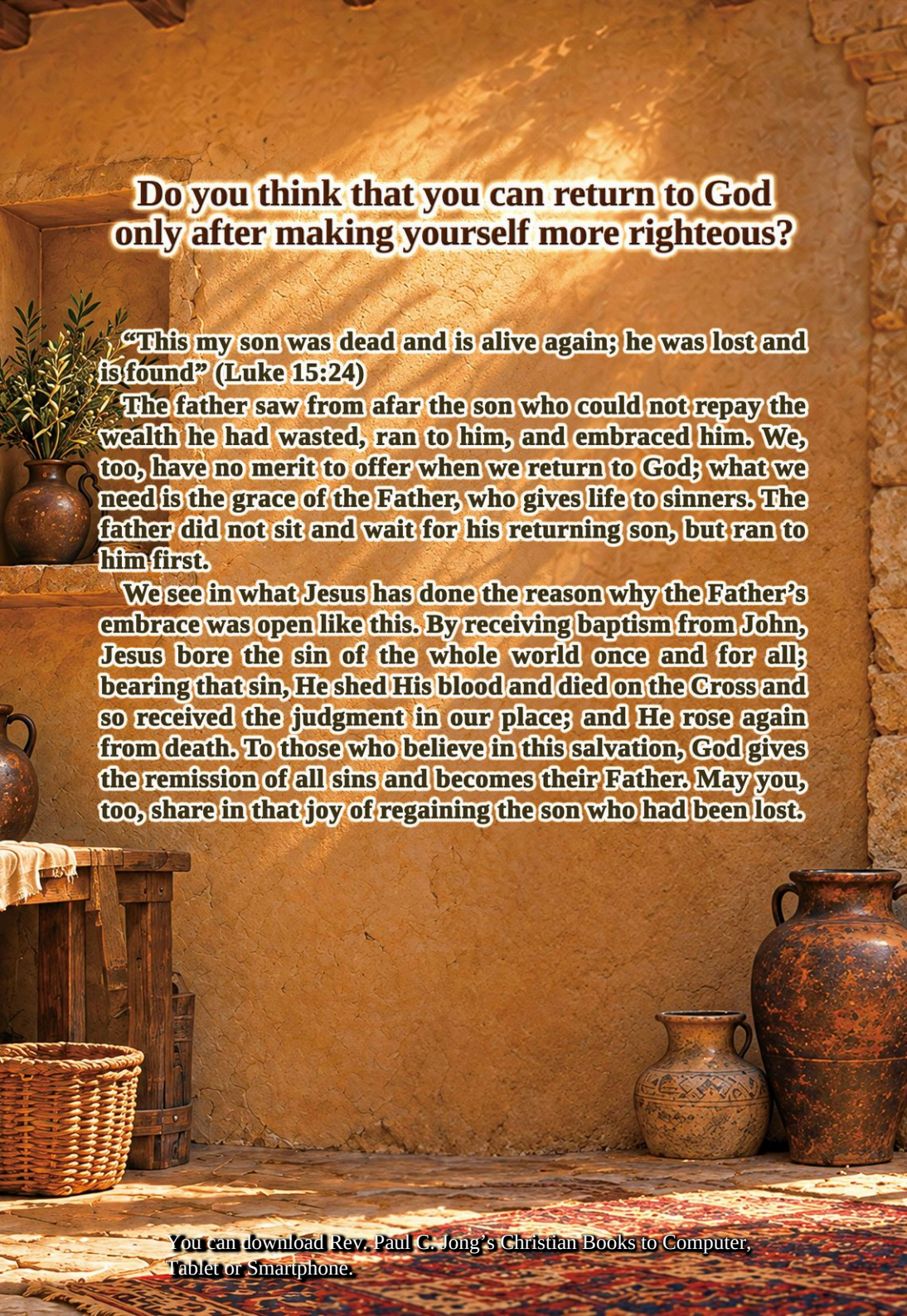
Currently, Pastor Paul C. Jong leads 'The New Life Mission', where he and his fellow workers are spreading the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Although he believed in the crucified Jesus, he had long been suffering because the problem of his sin remained unresolved. In the midst of this suffering, he came to believe that Jesus, by being baptized by John the Baptist, had the sin of the world passed on to Him once for all, received its judgment in our place through His blood on the Cross, and rose from the dead.

For about 40 years since then, he has been preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to those who only believe in the Cross, documenting his actual sermons in writing, and publishing sermon collections and Biblical Exposition Series that expound the Bible chapter by chapter, based solely on the Word of God.

His works continue to be published and have been translated into more than 110 languages, reaching readers in over 160 countries. E-books and audiobooks are available free of charge at www.bjnewlife.org, while paperback editions can be purchased on Amazon.

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



Do you think that you can return to God only after making yourself more righteous?

"This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:24)

The father saw from afar the son who could not repay the wealth he had wasted, ran to him, and embraced him. We, too, have no merit to offer when we return to God; what we need is the grace of the Father, who gives life to sinners. The father did not sit and wait for his returning son, but ran to him first.

We see in what Jesus has done the reason why the Father's embrace was open like this. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus bore the sin of the whole world once and for all; bearing that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and so received the judgment in our place; and He rose again from death. To those who believe in this salvation, God gives the remission of all sins and becomes their Father. May you, too, share in that joy of regaining the son who had been lost.

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