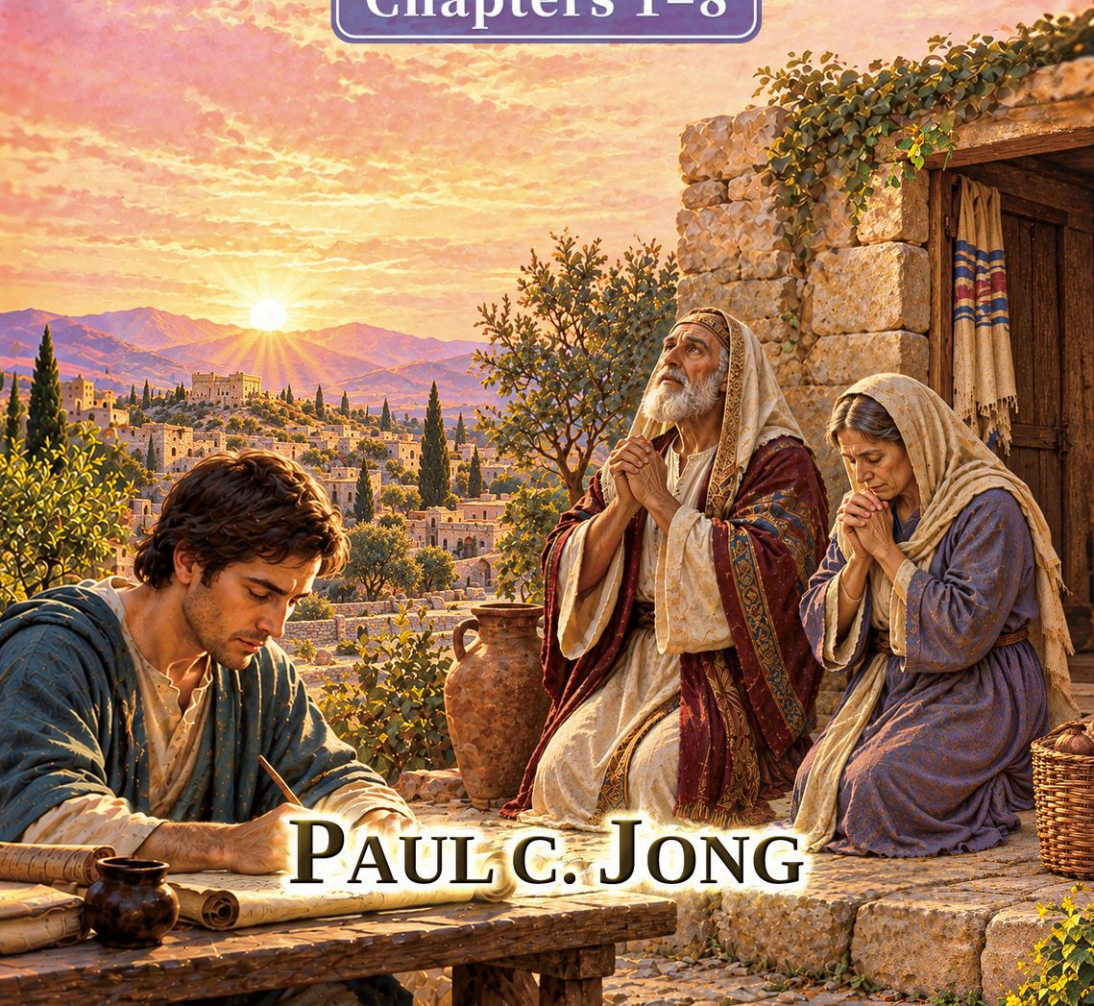
Sermons by Paul C. Jong

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

The Gospel of Luke Volume 1

Chapters 1–8



PAUL C. JONG

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

The birth of the Savior is good news to us because Jesus came to deliver us from the sin from which we could not escape by ourselves. He who is God by nature came in the body of a man and, by receiving baptism from John, bore the sin of the world once and for all; He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for that sin in our place, and He rose again from death and saved us. When I look upon the baby laid in a manger and accept in my heart even this salvation that He accomplished for me, the news that a Savior has been born for you becomes my own joy.

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and read now,

before the Antichrist appears,

as this world is heading toward destruction.

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

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Sermons by Paul C. Jong

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

The Gospel of Luke

Volume 1

Chapters 1–8

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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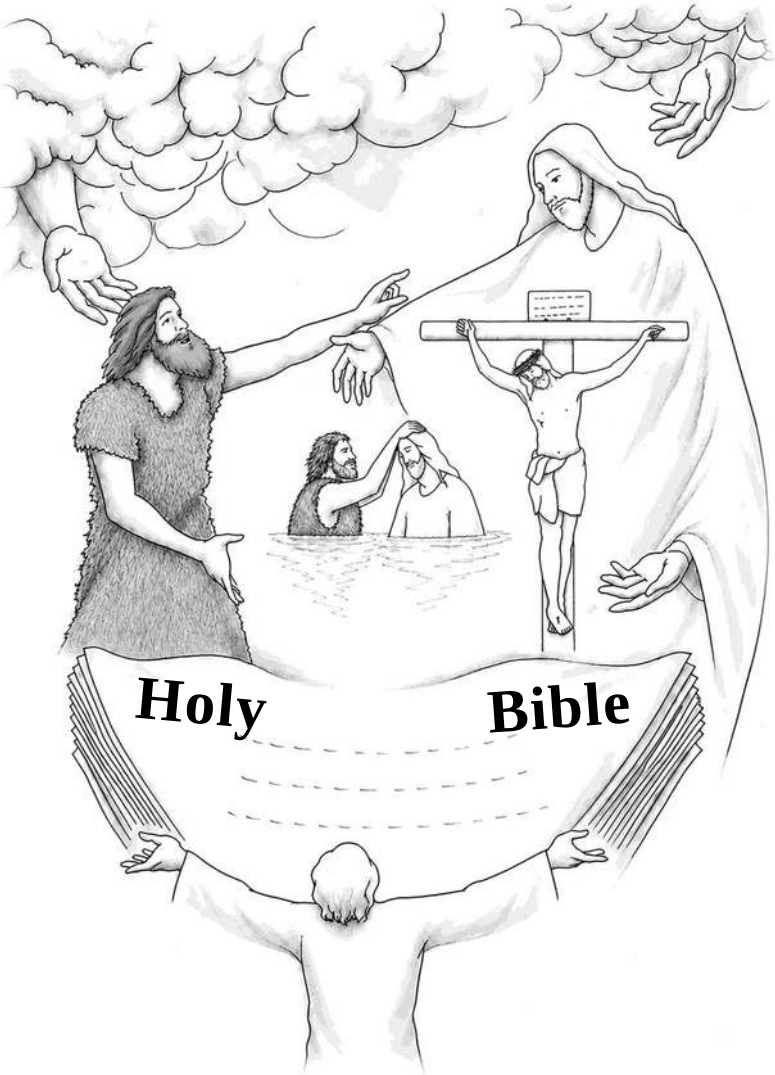

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Preface

The word meant to make us know for certain the gospel we have learned

Luke wrote down the things of Jesus Christ once more and sent them to Theophilus, who had already learned the gospel: *"That you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed" (Luke 1:4)*. He did not regard the fact that Theophilus had heard it once as sufficient; he meant to make him know clearly what he had believed. We, too, need this certainty. If our confession that we have received the remission of sins is not to remain mere words that soothe our own hearts, we must know how Jesus remitted our sins.

God did not leave us to live guessing at our salvation; He sent John to prepare the way of the Savior. He also sent His Son and had Him bear sin Himself. And because He made that work of salvation known through the word, the assurance of the remission of sins comes from knowing what God has done. However earnest a believing heart may be, if its object is not clear, then every time our faults are revealed we become afraid, not knowing what to rely on.

This book, which contains Luke chapters 1–8, conveys the word so that we may clearly know and believe in the Savior who came to us for our sake. Jesus, whom we meet on the way John prepared, is the One who calls sinners and gives them new life. As we hear His word, we learn why we, who are sinners, have been called, and by what we can be assured of the remission of sins. When this learning becomes faith received in the heart, the

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way to live by the grace we have received from the Lord is also opened.

The way of salvation opened to those who acknowledge their sins

John, who prepared the people to receive the Savior, first exposed their sins. This is because neither the boast of being descendants of Abraham nor an appearance of faith recognized by others can remove the sins that stand before God. If we regard ourselves as decent people and seek help only for the few parts in which we fall short, it is hard to know why Jesus Himself had to bear our sins. John's cry turns the heart that relied on its own righteousness and makes us acknowledge that we are sinners in need of salvation.

Knowing one's own sins does not end with recalling a few things one has done wrong. Even if they have not been revealed outwardly, there are craving and hatred in our hearts, and even on a day when we have done good, we cannot wash away with it the sins we have already committed. When we compare our own faults with those of others and think that we are better than they, this problem is hidden. But when we stand before the word of God, we come to know that what we need, before praise or comfort, is the remission of sins.

It was exactly such sinners that Jesus called. To the people who criticized Him for being with Levi the tax collector, the Lord said, *"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:32)*. It was not that Levi was called after first making himself clean. Jesus called him knowing what kind of person he was, and Levi rose up following that call. The

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person who thinks he cannot come to the Lord because of his sins must hear this word.

The Lord's purpose in calling sinners is not to have them merely repeat all their lives the confession that they are sinners. It is to have them turn from the thought that regarded themselves as righteous and believe in the Savior who remits sins. What we must know more deeply than the fact that our faults have been revealed is the fact that Jesus, who knows all those faults, came to save us. The heart that honestly acknowledges its own sins and the faith that believes in the Savior are joined together within this calling.

Because it is the word of the One who took our sins upon Himself

Then with what did Jesus remit our sins? Here we must look into the reason the Gospel of Luke relates everything in detail from the birth of John onward. Concerning the work John would take on, Zacharias prophesied, *"To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins" (Luke 1:77)*. John was not to stop at rebuking sin; he was the one who would make known to the people Jesus, who would take those sins upon Himself. God had John born into the house of Aaron and had him, as the representative of mankind, baptize Jesus.

Jesus, who came to receive that baptism, is God by nature, the One who came in the body of a man to save us. The reason the sinless Son of God put on the body of a man was to bear our sins in that body and be sacrificed in our place. Therefore, the heart that rejoices at the Lord's birth must go on to believe in what He came and did. What connects the news that the Savior

has come with the faith that our sins have been remitted is the salvation Jesus actually accomplished.

That baptism was the very place where all the sins of the world were transferred to Jesus once and for all. Just as in the Old Testament sins were passed on by laying hands on the head of the sacrificial offering, the sin of mankind was transferred to Jesus through the baptism, which was the laying on of hands by John. In that sin of the world are contained not only the sins we have already committed but also all the sins we will commit for the rest of our lives. Because He had sins passed on to Him in this way, Jesus had to be hung on the Cross, and by shedding His blood and dying there He paid in full the judgment we were to receive. And He overcame death and rose again, and He is our Savior who is alive even now. When we receive in our hearts the gospel of the water and the Spirit accomplished in this way, our sins are remitted with none remaining.

When we know the baptism by which He had sins passed on to Him, it also becomes clear why the death on the Cross was a death in our place. Because our sins were passed on to Jesus, the judgment He received is the very judgment for our sins. Since we do not obtain the remission of sins by how much we have agonized or how much we have made amends, there is no need to add our own merit to the Lord's salvation. Knowing the work John took on turns our faith away from human devotion and effort toward what Jesus Christ has accomplished.

When this Savior declared the remission of sins to the paralytic, people reasoned among themselves, asking who could remit sins but God. Jesus said, *"That you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Luke 5:24)*, and raised that man up. The healing of the disease revealed the authority of the One who had spoken of the remission of sins. The centurion, who asked Him only to say the word concerning

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his servant's sickness, was also a person who believed in this authority. As we read these scenes, we, too, must not stop at marveling at His amazing power, but must believe the word spoken by the One who took our sins upon Himself. Because we know who He is and what He has done, we can accept the word of the remission of sins with certainty.

Keep in your heart the word you have learned for certain

The person who has received the word of the remission of sins with certainty lives in response to that grace. The woman who wet Jesus' feet with her tears and poured fragrant oil on them in the house of the Pharisee was such a person. Through the story of two debtors who owed five hundred denarii and fifty denarii, Jesus taught that the one who has had much debt canceled loves much. It was not that the woman received the remission of sins because she first offered her love. Because she believed that the Lord had removed the debt of sin that she had no way to repay, she was grateful for that grace and, without sparing what she had, poured it out on the Lord. The Lord said to her, *"Your faith has saved you. Go in peace" (Luke 7:50)*. Our love and service, too, begin from this peace.

The women who had been healed and went about with Jesus also served the company with their possessions. They, too, did not obtain grace through their service; because they were thankful to Jesus, who had first cared for them, they were able to use what they had for the Lord's work of preaching the gospel. We, too, do not toil to bring about the remission of sins; we serve the Lord believing in the love that has already saved us.

Yet worries and cravings can grow even in a heart that once knew grace and rejoiced. When life becomes hard, securing our own future feels more urgent than following the Lord, and it is easy to begrudge even the time spent hearing the word. Jesus' teaching about the heart that hears the word, through the parable of the sower, is the exhortation that we, being like this, need. We must not live leaning on the memory that we rejoiced at first, but must examine what we believe and rely on now.

"The ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). A good heart is not a heart that puts itself forward as having much that is good in itself. It is a heart that accepts the word that exposes our wrongs along with the word that comforts us, and that relies on God even in difficulties. Therefore, we must keep hearing and learning the word in the church, and turn our hearts even when faced with teaching that differs from our own thinking. We need the faith that tells the Lord who saved us the needs and weaknesses of our lives and seeks His help.

The patience that keeps the word is different from steeling one's heart on one's own. It is not abandoning the word even when our circumstances do not change right away, because we regard what the Lord has said as true. We listen to the exhortation of fellow believers and entrust to the Lord the worries that have taken hold of our hearts. With that faith we carry on the service we are to carry out today, and we also preach the gospel we have received to other souls. The person who has learned the certainty of salvation learns in this way to rely on that word every day.

The certainty of the things learned, which Luke sought to make known, must also be clear in our hearts. Lay down the thought of seeking the basis of the remission of sins in yourself,

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and receive in your heart the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ, of whom John testified. I hope that as you read the word of this book, you will come to know more certainly why Jesus called us and how He remitted our sins. I hope that you will keep that certain word in your heart and live in thanksgiving, without fear, before the One who saved us. ✉

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CHAPTER

1

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Where does the certainty of salvation lie?

< Luke 1:1–4 >

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

The reason for recording what has already been fulfilled

There are times when, on days when our hearts are fervent, we are sure of our salvation, and yet that assurance is shaken once we discover our own faults. If yesterday we clearly said that we believed, but today we become afraid again, we must examine what we held on to and believed. This is because it must be clear whether salvation comes into being and disappears according to the changes in our hearts, or whether we know and believe, through the word, the salvation the Lord has accomplished. Luke begins his writing precisely in order to convey this certainty to Theophilus.

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The opening of the Gospel of Luke does not introduce a person's resolve or religious zeal as the starting point of salvation, but makes us look at what the Lord has done. Just as the word *"those things which have been fulfilled among us" (Luke 1:1)* says, it conveys not what people hope for but what has already been fulfilled. The work of salvation that Jesus Christ came and did is not something Luke made up as he wrote. The Lord first accomplished that work, and Luke, to whom that work was handed down, recorded it; so we must consider here the fact that the basis of salvation precedes our faith.

To say that it has already been fulfilled does not mean that there is no need to believe. It means that what we must believe has been determined. Just because a person draws up a savior to suit his own heart and holds firmly to that idea, it does not mean that he believes in what the Lord has done. Since faith is accepting what Jesus actually did for us, we must not try to make only our own conviction strong without knowing that work. Luke first sets out the facts of salvation that the reader must hold on to.

The narrative of salvation delivered by the eyewitnesses

That fact did not remain merely a vague rumor, but was delivered through those who had seen it from the beginning, and there were also people who sought to record its narrative. Luke said, *"Many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us" (Luke 1:1–2)*. Here Luke does not claim that he himself witnessed everything directly, but makes

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it clear that he records on the basis of the facts the eyewitnesses delivered. It is not the thoughts of the one who delivers it that determine the content of salvation; it is what the Lord has done that determines the content of the testimony.

Therefore, even when we say that we believe in Jesus, we must be able to ask what we believe. If we have heard that Jesus has removed our sins, we must know how the Lord bore those sins. If we hear it only as a story that some great person suffered, with no relation to us, how could we connect the problem of the sin remaining in our conscience with His salvation? Since the word tells us the relationship between the Savior and us, we cannot treat lightly the testimony that explains that relationship.

Luke says, *"It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:3)*, and begins his story, before the birth of Jesus, with the parents and birth of John. That he relates the source of the gospel starting from the birth of John the Baptist is also not separate from this relationship. God sent John, who would prepare the way of the Lord, and John gave baptism to Jesus and testified of Him. A person who wants to know Jesus must listen to the words spoken by the witness whom God sent. It is not that we exalt the witness as the Savior; rather, through his testimony we must rightly know Jesus, who saved us.

The Lamb who bore our sins

Look at the word with which John testified of Jesus. *"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29)*. John did not point to the Savior by vaguely imagining

Him. Because Jesus received baptism from John and through that baptism had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, John testified that He was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Only when we know together the baptism the Lord received and John's testimony does this word become a clear answer to the problem of our sins.

The sin of the world also includes all the sins that each of us commits throughout our whole lives. Not only the wrongs we remember, but also the sins we have forgotten and even the sins we will commit as we go on living—the Lord bore them all once and for all. Therefore, there is no need to gauge by our feelings whether the Lord received our sins too. Since we, too, are people who belong to the world, we cannot say that only our sins were left out of the salvation of the Lord, who received all the sins of the world. If we narrow this broad range and think that only some sins have been resolved, we cannot fully believe in what the Lord has accomplished.

Jesus went to the Cross bearing the sin of the world that had thus been passed on to Him. The Lord's shedding His blood and dying was not a punishment for His own wrongs, but His receiving in our place the judgment for our sins. His bearing sins through the baptism and His paying the price of those sins on the Cross are joined together as one work of salvation. Moreover, Jesus rose again from death and became the living Lord who has saved us. What Luke sought to make Theophilus know for certain is precisely this work: the salvation He accomplished through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection.

It is not that we complete the Lord's work by our faith; rather, we receive by faith the salvation the Lord has completed. So a person who seeks to receive the remission of sins must, before examining how firmly he has braced his own heart, look to the

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Lord, who received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again. When we clearly know this fact and accept it in our hearts, our conscience, too, lays down its toil of trying to save itself and finds rest in the salvation the Lord has given.

Abide in the certainty of the word you were taught

Luke, saying that he had examined everything carefully from the very first and was writing it in order, made clear his purpose. *"That you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed" (Luke 1:4)*. Theophilus was a person who had already been instructed, but Luke conveyed it to him again so that he might know that instruction for certain. It is not that the gospel may be skipped over just because it has already been heard. This is because only when we clearly know what has saved us can we believe on the basis of the word even when many thoughts come flooding in.

We, too, need this confirmation. This does not mean that when we discover a fault we should excuse that fault or regard it as a small matter. We must acknowledge the wrong and turn from it, but we must not judge again the salvation the Lord has accomplished by the feelings of today, when we discovered that wrong. Because the Lord knew how heavy our sins were, He bore those sins and received the judgment in our place. A person who believes in that grace does not take sin lightly; rather, being thankful for the love that saved him, he seeks to follow the Lord's will.

We must have the same standard when we preach the word to others as well. If we leave the listener with only the demand to believe fervently, that person may remain stuck in examining his own heart. We must preach what relationship the baptism

Jesus received from John has with our sins, why He died on the Cross, and why we believe in the risen Lord as our Savior. The words with which we preach the gospel must lead that person's gaze from his own zeal to what the Lord has accomplished.

At the beginning we considered how yesterday's assurance is shaken in the face of today's faults. The place to return to at that time is not yesterday's fervent feelings but the facts of salvation recorded in the Scriptures. Just as Luke sought to make Theophilus know for certain, I hope that we, too, will examine the word we have been taught and clearly believe in Jesus Christ, who saved us. Even on days when our hearts waver, what the Lord has accomplished does not change, so we must set our faith upon that certain fact. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The righteous live not by their circumstances but by the righteousness He has given

< Luke 1:5–7 >

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years."

The righteous before God and their unresolved circumstances

When something we have long hoped for does not come to pass even though we have believed in God and lived according to the word, we come to look back on whether there is some problem with our faith. As we compare ourselves with the circumstances of others, we sometimes even doubt whether the Lord has accepted us. However, in introducing Zacharias and Elizabeth, the Gospel of Luke records together their living as

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righteous people before God and their circumstance of still having no child. From these two we learn by what we must judge faith.

The passage first speaks of the two of them as follows. *"They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6)*. Reading the word that they were righteous before God, we must not think that this couple were originally without sin and so had no need of God's help. That they walked in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord means that they treasured the word God had established and lived within that word. It was not a life in which they fixed by their own standard whether a person is good or bad and asked God to accept that assessment.

Within God's ordinances there was, along with the word that reveals sin, also the sacrifice by which sins are remitted. For a person who has broken the law to offer a sacrifice in which he lays his hands on the sacrificial offering to pass his sins on to it and the offering dies in his place cannot be a boast that he himself is righteous. It is because it is an admission that he has sin and needs the atonement God has established. The word that Zacharias and Elizabeth lived as righteous people likewise cannot be explained by human perfection alone, apart from these ordinances of God.

We need this distinction when we examine ourselves as well. Since the Scriptures say, *"As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one'" (Romans 3:10)*, a life lived faithfully is precious, but it cannot remove all the sins of one's whole life, and being assessed as better than others cannot take the place of the remission of sins before God. True faith is not gathering up one's strengths to prove one's qualification for salvation, but relying on the way by which God remits sins. That is why the

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life of the righteous is not a life of one's own power, separated from God's grace, but a life of believing in and following that grace.

The fact of having no child does not erase faith

After introducing the two as righteous, Luke immediately tells us their circumstances. *"They had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years" (Luke 1:7)*. Although the two were righteous, they had no child, and they were also advanced in years. Therefore, from this word we cannot interpret the reason they had no child as being that they did not believe in God. Rather, looking at the two facts the Scriptures record together, we must reflect on our way of thinking that easily settles the relationship between God and a person by one visible circumstance.

The fact that something long awaited has not come to pass is not a light matter. The passage, too, records without erasing it the hardship that Elizabeth could not conceive. But that hardship does not cancel the preceding word that they were righteous before God. When we read following the order in which Luke introduces the family of these two, we come to know that even a person with unresolved matters can live believing the word God has given. Faith is not something that begins only after all circumstances have first improved.

When we see someone's pain, we must not easily say that it is because he has many sins or because his faith is lacking. God's word concerning Zacharias and Elizabeth is clearer than such judgments of people. Also, when looking back on our own lives, we must not judge God's love by counting only the wishes that have not yet been fulfilled. Only when we distinguish between

the fact that the Lord has saved us from sin and the hardships we go through today can we believe in His grace and seek help even in the midst of hardship.

Even so, we also cannot promise that what happened to this couple will happen in the same form to everyone who believes. The son given to this family was John, who would prepare the way of the Lord, and in his birth there was a special mission God entrusted. Rather than demanding the same result as someone else's experience, we must look at the salvation God intended to accomplish through that event. Then, in the fulfillment of one family's wish, we come to see God's will toward all of us.

The witness prepared in a priestly family

Luke introduces Zacharias as a priest of the division of Abijah, and Elizabeth as a daughter of Aaron. This record makes clear in what family John was born, and prepares us to understand the work of salvation that would follow. God did not accomplish salvation unrelated to the sacrifice He had established for the remission of sins. In order to fulfill the meaning of that word, by which one laid his hands on the sacrificial offering to pass his sins on to it, He caused John, who would give baptism to Jesus, to be born in this priestly family.

Concerning what that son would do, the angel conveyed, *"He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God" (Luke 1:16)*. He was not a son who would end as merely the joy of his parents, but a witness who would turn people back to God. So when we read of the birth of John, what we should pay attention to is not how greatly the honor of this family was raised. We must know whom God had him testify of, and what salvation that testimony makes known to us who are in sin.

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John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus as the representative of mankind, and Jesus, by receiving that baptism, bore all the sins of the world once and for all. Included here, without exception, are all the sins that you and I commit throughout our whole lives. It is not the lineage of being a descendant of Aaron in itself that saves a person; rather, it is Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who received sins through John, whom God sent, who saves us. The more we know John's mission, the more our faith is directed toward Jesus, of whom he testified.

Herein lies the reason this record, which began in the house of Zacharias, is important to us as well. It is because it is not an old story of a family that has nothing to do with us, but tells us whom God sent before the Lord, who would bear our sins. God did not wait for sinners to escape from sin on their own, but prepared the witness who would pass on sins and the Savior who would bear them. Therefore, the initiative in salvation does not lie in our circumstances or ability, but in God, who had mercy on us.

Believe in the righteousness the Lord has given and live

Jesus, who received our sins, bore those sins, was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood, and died. The Lord received in our place the judgment for sins that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and accomplished our salvation. That Zacharias and Elizabeth were called righteous before God is also not separate from the faith that looks to this salvation. It is not that we became righteous by living well and reducing our sins little by little; rather, we have received the remission of sins by

believing in the salvation the Lord accomplished, from His receiving baptism from John to the Cross and the resurrection.

The Scriptures speak of that grace, saying, *"By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10)*. The basis for being sanctified lies in Jesus Christ's having offered His own body. Therefore, when we come before God, what we have to boast of is not the achievements we have built up in our own lives, but the righteousness of the Lord, who gave Himself for us. If we believe in this righteousness the Lord has given, then even when we find ourselves still weak, there is no reason to go back to the path of piling up our own merits again in order to obtain salvation.

Believing in this grace does not mean that we may live our lives carelessly. Just as Zacharias and Elizabeth lived treasuring the word of the Lord, we who have received salvation must also know what pleases the Lord and live according to His will. Only, the order is clear. It is not that we pay the price of salvation by serving, but that we serve out of gratitude for the love that has already saved us; and to others, too, rather than putting ourselves forward, we preach Jesus, who remitted our sins.

We, too, may have circumstances that have long gone unresolved, like those we thought of at the beginning. But do not judge that you have been forsaken by the Lord by looking only at those circumstances; rather, I hope you will look to the Savior, who bore our sins and gave up His life for us. Lay down your hasty judgments before the word that records Zacharias and Elizabeth as righteous. We must live before God today as well, not by the size of the wishes that have been fulfilled, but by the faith that believes in the righteousness the Lord has given. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Believe the promise that He would send John

< Luke 1:8–23 >

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

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mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time.' And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house."

The news that came to the priest burning incense

Even a person who has been praying can be startled on hearing God's word answering that prayer. Zacharias met an angel while burning incense in the temple, and even on hearing the news that he would be given a son, he first thought of his own age and his wife's. It was something he had long prayed for, but he calculated by his own circumstances whether it could come to pass now. In this scene we must examine where the heart that asks of God and the heart that believes what God has said diverge from each other.

Zacharias was serving as priest in the order of his division, and, his lot having been drawn, he had gone into the temple and was burning incense. While the people were praying outside, an angel of the Lord appeared on the right side of the altar of incense. At this time God conveyed to Zacharias news that he had not expected. *"The angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John'" (Luke 1:13).* Calling Zacharias, who was afraid, the angel told him that his prayer had been heard, that his wife would bear a son, and that

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he was to call his name John.

In this word there is grace that Zacharias could not provide for himself. God did not say that He would look at human possibilities and choose and use one of the children they already had; He said that He would give a son to a couple who had no child. That He even told them the name shows that the will to send that child lay with God. What Zacharias was to do from then on was not to add his own ability in order to bring the promise into effect, but to believe and receive what God, who had spoken, would accomplish.

The son who would turn many people to the Lord

The angel did not convey to Zacharias only the joy of gaining a son. He said that the parents would rejoice, that many would also rejoice at his birth, and that he would be great in the sight of the Lord. The word that he would drink neither wine nor strong drink and would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb means that God sets him apart for the work He would entrust to him. Jesus, too, said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11)*, but that greatness cannot be measured by how highly he is treated by people. His mission lay in turning people to God.

The angel conveyed that mission as follows. *"He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17)*. Just as Elijah turned the people back to God, John, too, would come before the Lord and make the people ready. To prepare the way of the Lord does not mean to pile up human

merits on the way the Savior would go. It means to lead hearts that had been rebelling against God to turn, to welcome the Lord, and to believe in His salvation.

When we consider the word about turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, we must know the heart God has toward sinners. We are those who commit sin and can only be judged, but God wanted to save us. He did not make that love known by words alone; He sent His Son and had Him bear sins. Since that work is revealed through the work of John, even a person who feared God and kept away from Him can come to know the remission of sins the Lord has given and return.

Returning to the wisdom of the just, too, is not a matter of making one's own thoughts more clever. It is returning to the way of knowing the righteousness of God and believing in that righteousness. People compare themselves with others in order to try to cover their own faults, but by such comparison no one can be rid of sin before God. Admitting that we cannot remove sin by ourselves and receiving the salvation God gives is the truly wise choice. John prepared the way before the Lord so that people could meet this salvation.

John's mission leads on to Jesus

Since the purpose for which God sent John does not end in praise that his life was admirable, we must also know to whom he gave baptism and of whom he testified. Look at the word Jesus spoke when He came to John and received baptism. "*Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him" (Matthew 3:15)*. Through this baptism that John gave to Jesus, all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus; so John is the

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one who passed on sins as the representative of all mankind, and Jesus is the Lamb of God who had those sins passed on to Him. In this way, John's mission of turning people to the Lord is connected with the work of salvation.

Since the sins Jesus received were not limited to the people who had come to the Jordan River at that time but were all the sins of the world, all the sins that each of us today will commit throughout our whole lives are also included in them. If we are to believe the word that God loves us, we must clearly know this fact. It is because the Lord did not receive only some of our wrongs and leave the rest for us to resolve by ourselves; He bore all sins once and for all.

Jesus, who bore those sins, received in our place the judgment we were to receive, by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross. If the baptism He received from John was the event in which He had sins passed on to Him, the Cross was the place where He paid the price for those sins with His life. And the Lord rose again from death and saved us from sin and death. What the angel said about turning many to the Lord means causing them to return to God by knowing and accepting precisely what God has done in this way.

When we know why John had to come first, the place of each of the two also becomes clear. John, as the man God sent, carried out the mission entrusted to him, and Jesus, as the Son of God, Himself bore our sins and became the offering of atonement. Only when we know and believe this relationship can we make clear who it is that accomplishes salvation, while also treasuring the role of the witness. The One we rely on is Jesus Christ, of whom John testified.

From a heart that counted its years to a heart that believes the word

On hearing the news that he would be given a son, Zacharias answered that he was old and his wife was advanced in years. The condition of his body was a fact, but on that basis alone he judged that even God's promise was impossible. Gabriel, after making clear that he stands in the presence of God and was sent to bring this good news, speaks as follows. *"Behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time" (Luke 1:20)*. That Zacharias became unable to speak until the word was fulfilled was because he did not believe that promise.

However, at the end of this word there is also the promise that it will be fulfilled when the time comes; so while making clear that Zacharias's unbelief was wrong, it does not erase what God would do. The people, waiting outside the temple, saw that he could not speak and perceived that he had seen a vision. Zacharias conveyed his meaning with gestures, and after the days of his service were over, he returned home. The passage makes us look at how the word of the faithful God would be fulfilled even in that place where Zacharias could not speak for the time being.

We, too, when hearing the word of salvation, must not make our own conditions the final criterion of judgment. If we hold on only to the thought of how we, with so many faults, could ever become righteous, we come to regard our own state as greater than the fact that the Lord bore our sins. Pretending to have no faults is not faith, but judging that our faults are stronger than the Lord's atonement is not faith either. We must accept just as they are the Lord's baptism, by which He took all sins upon

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Himself, the judgment He received in our place, and the salvation of the resurrection.

The good news Zacharias heard in the temple was greater than the possibility he had calculated. The news of the remission of sins that has come to us is also the news that the Lord has accomplished what we could not accomplish by our own ability. I hope that you will now lay down before that word the heart that, even while praying, reckoned only its own circumstances. Believing in God, who sent John and accomplished salvation through Jesus Christ, we must become people who know the meaning of the promise He has given and rejoice. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus and John the Baptist, whom God prepared

< Luke 1:1–23 >

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

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a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children," and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' And Zacharias said to the angel, 'How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.' And the angel answered and said to him, 'I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time.' And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house."

The reason Luke took up his pen

In a little while it will be Christmas. When Christmas comes, we wrap up the year and put our hearts in order. Before we greet Christmas, we want to share the word about John the Baptist, whom God had prepared. When Christmas comes around, we

want to praise how our Lord removed our sins and give thanks to God.

The word of Luke chapter 1, verses 1 through 23, which we read today, tells us that God prepared John the Baptist for our salvation, and how He prepared him. Through the word of this chapter 1, Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke, speaks concretely of how God prepared John the Baptist on this earth before He sent Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to this earth. He is telling us why God had to send John, who gave baptism to Jesus, to this earth, and why He had to prepare him.

Of that time it says, *"Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us" (Luke 1:1–2)*. This means that many people took up their pens to write about this fact that Jesus Christ accomplished our salvation. Luke, too, took up his pen with the same heart. He took up his pen to show that Jesus is our Savior, that Jesus Christ came to this earth and actually saved us, and that this salvation, which the Lord accomplished and gave to us, is a fact.

It was not only Luke who took up his pen; Matthew, Mark, and John also took up their pens. Also, many among the disciples of Jesus wrote in order to convey this fact. That is how we have come to see the Bible today. But Luke in particular preached the gospel to a most excellent man named Theophilus, whom he knew, and since he was called "most excellent," it seems that he was a man in a high official position. Luke thought it good to write this down once more in a document and send it to that man, and so he recorded this. Simply put, Luke did literature ministry. Just as we today write down sermons, translate them into the languages of many countries, and carry out the literature

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ministry, Luke, too, felt the need to preach, and so he recorded this in order to send it to the most excellent Theophilus.

God, who singled out Zacharias from the house of Aaron

When we look at what Luke wrote to the most excellent Theophilus, he records in order what he saw while following the Apostle Paul around, and the things he saw and heard concerning Jesus Christ. Then, historically, around when did the appearance of Jesus Christ take place? At that time, when there was a king named Herod in Judea, among the divisions of the priests there was a priest named Zacharias in the division of Abijah, and his wife was also a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. But because Elizabeth could not conceive, the two of them had no child even though they were advanced in years. Luke is explaining the reason why John the Baptist was sent to this earth through the family of Zacharias. It tells us why God had to send John the Baptist to this earth, and through whom He sent him.

Luke speaks of the house of Aaron, which stood in the division of Abijah. Because the descendants of Aaron, the family of the high priest, had become too many, David long ago divided the priests into twenty-four divisions. He set the order because it would not do for some to perform the priest's duties while others did not, and those born as males in the house of Aaron were given the qualification to go before God and offer sacrifices once they came of age. As the number of Aaron's descendants increased, David organized the priests into divisions so that their duties could be carried out in an orderly manner.

In any case, Luke is saying that John the Baptist was born in the house of Abijah, which was in the high-priestly division of Aaron. But this is not a story like a folktale. It says, *"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah" (Luke 1:5)*, and so it is explaining by citing a historical event. A folktale has no historical basis. Every country has a founding myth of the sort in which an animal became a human being and became the ancestor of that country's people, but such stories are merely stories handed down by word of mouth, without any historical basis or evidence.

But it is a historical fact that John the Baptist was born in the house of Abijah. The man named Abijah was a descendant of Aaron and a man who carried out the priest's duties, and even at this time, before Jesus came to this earth, that division was carrying out these duties. Even at that time, there were many people of the high priest's family. Coming down through several thousand years, how many descendants there must have been! From among those many descendants of Aaron, God specially singled out a man named Zacharias, a priest of the division of Abijah, sent an angel to him, and caused John the Baptist to be born on this earth through that couple. This proves that Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth were descendants of Aaron before God, truly representatives of the people of Israel, and of the family of Aaron the high priest, which God acknowledges.

These two people lived very faithfully and well before God with the faith that believed according to the sacrificial law of the Old Testament. Even judged by the righteousness of the law, they lacked nothing. So God said of these two people, *"They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6)*. In fact, if one keeps the law reasonably well, one can be

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said to be blameless. But there is no one who can keep that law perfectly. Human beings are weak; even if they can keep it today, tomorrow they fail again—that is what human beings are like. It is because we cannot keep the law, because we commit sin, that Jesus Christ is needed.

Nothing is done without preparation

God sent John the Baptist through Zacharias of the house of Abijah, which belonged to the high-priestly division of Aaron. This is what God prepared in advance for the salvation of you and me. It means that Jesus Christ, who was born on this earth and said, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28),* did not do this work alone, but that a representative of mankind was needed who would pass all the sins of mankind on to Jesus Christ Himself. That is why God prepared the representative of mankind. This kind of knowledge is absolutely necessary for us. What Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John deal with before the public ministry of Jesus is John the Baptist. The Gospel of Mark speaks of John the Baptist right away. When we read the Bible, we must not look at just one place but look at it as a whole, and we must know it as a whole. God sent John the Baptist to this earth six months before Jesus was born on this earth; we must think about whether this event is that important, and whether, since the writers of the Bible treated and recorded this part as so important, we too should not regard it as important. If the disciples of Jesus regarded it as this important, we too must do the same.

What we must think about in this word is that God the Father prepared John the Baptist starting six months before He sent His Son to this earth. This is tremendously important. Many people,

claiming to preach the gospel, say that Jesus came to this earth and saved us from sin straightaway. They say that since the Lord told all who labor and are heavy laden to come to Him, He was hung on the Cross and saved us straightaway. But whatever work we do, how much preparation we must make! Even to do just one flower arrangement, there must be a vase, there must be a holder to fix the flowers in place, and one must work out the whole design in advance and prepare the flowers to fit it. Only when one has planned this way and actually carried it out does the flower arrangement come about. All things are like this. Not only in the affairs of our lives, but God, too, prepared everything in order to save us. Before the foundation of the world He prepared everything to save us in Christ, and God the Father sent His Son to this earth and saved us through Jesus Christ. Then what did He prepare in order to save us? He had to raise up the representative of mankind, and He had to send John the Baptist to this earth. In order to do the work of passing our sins on to His Son Jesus Christ, He had to cause John the Baptist, who would give baptism to Jesus, to be born on this earth.

This was not an ordinary work of God but a special work. God sent an angel to Zacharias and spoke, caused what He had spoken to be fulfilled, and, when John the Baptist turned thirty, had him give baptism to the Son of God and transfer the sins of mankind to Him. This means that God the Father prepared these things. In any work, preparation takes up more than half of the work. Nothing just happens by itself. A person who rushes in without any preparation is a fool, and to say that one will live in this world without any preparation is truly foolish. Even to eat a meal, countless preparations must be made. One must farm, and to farm one must store seed; it is because such preparations were made that food enters our mouths. God the Father, too, in order to save you and me from sin, had to prepare John the Baptist, the

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representative of mankind and the high priest of the earth, who would pass our sins on to Jesus Christ. Therefore, this preparation is extremely important to us.

There are truly many foolish people in this world. If, without having prepared surgical instruments and without sterilizing them, someone presses on a patient who comes in, tells someone to bring any knife at all, and cuts open the person's belly and operates with instruments crawling with germs, that person will be infected with germs and die right away. Likewise, to do any work, much preparation must be made. God the Father, too, prepared John the Baptist in minute detail in order to save us. But when we look at many pastors in the world today, without preparing any surgical instruments, when a person with sin comes, they just say straightaway, "Your sins have been remitted. You have been saved." That is no different from a clumsy quack doctor who cuts open a belly without preparation. Without even knowing, not only do they themselves die, but they cause even those who come to them to die.

In today's word, God has told us about this process of preparing John the Baptist. In fact, God prepared clearly and meticulously. The one who would pass the sins of mankind on to Jesus had to be a descendant of Aaron the high priest, and only a person whom God acknowledged could be raised up as the representative of mankind, and he could transfer all the sins of mankind to Jesus Christ. God had to prepare this.

"Your prayer is heard"

So God the Father sent an angel to Zacharias. At that time, Zacharias had gone into the sanctuary and was offering a sacrifice. Outside the tabernacle there is the altar of burnt

offering and the laver, and inside is the sanctuary; one opens the veil, goes in, and burns incense on the altar of incense. While Zacharias was doing the work of offering the sacrifice, an angel was standing beside that altar of incense. How startled Zacharias must have been! Angels really do exist. Now God speaks to us through the word of the Bible, but at that time an angel appeared directly. The angel Gabriel, whom God sent, appeared to Zacharias and said, *"Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard" (Luke 1:13).*

We can see through the Bible that God prepared John the Baptist in order to accomplish His will. Zacharias and his wife had no baby. The couple were on good terms, but since they had no baby, how earnestly they waited and waited; it says that their prayer was heard by God. This means that they prayed earnestly. But Zacharias had already become quite an old man, and Zacharias's wife had become quite an old woman. Even so, because they had no child and were old, they waited for a child all the more earnestly. The older people get, the more they long for a child. God used that couple. It was not that He chose and raised up the representative of mankind from among people born by human ability; rather, God answered a person's prayer, but from such a couple as could have a child born only if God's special power came upon them, God caused the person He had prepared, namely John the Baptist, to be born.

John, who was great in the sight of the Lord and came in the spirit of Elijah

Zacharias comes to have God's will conveyed to him through the angel of God. It says, *"Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and*

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gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God" (Luke 1:13–16). It was said that his name should be called John, and that he would be great in the sight of the Lord. This man, John the Baptist, is the greatest in the sight of the Lord and the representative of mankind. Verse 17 says, *"He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17)*.

This means that John the Baptist, in the spirit of Elijah, turns the hearts of the fathers to the children. Who is the representative of mankind and the Elijah who was to come? It is John the Baptist, who gave baptism to Jesus. John the Baptist is far greater than the disciples of Jesus and than the prophets of the Old Testament. John the Baptist, as one so great, causes our salvation to be accomplished, and of him it says that he *"shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15)*. In other words, John the Baptist is a servant of God whom God specially sent. Through God's power, He gave John to Zacharias as his child. Elizabeth, Zacharias's wife, had no ability to conceive. Her menstruation had ceased. There is no one who bears a baby after her menstruation has ceased. By natural means, it is an impossible thing.

We must know. Who is the one who turns countless people to Jesus Christ? We must know the fact that it is John the Baptist. John the Baptist is this important. It says that he will *"turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just" (Luke 1:17)* and prepare a people established

for the Lord. This means that John the Baptist did the work in the spirit of Elijah. It means that John the Baptist did such work as turning countless people back to God. John the Baptist is a spiritual father to us, and the one greater even than Moses is John the Baptist. When we read through the Bible, we see that John the Baptist is a prepared person, whom God specially prepared.

Know and believe the roles of the two

John is a man prepared by God for our salvation. Jesus Christ is the sacrificial Lamb of God, prepared by God the Father as the sacrificial offering, to bear our sins, receive judgment for our sins in our place, and save us from sin. And John the Baptist, as the representative of mankind, is the one who would pass the sins of you and me on to the Lamb of God, the sacrificial offering. Jesus Christ and John the Baptist are the ones specially prepared by God the Father for the salvation of you and me. One is the Son of God and was prepared as the sacrificial Lamb, and the other is a human being just like you and me, a created being, the man who passes sins on to Jesus as the representative of mankind. We must without fail know how important it is to know the roles of these two.

There was the event of John the Baptist being conceived, and six months after that, Jesus was conceived. John the Baptist was born first, and six months later Jesus was born. God did so for the salvation of you and me. When John the Baptist turned thirty, he went out to the people and cried out for repentance very sharply, saying, *"Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Luke 3:7)*, and he also came to do the work of transferring the sins of mankind to Jesus Christ by giving baptism to Jesus in the Jordan River. Therefore, Jesus Christ, too,

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could become the true Savior of you and me when He turned thirty. From the very moment He received baptism from John, Jesus could become our true Savior. Before that, although He had come as our Savior, He had not yet borne our sins, and so the problem of our sins still remained unresolved.

Because Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, He bore those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and thereby received the judgment for sin in place of you and me. And since He rose again from death and saved us, we must know and believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord accomplished.

We must not just say that we believe blindly because it is the word of God; we must also think concretely about what we believe, and we must think through the whole process—what the Bible says, how God planned, and how He accomplished that plan. If we read the Bible without thinking about such things, then even on the question of why Zacharias became mute, we end our thinking with the answer that it was simply because he did not believe.

The mouth of Zacharias, who did not believe, was shut

Zacharias did not believe what the angel told him. So he was told that he would become mute. And after John the Baptist was born, Zacharias believed. Just as the angel had said, his wife's belly swelled and she bore a baby, and then he believed. And when he wrote on a writing tablet that his name was John, his tongue was loosed. If we do not believe this fact, we cannot say that we believe in Jesus, nor can we spread the gospel of Jesus.

Just as Zacharias became mute because he did not believe, if we do not believe the word, we cannot spread the gospel and we cannot be saved either; but if we hear and believe the word of God's truth, we can spread the gospel and we can also be saved. How wrongly the countless people today who claim to believe in God believe in Jesus! They believe without any knowledge, they preach blindly while claiming to preach the gospel, and even though they claim to believe in Jesus, they still have sin and have received no change of heart—that is how countless people today believe in Jesus.

It says that John the Baptist will turn *"the disobedient to the wisdom of the just" (Luke 1:17)* and prepare a people established for the Lord. The one who turns you and me back to God is John the Baptist. The person who played the role of making you and me return to Jesus is none other than John the Baptist. Without the role of John the Baptist, you and I could neither have known Jesus nor believed in Him. How could we know? People just say unconditionally that Jesus died on the Cross and unconditionally that He became our Savior, but even if one believes, one cannot know concretely. Since they neither know nor understand that their sins were passed on, even if they say they believe, in the end they merely finish with a one-sided love and are cast away. That is why we must know the concrete facts. We must know the historical facts, too, and we must know concretely what the God of truth says and the things God has done for us. That is how important this is.

Because Zacharias did not believe, he became mute, and the people were waiting outside the sanctuary. The people said it was a strange thing and wondered why he was not coming out for so long. Meanwhile, Zacharias came out mute, unable to speak, and expressed his meaning with gestures of his hands and feet, and the people realized that something had happened inside

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the sanctuary. Before Jesus Christ came to this earth, God frequently sent angels to His servants and conveyed His word. The angel Gabriel is the angel who brings good news, and the angel Michael is the angel who wages war. The people outside saw Zacharias's gestures and caught on. When we read through the Bible, John comes to be born exactly according to that word, and the Bible tells us so concretely.

Only by knowing and believing do we receive complete salvation

God has spoken to us through the Bible. He has told us that John the Baptist is the one prepared for you, that Jesus Christ, too, was prepared for your salvation as your Savior, who, as the Lamb of God and as the sacrificial offering, would bear your sins and be judged in your place, and that through that prepared Jesus you were able to obtain salvation. God the Father has told us that He prepared His Son and also prepared John the Baptist, namely the representative of mankind. And I am telling you this.

By coming to know that fact, we can believe and obtain true salvation. We must know well and believe in John the Baptist, whom God prepared and made ready, and in Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father. John the Baptist cannot be compared with Jesus, but only when we know without fail the roles of those two do we come to receive complete salvation. John the Baptist and we are the same created beings, but Jesus is God. God put on human flesh. Jesus, who is God, had to come in human form, and only when it was prepared this way could He bear the sins of you and me and save us. We must know this, think about it deeply, believe it, and examine once whether our faith is this kind of faith. Whether you believe just because you are told to

believe, or whether you believe really knowing this fact—I hope you will know and believe.

John the Baptist called people a brood of vipers. Truly, we were sinners. We were sinners in the present as well and could only have remained sinners forever, but through John the Baptist giving baptism to Jesus Christ, all those sins of ours were passed on to Jesus. Therefore, you and I were able to obtain salvation by faith. Do you believe this fact? Whatever the words of people may be, the word of God at least we must know concretely and practically, and by believing that word we must receive complete salvation. I give thanks to God, who prepared John the Baptist and Jesus for us and saved us. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

In the days when the Lord looked on me

< Luke 1:24–25 >

“Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, ‘Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.’”

The promise reached Elizabeth’s life

Speaking of what had happened to her, Elizabeth confessed that the Lord had looked on her. In the eyes of people she was a woman without a child, but when she spoke of the grace that had come upon her, she looked first at what the Lord had done. Even when looking back on the same life, the words that explain that life change depending on whose evaluation one puts first. Before Elizabeth’s confession, we must consider whether we speak at length about our own shortcomings yet pass briefly over the grace the Lord has bestowed on us.

The Scriptures record this event as follows: “*Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying*” *(Luke 1:24)*. The promise of a son that had earlier been conveyed to Zacharias was now actually fulfilled in his wife Elizabeth. When the news from the angel was heard, the age of the two seemed like a reason for impossibility, but the word God had spoken was not confined within that calculation.

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Elizabeth's conception was not the result of a person adding ability to herself, but a work bestowed by God, who had promised.

The record that she hid herself for five months appears briefly. Since a woman advanced in years had conceived a baby, it would have been hard for her to come out before people, but the Scriptures do not speak at length about her heart during those five months and immediately let us hear Elizabeth's own confession. She made clear who had done this, and accepted the change that had happened to her as the grace of the Lord's care. The text tells us the meaning of the event precisely through that confession.

Between the time we hear the word and the time we see that word fulfilled, there can be waiting. But waiting itself does not become the power that fulfills the promise. What was important for Elizabeth was not to boast of how long she had endured, but to know that the One who had promised had actually done it for her. When we too speak of grace, we must take care that our waiting or our toil does not stand ahead of what the Lord has done.

The Lord's care that is heard before the reproach

Elizabeth's confession continues as follows: *"'Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people'" (Luke 1:25)*. She speaks of the reproach she had suffered among people, but she does not end her story there. She speaks together of the fact that the Lord looked on her and took away that reproach. It is not a confession that covers up the pain of all that time as if it had never been, but

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a confession that recognizes what the Lord did in the midst of that pain.

Here, we must not connect whether someone has children with that person's worth. Since God had earlier said that Elizabeth, who had no child, was righteous together with her husband, the reproach among people was not evidence that she had been forsaken by God. Therefore, the circumstance of having no child does not determine a person's worth before God. Rather, it makes us think deeply about the fact that God looked on a life that had been defined by the eyes of people.

We too sometimes live with shortcomings or past wrongs that are hard to tell others about. As we fear that they might be exposed before others, we sometimes feel as if our whole life were explained by that one thing. But the reason God came to us is not that we had enough to boast about. He had pity on us because we have sin that we cannot resolve by ourselves and need salvation. The depth of grace lies in the fact that the Lord, who knows our lowliness, did not turn away from us.

So the confession "The Lord has looked on me" is not a boast about how special my circumstances are. It is thanksgiving that the Lord has bestowed grace on me, who cannot but receive help. Rather than striving to exalt ourselves before the eyes of others, we must know how the Lord bore our sins and accept that love. Because the Lord has remitted the sins that cannot be erased by people's evaluation, that salvation truly sets our hearts free.

The preparation of salvation contained in one family's joy

Elizabeth's conception was at the same time the removal of one person's reproach and a work for many people. The angel

had earlier said to Zacharias, *"You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth" (Luke 1:14)*. This is because this son was John, the one who would come before Jesus and prepare the way of the Lord. Through looking on Elizabeth, God sent a witness who would make the Savior known to people in sin. In the joy that came upon one family, a broader purpose of grace was contained.

The Scriptures say of John, *"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe" (John 1:6–7)*. John was not one sent so that people would remain with him. He was the one who would cry out for people to return to God, give baptism to Jesus, and testify that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Therefore, our eyes that look at the son given to Elizabeth must also go on to Jesus, of whom he testified. If we know that a witness was prepared yet do not know the Savior, who is the object of that testimony, we have not examined to the end the purpose God bestowed.

When John, the son given to Elizabeth, grew up and gave baptism to Jesus, Jesus had all the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all through that baptism. Because the lifelong sins of each of us were also included in that sin of the world and were passed on to the Lord, the work of bestowing grace on Elizabeth and sending John is also directly related to our salvation. God prepared and accomplished the work of salvation even before we were born into the world.

Because of that sin He bore, the Lord was hung on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and received in our place the judgment we were to receive. And He rose again from death and gave salvation to us, who had been under sin and death. Therefore, the confession "The Lord has looked on me" is not a vague expectation that He has thought well of us, but is based on the

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fact that He actually took our sins upon Himself and finished even the judgment for them.

Speak of the grace you have received as your own confession

What was fulfilled in Elizabeth was later conveyed to Mary as well. The angel, informing her that her relative who was called barren was already in her sixth month, said, *"For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37)*. What God had done for Elizabeth was used as evidence that helped another person believe the word of God. It was not that she persuaded others by her own ability; what God had done showed the power of the word.

We too need to know clearly the grace we have received. This is because we can rejoice at hearing that someone else has been saved and yet still think vaguely about our own sins. I hope you will accept in your hearts the fact that if the Lord received the sins of the whole world, He also received your sins. Do not regard it as a salvation that is ample for others but insufficient for you alone. When we take as our basis what the Lord has done rather than the size of our sins, we too can confess that the Lord has saved us.

That confession must not become words that judge the circumstances of others. Just because we have received grace, we cannot demand of someone who is still in difficulty why he has not become like us. A person who has received pity, even in the face of another's pain, comes to convey the love of the Lord who looked on him rather than display his own superiority. The joy of salvation does not grow from exalting ourselves, but leads to making the same Savior known to other souls who need grace.

Remember that when Elizabeth spoke of her life, she first confessed the Lord's care. We too must not miss the grace of the Savior while repeating at length only our own shortcomings. Since the Lord, knowing all our sins, has nevertheless borne them Himself, we cannot now leave out what He has done when we speak of our lives. Even if we have little to boast about before people, I hope you will clearly confess the grace of the Lord, who looked on us and saved us. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The promise of the eternal King conveyed to Mary

< Luke 1:26–38 >

“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, ‘Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!’ But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’ Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’ And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who

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was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.' Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her."

The greeting of grace that came first

The angel Gabriel came to Mary, a virgin of Nazareth. Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but since she did not yet know a man, she could not have imagined that word would be conveyed to her that she would bear a son. Yet the angel did not begin by demanding what great things she must do in the future, but greeted her as one who had already received grace. Through this word, let us examine whether the Lord's meeting with us also begins with our becoming qualified and inviting Him, or begins with the grace that came to us first.

The angel's first greeting was as follows: *"And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!'" (Luke 1:28)*. Since Mary heard the word that the Lord was with her even before she knew all that would happen to her, she was troubled at hearing these words and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel, telling her not to be afraid, informed her again that she had found favor with God. These two sayings make it clear that what would come upon Mary was not a task she had to produce by her own ability, but grace that God bestows.

The words that she had found favor do not mean that Mary was by nature a holier being than all other people. Mary too was a person who needed God's help and salvation, but God decided to use her in the work of sending His Son to this earth. Since grace is not received as a price after one's qualifications are

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weighed, the one who has received grace is precious because the One who gave the grace looked on her. Therefore, the more we speak of the blessing that came upon Mary, the more we must see not the righteousness she built up by herself, but the love of God, who came to her first.

Why Mary's son is the eternal King

The angel conveyed that when she bore a son, she should call His name Jesus. He also said, *"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32)*. He went on to say, *"He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:33)*. This promise is not merely words that tell Mary the joy of gaining an outstanding child, but a word that tells her who the son to be born is and what rule He will accomplish.

Consider that the throne of David and a kingdom without end are mentioned together. A human king, however strong, cannot escape death, and the circumstances of the kingdom he established also change. But because Jesus is the Son of God and the eternal King who will save His people, the kingdom promised to Him has no end. God did not send one leader who would relieve difficulties for a while, but sent the Savior who would deliver us, who are in sin and death.

That is why we must not think of the birth of Jesus only as the image of a beautiful baby. This baby would in the future bear our sins and make us the people of God. The kingdom the Lord gives is not a comfort that loses its effect on the day our lifespan ends. Because Jesus, the eternal King, reigns forever over the people who have been saved, those who believe in Him have a

hope that goes beyond life in this world. This is why the news that came to Mary is great joy for us as well.

The thought that we will acknowledge Him as King only if He changes every problem in our lives right away as we wish narrows this promise. What the Lord came first to resolve is the problem of sin and death, which keeps us from standing before God. If only our earthly circumstances change while that problem is left as it is, we cannot obtain eternal life. Therefore, those who believe the promise of the kingdom without end must first know and accept the salvation of the Lord, who opened the way to enter that kingdom.

By the power of the Highest

When Mary asked how this could be since she did not know a man, the angel told her the basis on which it would come to pass. *"And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God'" (Luke 1:35)*. This was not something that could be explained or imitated by human strength, but a work the Holy Spirit would do. The One to be born through the coming of God's power was the holy Son of God, and Mary was a person who received that power and was given grace.

Only when we know the One who thus takes the lead does the object of faith also become clear. It was not that Mary made the impossible possible by strong will; rather, because God spoke and would accomplish it by God's power, she could believe and receive it. The angel informed her that her relative Elizabeth had also already conceived a son, and said, *"For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37)*. The basis given

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for Mary to believe was not a conviction drawn out of her own heart, but what God was doing and had spoken.

The Son of God came in this way, clothed in a human body, in order to bear our sins Himself. At the age of thirty, Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River, and through that baptism He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. Since even all the sins we commit throughout our lives were included in them, the coming of the Savior is directly related to the conscience of each of us as well. The Lord took the sins of sinners upon His own sinless body and did the work of salvation that we could not do by ourselves.

The Lord, who bore those sins, received in our place the judgment we were to receive by being hung on the Cross and shedding His blood and dying, and He rose again from death and saved us. The way the eternal King makes sinners His people was not a way of overlooking sin as if He had not seen it. It was the way of receiving sin through baptism and paying the price of that sin with His own life. Just as Mary could not conceive a son by her own strength, we too cannot produce new life by our own resolve; when we accept according to the word this salvation that the Lord accomplished, we receive the remission of sins and are born again.

The answer of one who has received the word

Having heard the explanation, Mary answered as follows: *"Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her" (Luke 1:38)*. In this confession, the place of the Lord and her own place are clear. The Lord speaks and acts, and Mary is the servant who receives that word. She did not pretend not to know

her own circumstance of not knowing a man; rather, she laid down the position of refusing even the word of God on the grounds of that circumstance. Because the word the Lord had spoken was true, she entrusted herself to His will.

We too must give this kind of answer when we hear the gospel. Rather than denying the fact that our sins are many, we must believe that the Lord has already borne those many sins through the baptism He received from John. Rather than clinging only to the thought that judgment is frightening, we must rely on the Savior, who received that judgment in our place on the Cross and rose again. Faith that accepts the word of God is not optimism ignorant of reality, but faith that knows both one's own sins and the Lord's vicarious atonement and comes to the Savior.

That faith continues into life after receiving grace as well. Because Jesus, who saved us, is the eternal King, even when we are weak we can seek the Lord's rule and help and learn the word. Our relationship with the Lord does not end with having received the remission of sins; rather, living as His people, we come to learn what is right and to serve other souls. The more we know the grace the King has bestowed, the more our hearts also grow in relying on Him.

The first greeting that came to Nazareth was news of peace given to one who had received grace. Just as Mary did not need to prove her own ability first when she received that greeting, we too do not need to create qualifications for salvation ahead of the Lord in order to receive grace. Receive the word that the King of the kingdom without end came to bear our sins. I hope that before that grace which came to us first, our answer too will be a confession of believing the word and entrusting ourselves to the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Subdue your own thoughts and accept the word

< Luke 1:26–38 >

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

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be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her."

Faith starts from accepting the word

We see the faith of Mary in this word. When Mary heard the words of the angel, she could not understand them, but she subdued herself and denied herself, and accepted that Jesus Christ would be conceived in her, just as the angel had conveyed. Where does faith start? Faith starts from accepting the word of God. Accepting the word that God speaks is faith. Nothing else is faith. Visions appearing, some feeling coming over the body, and speaking in tongues are not faith. As we look at the things God did for Mary, we come to know what kind of faith Mary had, and what kind of person comes to receive the birth of the baby Jesus in his heart.

Mary was a virgin. The angel went in to the virgin named Mary, who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, and said, *"Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28)*. When the virgin heard this, she was troubled and considered *"what manner of greeting this was" (Luke 1:29)*. The angel then went on to say, *"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:30–32)*.

The angel had said something utterly astonishing. The virgin named Mary was at home, and the angel came in and said, *"You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son" (Luke 1:31)*. How astonished Mary must have been when she heard that a

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virgin would bear a son, and heard it not from a person but from an angel who had appeared! Yet before the words that she would bear a son were even finished, he said that she should call His name Jesus, that He would be great and would be called the Son of the Highest. He was saying that the Messiah, the very Messiah who is the Savior, would be born. Merely hearing that a virgin would conceive a baby was already a thing to be astonished and afraid at, but before that account was even finished, when she was told that the Savior prophesied in the Old Testament, the Son of the Highest, would be conceived in her, what could Mary have said? If a woman knows a man, marries, and bears a child, that is a normal thing. But Mary had not known any man. She was a virgin who was betrothed to Joseph, set to marry him, and who had remained as she was.

Mary was a relative of Elizabeth, so she was a person connected to the family of Aaron, and Joseph was a descendant of David. Then why did God bring about this event when she was betrothed to Joseph, a descendant of David? Jacob had twelve sons, and among them was a son named Judah. When Jacob blessed Judah, he prophesied that the scepter would not depart from Judah, and that the eternal King would be born through Judah. The phrase "the descendant of David" appears many times in the Scriptures, and David is of the royal line. There were twelve sons, but Judah is the royal line that God specially chose.

She was betrothed and set to marry, when the angel appeared and said that she would conceive and bring forth the Son of the Highest, and that she should call His name Jesus; so Mary said something quite natural, *"How can this be, since I do not know a man?" (Luke 1:34)*. When Mary thought about it, she did not know a man, so how could she conceive a baby? Then the angel answered, *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power*

of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). By Mary's own standard and thinking, of course one must know a man in order to bear a child, but the angel came, conveyed the word of God, and also gave evidence. He said that her relative Elizabeth, who was by nature barren, had also conceived a child, and that *"with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37)*. At that moment the virgin Mary denied herself, denied her own thoughts, and accepted that word, saying, *"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38)*. And so she came to conceive Jesus Christ. If God had said that the power of His word would work through that woman, then a child could be born by that power.

It is the same when we receive Jesus Christ into our hearts. In our own thinking, it seems that our sins would not disappear once and for all, at one time; but if the word that Jesus Christ spoke to us caused those who went before us in the faith to be born again by the word and removed their sins by the word, then we, too, if we cast off the fixed ideas and thoughts we hold and accept the word of God, come to receive the baby Jesus Christ in our hearts and are born again.

Faith is this: when we deny ourselves and accept the word God has spoken, the power of the Highest overshadows us and, just as He said, causes us to be born again and washes our sins that are like scarlet as white as snow, making us clean. And so He leads us into the Lord, into faith. When we have faith, we must subdue ourselves. When Mary subdued her own human thoughts and said, let it be according to the word of the Lord, the baby Jesus was conceived in Mary just as it was said, and was later born. Has it become so for you? Do you believe the fact that Jesus Christ has removed all our sins, the fact that this word has removed all your sins? This is exactly what faith is. Faith is

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not something where the body trembles and the gift of shaking comes upon you. If that were so, shamans would be people of truly good faith.

Mary, too, in her own thinking, could not possibly accept this word, but she denied her own thoughts and said, if the word says so, let it be according to the word. This is exactly what faith is, and this is exactly the faith that causes the baby Jesus to be born. We, too, have come to conceive Jesus Christ by the word through such faith. How does anyone come to conceive the baby Jesus Christ? It is not by one's own thoughts, but by saying, let it be according to the word. We have truly thankful hearts before God.

Faith is denying oneself

If we look once more at our faith, faith is denying one's own thoughts and denying oneself before God. How can we receive the blessings God gives, believe in God, and live a life of faith? Denying oneself and accepting the word is faith. Peter cast his net all night long but did not catch a single fish. Even so, the Scriptures say that when he let down the net, saying, *"At Your word I will let down the net" (Luke 5:5)*, Peter caught a great many fish. Our true faith is casting off our own thoughts and, if the word of God says so, believing it just as it is and accepting that word. If we only accept that word, the baby Jesus is conceived, the baby Jesus is born, Jesus Christ grows up, and He becomes King and rules over us, and becomes our shepherd and leads us.

Faith means that there is nothing for us to do. After Mary heard these words, did she think, "Then I must conceive a baby," and do something herself to make the baby Jesus? The Scriptures

say that it was not so. Mary only accepted the word. She did nothing but accept the word, and yet that word entered into her, her belly swelled, and the baby Jesus Christ was born. If we only accept the word by faith, everything comes about by the word. Our faith does not come about by our making some kind of effort. If we only accept the word, the rest comes from the power of the word; the power of the Lord overshadows us and causes us to live our whole life of faith, leads us, makes us discern spiritually, makes us follow the Lord, makes us preach the gospel to many people, and makes us live a life of walking with the Lord. This is the life of faith.

Our receiving the remission of sins, too, was not something we received because of our efforts or because of something we did. We simply accepted the word just as it is, and from the day we accepted that word, all our sins disappeared, and before we knew it, we were living a life of faith. Without our knowing it, we became people who follow the Lord, and without our knowing it, we became people completely separated from the world. Faith does not come about by our making an effort; it starts from accepting the word of the Lord, from denying oneself. Even if one's own thoughts seem right, if the word of God says so, faith begins from following it, and because the power of that word is there, it causes us to live a life of faith and to receive and enjoy all things.

In the word of the remission of sins that we have accepted is the salvation that Jesus accomplished. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lives, transferred to Him once and for all, and in order to receive the judgment for those sins in our place, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and rose again; so by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we have received the remission of sins.

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Grace is for the poor in spirit

Because Mary accepted the news that the angel who came to her conveyed, she came to conceive the baby Jesus Christ. Our Lord bestowed on Mary the grace of conceiving the baby Jesus Christ. That is why the angel said, *"Rejoice, highly favored one" (Luke 1:28)*. Then on whom does grace come? Our Lord knew that poor heart of Mary. Our Lord bestows grace on those who are poor in spirit. The grace of God comes upon a person who has no righteousness of his own, who casts off his own righteousness and regards the righteousness of God as more precious, who regards the love of God and the power of God as more and more precious, who knows God to be greater than the ability of man and believes in His power and accepts the word God has spoken; a person who is truly poor in heart, who accepts it, saying, "Has God said so? Yes."

Our Lord gave grace to those who knew how wretched and worthless they were as human beings. God gave blessings to those who knew their own lowliness. We must know how lowly we humans are. What do we humans have that is worth presenting before God? God looked at Jacob and said, *"You worm Jacob" (Isaiah 41:14)*. It means that Jacob was like that filthy worm, which, when it rains, wriggles through the muddy fields, crawling through clean places and crawling through places where there is garbage. God at times also says that humans are like maggots. That is what we people are. God bestows grace on such worm-like and maggot-like humans, on the person who knows what he is and, having nothing to boast of, relies wholly on God, believes in Him, and looks to Him. Our God bestows grace on the person who says, "What God does is right; it is a hundred times more right than what I do; our God is holy and righteous, the God of love and justice, the One who, in

order to save me from all my sins, passed sins on to His own Son and removed all the sins of mankind; therefore, because it is fitting, I accept the Lord."

The reason I speak so strongly of the lowliness of man is that man has been exalted too much. The humanists have exalted man too highly. But between God and man there can be no comparison at all. The word God has spoken is absolute, whereas man is always changing, and man is as filthy and ugly as a maggot. If we want to receive the grace of God, we must rely wholly on God and believe in Him.

Who receives the grace of God? When Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, who received grace? It was not the scribes, the Pharisees, the chief priests, the kings, and the upper-class religious leaders of that age who received grace; rather, those who, like Mary, knew their own lowliness received grace. Also, the shepherds who were keeping watch over their sheep at night at that time received grace. The angels came down from heaven and praised God, saying, *"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased –ASV" (Luke 2:14)*. The people whom God was pleased with and accepted were precisely those who relied wholly on God and believed wholly in the word of God, those who had not relied on themselves. This means that only the person who knows what he is, who knows how ugly and filthy man is, who knows how great God is, and who knows the fact that God has saved us received the salvation of God.

We must examine whether we believe in the grace of God or not. If a person believes, that person is one who has received the grace of God. If a person does not believe even though the word of God is like this, it is because he rejects the word of God, and so he falls into the category of those who do not believe. What is grace? It is something given freely. Grace is something given

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freely as a gift. Why do you not receive what is given freely? I want you to know the fact that God likes people who like free gifts. Do you know how much a person who likes free gifts before God receives and enjoys? The person who likes free gifts goes to the kingdom of heaven, receives the remission of sins, and lives in the kingdom of God receiving God's favor and help. But the person who dislikes free gifts, the person who rejects the grace that God gives freely, ends up going to the burning hell. Just as Mary received grace, I hope that all the saints, without a single exception, will receive grace.

It is good for us to live receiving the grace of God. Without the grace of God, without the help of God, we cannot go on living. While we live, there are many things that are not visible to the eye, and in all those things we need the unseen protecting hand of God. We must live without forgetting the grace of God. Whatever we do in all things, the person who looks to the grace of God even in the smallest matters, saying, "I ask that God would help me like this, and that He would bless me," is a wise person and one who worships before God. This means that God has bestowed His grace on the person who is lacking, on the person who knows his own lowliness, on the person who is poor in heart, on the person who truly needs the help of God and desires the grace of God.

"The power of the Highest will overshadow you"

The angel said to Mary, *"The power of the Highest will overshadow you" (Luke 1:35)*. It does not say that God would overshadow Mary; it says that His power would overshadow her. In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, He said, *"Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3)*, and the power of

that word, the power of God, came upon it and there was light; and so we are now looking at the light in broad daylight. I want you to know the fact that because the power of that word, "Let there be light," is there, there is still light even now, thousands of years later. The angel said to Mary, *"The power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."* God said through the angel that the power of God would overshadow Mary, so that although Mary had not known a man, the power of God would cause Mary to conceive a baby, to give birth, to produce milk, and to raise the baby, and that the power of God would save Mary from sin, make her one of the people of God, and make her a person clothed with the righteousness of God, a person who has received blessing. That word spoken through the angel caused Jesus Christ to be conceived in the virgin Mary.

Whoever entrusts himself to the power of the God of salvation obtains salvation. The baby Jesus is conceived in the person who has accepted the power of the word of God and has received the remission of all sins. Jesus Christ entering our hearts, and believing in that power of God, by which His power removed our sins that were like scarlet, is precisely what it is to receive Jesus Christ. And He has come to dwell inside the born-again person. Just as the baby Jesus gradually grew in Mary's womb, after the baby Jesus Christ has entered a born-again person, the belly does not suddenly swell. After Jesus Christ has entered a born-again person, just as a baby grows in the womb, He causes faith to grow in our hearts, causes the word of God to grow, and causes the knowledge we know and the faith we believe to grow. Just as the Scriptures say that Jesus Christ was born in the flesh on this earth and grew in wisdom and stature, we, too, after we have received Jesus Christ, grow in faith as time goes by.

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God, who makes us grow continually

After we are born again, our faith does not stay where it is but keeps on growing. The One who makes us grow is God. God has power, and so He makes our faith grow. He continually raises us, continually protects us, and continually heals our wounds. Satan the devil continually torments us and wounds us, but God continually heals those wounds and binds them up, supplies nourishment, makes us grow, fills us, and gives us blessings. Our God is a God who is still working continually even now. The power of God overshadowed Mary and Jesus Christ was born, and the power of God removed all the sins of us humans. The fact is that this power through Jesus Christ has not only delivered us from sin but has also made us grow, and is healing day by day the wounds of sin inflicted by Satan the devil and causing our faith to grow.

What is amazing is that Jesus Christ is not someone who was born only at Christmas and then disappeared. He was on this earth for thirty-three years, and then He went. God is the God who remains on this earth forever, causing those who will receive the grace of God to be born again, making the born-again grow, healing them, raising them, blessing them, and accomplishing His own will. The work of God continues. It does not end with Christmas; tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, and within eternal time as well, God's work of life, His work of filling, His work of blessing, and His work of making us grow continue. Jesus Christ did not die and disappear completely; He rose again with new life. Having died and risen again, He sits at the right hand of the throne of God and lives forever, and now He is the Judge who will judge us, and as our King of kings He fills us forever, bestows grace on those who will receive grace,

blesses those who are to be blessed, and curses those who are to be cursed. Forever, our Jesus Christ is God and is with us as King.

The kings of this earth are born once, and when they die, that is the end. But the Scriptures say that the name of God is the LORD. The name "the LORD" means the One who exists by Himself. When Moses asked, "What is Your name? Must I not know it in order to go and tell Your people?" God said, *"I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14)*. It means that He is the LORD, whom no one formed and no one made, who has no beginning and no end. Jesus Christ is the eternal God and the God who exists forever. We cannot do so, but God has such power. We cannot believe it with our heads, but that is how it is. All beings other than God—Satan the devil, the angels, and humans—are all created beings. That eternal God gives us the work of God's life and makes those who have received grace grow, raises them, and blesses them. We have now received the remission of sins and have faith as small as a mustard seed, but God makes it grow continually. I want you to know the fact that our God saves many people through us, makes us serve many people, and bestows many of God's blessings on us so that we may live. I give thanks before the Lord.

"Let it be to me according to your word"

"Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her" (Luke 1:38). This means that when Mary heard the word the angel conveyed and entrusted everything to the Lord with the faith that relies on the Lord, all the words spoken to Mary came to be fulfilled, and the blessing of all the words of the Lord became Mary's. If we say, let it be according to the word of the

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Lord, we receive all the blessings. Mary accepted everything God had said just as it was. She accepted it all because it was the power of the word of God, because it was the word of the Almighty. When she said, *"Let it be to me according to your word,"* Mary received all the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. We must know this. I hope that we, too, will believe all the words in which the Lord says He will give, and become people who receive and enjoy, like Mary, all the blessings the Lord gives. Mary spoke that one word, and all the blessings of the kingdom of heaven became Mary's.

That is why Mary said, *"My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:46–48)*. It means that Mary is forever a blessed woman, one who has received blessing. When Mary accepted the word of God, she received all the blessings of God. That is why she said that her heart had rejoiced in God her Savior, because He had regarded the lowly state of His maidservant. It was on a woman just like Mary that our God bestowed grace and regarded her lowliness. Mary received blessing.

We are no different from Mary. Just as Mary heard the word through an angel, we, too, have heard the word of God. Through whom did we hear it? In the old days God conveyed His word through angels, but now He conveys it through His people and servants. The angel named Gabriel is an angel who runs errands. Just as our God spoke to the angel Gabriel, in this age He testifies of the word of God through His born-again people and servants. Did you, like Mary, say, *"Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38),* and believe when the word was preached to you? That is exactly the same as what Mary accepted. There must be someone who preaches the word in order for us to believe.

"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Having heard once and believed is salvation. But if one does not hear and merely says by one's own thinking, "I believe, I believe," faith does not arise. If the angel had not appeared to Mary and Mary had thought on her own that God would give her a blessing, she could not have received the blessing. By hearing that word once, by believing that word once, and by saying, *"Let it be to me according to your word,"* one comes to receive all the blessings of the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus Christ said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and accepted that it was fitting to remove the sins of all people. Righteousness refers to what is right. If there was a right thing that God came to this earth to do, it was the word of God that said, "Since humans go to hell because of sin, become slaves of Satan the devil because of sin, suffer because of sin, and fail to receive blessing because of sin, I will bear that sin itself and receive the judgment on the Cross in their place, and by offering My body to God the Father as the sacrificial offering, I will save all who believe in Me." Jesus came to this earth and received baptism from John in the Jordan River. He received baptism two thousand years ago, at the place where the deep-blue waters of the Jordan River flow. Do you believe the fact that when Jesus received baptism from John in the Jordan River, our sins were passed on to Him, and all the sins we commit throughout our whole lives were transferred to Jesus Christ? Do you believe the fact that we obtain salvation by confessing with our mouths?

John said, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*. Now where is sin? It was on Jesus Christ. Jesus, bearing our sins, went about for three years, and then, seeing the woman caught in the very act of adultery, He said, *"Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more" (John*

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8:11). Jesus Christ could not judge this woman. Because Jesus Himself had borne all this woman's sins, all the sins of the world, this woman was not to be judged. But this woman was poor in spirit. She knew the fact that she was truly a person like a worm, and her lowly state had been exposed before many people as that of one who had sinned. This woman had no righteousness of her own, and so she was only waiting for Jesus to decide what to do with her. At that moment Jesus Christ said to this woman that He did not condemn her either, that He could not condemn her. Why is that? He was saying that she had no sin because He had borne all her sins, and that He had borne them all, knowing that she would do such a thing. That is how Jesus became our Savior.

Your beginning is small, but your latter end will increase abundantly

Let it be to me according to the word of the Lord. The word of the Lord has saved us, and the word of the Lord has made us children 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)*. If we have received Jesus Christ into our hearts, we are children of God. Then God sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts. Then, just as Jesus Christ grew inside Mary's body, He has made faith grow in our hearts through the Church. Right now it may seem that Jesus Christ is not doing much great work for us, but He is working even now, and as time goes on more and more, He rules, protects, blesses, and embraces you and me. He Himself becomes our King and our Master so that no one can touch us, and God Himself leads us.

Dear beloved saints, *"Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38)*. There are countless words in the Scriptures. After

we are born again, it does not end with just being born again; we grow spiritually, deny ourselves, fight against the world and overcome it, and come to confess that we love the Lord more than everything in this world. We can love the things of this world, too, but because the love with which the Lord loved us is deeper and greater than the things of this world, we cannot help but love the Lord. In this world we often stumble, get torn, and get hurt, but Jesus Christ has removed all the sins of you and me, and He is the One who truly gives us rest and gives us blessings. He loves us. When we have hearts that love Him before God, God transforms our lives into tremendous blessing and into power. *"Though your beginning was small, Yet your latter end would increase abundantly" (Job 8:7)*. God said that He would bless us greatly, broadly, and abundantly. Do you believe that fact?

The blessing Mary received was this: *"Henceforth all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48)*. When Mary conceived the baby Jesus, she was ashamed. Since a virgin had conceived a baby, she could not hold her head up before people. But after she had conceived and given birth to Jesus Christ, her position changed. As Jesus Christ grew up, people said, *"Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You" (Luke 11:27)*. At first Mary was nothing special. But the fact is that, having accepted the word of God, within that faith with which she accepted the word, saying, *"Let it be to me according to your word,"* Mary was changed, as time went on more and more, into a blessed person, a person clothed with glory.

Do you know the fact that our receiving Jesus Christ, too, seemed at first very feeble and like nothing at all, but as time went by, God made it strong and great and made it the source of all the blessings of God? God does not abandon us. He

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continually protects us, continually raises us, and continually blesses us. I want you to know the fact that whatever Abraham may have been like before God, God did not abandon him but blessed him. It is only that our hearts were shaken for a moment; the blessing of God was forever with Mary, who said, *"Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38)*. If so, the fact is that it is with you and me as well.

This Christmas, I hope you will give thanks for having been given the faith that makes all the blessings in the word of God your own. There is blessing in every word of God, and He has given us the faith that believes it. I give thanks and glory before God, who gave us that faith. The blessings visible to the eye on this earth are blessings, too, but the growth of faith that is not visible to the eye is also a blessing, and knowing the fact that God grants all the things of this earth according to the growth of faith, having expectation before the Lord, relying wholly on Him and believing in Him with everything we have, and accepting the word of the Lord, I hope that all the glory God works for us will be revealed through us. ✉

Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

He came to save the lowly and to judge the proud

< Luke 1:46–55 >

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

Remember John the Baptist, too, at Christmas

When we celebrate Christmas, we remember only that Jesus Christ was born on this earth. We remember that the baby Jesus Christ was conceived in Mary and came to this earth. But in fact, we must also consider the fact that God did not send only the baby Jesus Christ to this earth, but that six months before the baby Jesus Christ was born on this earth, He sent John who gives baptism. Because sending Jesus Christ alone would have been

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insufficient to fulfill the word of God in the Old Testament, we must remember the fact that before God sent Jesus Christ to this earth, He sent Gabriel and caused the one named John, who would later give baptism to Jesus, to be born through an old woman named Elizabeth, who was of the house of Aaron. The author of the Gospel of Luke records this part in great detail. He said that just as many people had examined these facts from the very source and left writings, he too had examined them from the very source and written them down to send to the most excellent Theophilus, and what Luke thus recorded is the Gospel of Luke.

Among the angels of God, the angel Gabriel is the angel who brings good news, and the angel Michael is the angel who wages war. God sent Gabriel to Elizabeth, who was of the house of Aaron, and to her husband Zacharias. Zacharias, following the duties of the Old Testament priesthood, had gone into the sanctuary when his turn came and was offering the sacrifice. When he had drawn the lot, entered the sanctuary, and was burning incense on the altar of incense, an angel appeared. The angel Gabriel appeared and said, *"Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John" (Luke 1:13)*. This elderly priest's eyes grew wide, because he had seen the angel with his own eyes and heard the angel speaking to him. Everyone has a wish, and for a priest, if he had no child, his family line would be cut off. He was old and had no child, and so he had been praying earnestly before God, when the angel Gabriel appeared and told him that his prayer had been heard and that he would be given a child; yet Zacharias could not believe it. Because he did not believe, the angel said, *"Behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things*

take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time" (Luke 1:20).

The people were waiting outside. When Zacharias had offered the sacrifice before God and came outside, he could not speak, and the people sensed that this man had seen something inside the sanctuary. After that, Elizabeth conceived a child, and while hiding herself for five months she said, *"Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people" (Luke 1:25)*. Among the people of Israel, a woman who could not bear a child was not treated as a woman. Since Elizabeth, as the wife of a priest, had no child, her human anguish was beyond words. A priest had to have a son, and when the son turned thirty, he would hand down the duties of the priesthood to him.

God, who worked in two women through the word

The angel Gabriel, who had appeared to Zacharias, this time appeared to Mary. He appeared to Mary and said, *"'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!' But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end'" (Luke 1:28–33)*. God the Father had His servant the angel Gabriel appear first to the priest Zacharias, a descendant of Aaron, and gave him a child, and that child is John.

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And again through the angel Gabriel, He conveyed the good news to Mary that she had found favor, that she would conceive, and that the One to be born of her would be called the Son of God and would be the King who would succeed to the throne of His father David and reign over the house of Jacob forever. Mary, exactly like Zacharias, was so astonished that her eyes grew wide. She was alone at home when an angel appeared, so how astonished she must have been! In the old days God did many things through angels, but now He speaks through the servants of God.

When Mary said, *"How can this be, since I do not know a man?" (Luke 1:34)*, the angel Gabriel answered, *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:35–37).*

Before God sent His Son Jesus Christ to this earth, He conveyed two pieces of good news through the angel Gabriel. One was that He would send John who gives baptism, and the other was that He would send the Son of God, the King of kings, to this earth. He spoke to these two women, Elizabeth and Mary, and from these two women John and Jesus Christ were born by the power of God. God is Spirit. People think of God as if He were a man and take the word that the power of God would overshadow Mary as a human relationship, but that is not so. When the almighty God speaks and that word enters inside her, conception takes place. Just as God created all things in the universe by His word—when He said that there should be light, there was light; when He said that the earth should bring forth vegetation and fruit trees, it brought forth fruit trees; when He

said that the waters should be divided from the waters, they were divided; when He said that there should be fish in the sea, there were; and when He said that there should be birds flying in the sky, there were birds flying—He worked in these two women with that same power.

Therefore, when it comes to Jesus Christ's coming to this earth, we must not think of Jesus Christ alone. God sent the angel Gabriel to these two women, and through one of them He caused John to be born from the house of Aaron, the high priest of the people of Israel, and through the other He caused Jesus Christ, the King of kings, to be born by borrowing the body of a virgin from the tribe of Judah, from which the royal line comes among the twelve tribes of Israel—from that royal family. We must remember these two things. These two pieces of good news came to you and me today through the angel Gabriel. If we count the months, John was born exactly six months earlier, and after him Jesus Christ was born.

Now, of these two women, one is an old woman and the other is a virgin. This is not a human work but a transcendent one. God deliberately did this, and Elizabeth said that God had given her a baby to take away her reproach among people. How ashamed she must have been, an old woman having conceived a baby! Even so, she was glad, and people also praised her, saying that God had bestowed mercy on her. Now, Mary and Elizabeth were relatives. When the angel Gabriel told Mary that her relative Elizabeth had also conceived a baby, Mary believed and accepted it, saying, *"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38)*. From that moment the baby was conceived.

So Mary, too, must have been curious. When Mary went to visit her relative Elizabeth and greeted her, Elizabeth said that the mother of her Lord had come to her. The virgin who had

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conceived Jesus Christ was the mother of the Lord. It is said that when she heard Mary's voice, John who gives baptism, who was in Elizabeth's womb, leaped for joy. Elizabeth *"spoke out with a loud voice and said, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord'" (Luke 1:42–45)*. She said that the baby had leaped in her womb, that blessed is she who believed, and that what the Lord had spoken would surely be fulfilled.

I want you to know the fact that before Jesus Christ was born, the angel Gabriel visited two women and worked. These are the two servants God sent in order to save us: John and Jesus Christ. He sent the King of kings, and John the Baptist, the greatest among those born of women. The author of the Gospel of Luke records the fact that God sent them because only then could Jesus Christ save us, and we must know the fact that all four Gospels treat John the Baptist and Jesus Christ together. We lean far too much to one side and speak only of Jesus, but that is not right. Just as Mary said, *"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38)*, exactly according to that word the baby was conceived in Mary's womb. By the power of God, she conceived by accepting the word that the angel Gabriel conveyed to her.

How was the will of God, who sent John and Jesus, fulfilled in the remission of our sins? Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and in order to receive the judgment for those sins in our place, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and rose again, and thereby saved us, the lowly.

Mary's confession is the confession of us who are born again

Mary speaks, filled with the Holy Spirit. *"And Mary said: 'My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed'" (Luke 1:46–48)*. This confession of faith that Mary made after she accepted the word and conceived Jesus Christ is the confession of all of us who are born again. It is not that we believe because we went back two thousand years and saw with our eyes Jesus Christ being born. Just like Mary, it is something we could never believe, but when we accept that the word of God, which God spoke by sending the angel Gabriel and by sending His servants, is fulfilled just as it is, we receive salvation before God, and Jesus Christ is born in our hearts.

Mary said, *"Henceforth all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48)*. This means that after we, the saved, have believed in Jesus Christ and become righteous, people also call us blessed. We have received salvation by believing in Jesus Christ. Our souls praise God, who has saved us, and rejoice that our Savior has come into our hearts and removed all our sins. And we give thanks that just as He regarded that lowly maidservant, our Lord has come to and saved the lowly like me, the lowly like us. This has become not only Mary's confession but the confession of you and me. People look at you and call you blessed. Before we met Jesus Christ we were people without blessing, but after we met Jesus Christ we became blessed people, and people look at us and say that such a person has truly received a blessing.

"He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation" (Luke 1:49–50). God, who is mighty,

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has removed all our great sins. The name of our Lord is holy. It says that His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. God has compassion on us. To those who fear God and who, like Mary, acknowledge the word of God and believe it, saying, *"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38)*—to such people the mercy, love, and blessing of our God come from generation to generation. In order to save you and me, God had Jesus Christ receive the sins of this earth passed on to Him. Everyone who believes in the fact that when John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus, when Jesus Christ received baptism from John the Baptist, the sin of the world was transferred to Jesus and He thereby fulfilled the righteousness of God—the fact that God has saved us—becomes a child of God.

He scattered the proud and exalted the lowly

Just as God said, *"He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty" (Luke 1:51–53)*, He saved us, but He scattered those who were proud in their thoughts. He tore down the Tower of Babel and scattered them completely. He put down the mighty from above, exalted the lowly, filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty-handed, having nothing. That is what our Lord came to this earth and did. Our Lord did not come, simply save us, and end there. He scatters those who are proud in their thoughts, those who believe their own thoughts, those who say that in their opinion something about the Bible does not seem right, and who with proud

thoughts slander the word of God and engage in higher criticism and the like.

Jesus Christ is the King. The kings of this world, those who hold power in this world—Jesus Christ puts them down from above. He sends the rich away empty-handed, exalts the poor, and brings low the proud. Our Lord came to this earth to save those souls who are oppressed on this earth, who are in anguish because of sin, who are in anguish for fear of going to hell, and who tremble in fear before the word of God. Also, our Lord came to this earth to send the rich away empty-handed and bring low the proud, and He came to fill the hungry with good things. Our Lord gave good things to the hungry. He said, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)*, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6)*, and *"Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9)*. To the poor in spirit, to those who know that they are lowly, our God gave blessing. Our God has exalted us and brought low those who swagger in this world. He struck down the proud, who do not accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and who deny the fact that God specially sent John the Baptist to have sins passed on to Jesus Christ, the fact that Jesus Christ had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John the Baptist. That is what our Lord came to this earth and did.

Our God saved Mary's soul, exalted Mary, and bestowed mercy on Mary. And we must keep in mind the fact that He came to this earth to break those who do not, like Mary, accept the word, saying, "Let the word of God be fulfilled in me"—to send them to hell. Our Lord came and did this work, and He saved those who truly believe in God and believe in the word of God. This confession has become the confession of you and me.

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The purpose of sending John first

Mary stayed at Elizabeth's house for about three months and then returned home. The virgin's belly was swelling, and the old woman's belly was as big as a mountain. After Mary returned home, Elizabeth gave birth to a baby. A boy had to be circumcised eight days after his birth, and when people came and tried to name the child Zacharias after his father's name, Elizabeth said that he was to be called John. The people said that there was no one among her relatives with that name and brought a writing tablet to the father, and Zacharias, who still could not speak, then *"asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, 'His name is John.' So they all marveled. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God" (Luke 1:63–64)*. God gave Jesus Christ His name, but He also gave John his name. We must know why God gave this John, whom He gave through Zacharias, and we must know how Jesus Christ came.

Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied as Mary had. It says that God redeemed and visited the people of Israel and sent His Son Jesus Christ, and that He also sent the servant of the Most High God to this earth. *"You, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:76–79)*. Who is the one who guides us out of the power of darkness, who guides all mankind sitting in the shadow of death, into the way of peace, into the way of receiving the remission of sins? This word says that through this very John, the son of Zacharias,

whom God gave directly through the angel Gabriel—John who gives baptism—all mankind is taught the way to believe in God and receive the remission of sins. So that those sitting in the shadow of death and the curse might see the light of brightness, be set free, and receive salvation, our God gave John, who would later give baptism to Jesus, through the house of Aaron.

I want you to know that this John was not born without purpose. There is a purpose in everything. When the baby Jesus Christ came, John the Baptist also came along with Him, though six months apart. I want you to know that He sent John the Baptist first and then sent Jesus Christ after him. Only in that way could we know the role of John the Baptist and, by faith, know and believe the fact that Jesus Christ bore all our sins, and so receive the remission of sins and escape from sin.

Without knowing John the Baptist, we could not believe in Jesus Christ. Although it is said that Jesus Christ is our Savior, we could not know how He saved us. That is why, when we speak of Jesus, we also speak of John the Baptist with equal attention. There are two servants whom God sent directly in order to save us from sin: John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. These two servants were sent by God the Father and came to this earth; John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ fulfilled all righteousness by receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River at the age of thirty. That is why God sent John the Baptist to this earth and said, *"To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins" (Luke 1:77)*.

Who is the greatest prophet? John the Baptist. Who is the greatest priest? John the Baptist. Who is greater than Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, or Samuel? John the Baptist. We know the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel well, yet we know far too little about John the Baptist. God raised up many as His servants, but

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this John He raised up and sent as the representative of mankind who passes all the sin of mankind on to Jesus Christ, as the high priest, and as the great prophet. Therefore, we can never separate John the Baptist from Jesus Christ. This is not our own story; the authors of the Gospels say so with one voice. We must know and believe the purpose and the reason for the birth of Jesus Christ that the four Gospels speak of. John, who gives baptism to Jesus, was born and grew up in the deserts. Until he appeared to the people of Israel, he lived alone in the wilderness, wearing a garment of camel's hair and eating locusts and wild honey, listening to the voice of God without being tainted by people.

After John the Baptist was born on this earth, Caesar Augustus of Rome issued a decree that all the world should be registered, and Joseph and Mary went up to Bethlehem, their ancestral home. There, when the days were completed for her to be delivered, she *"brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7)*. That He was the firstborn means that there were younger siblings below Him, so we can know the fact that after Mary gave birth to Jesus, she continued her married life with Joseph and bore children. And an angel appeared to the shepherds who were keeping watch over their flock by night and told them that the Savior had been born in the city of David, and a multitude of the heavenly host praised God, saying, *"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased" (Luke 2:14)*. The shepherds went and found the baby lying in the manger, and told Mary what the angel had said to them about this baby.

Our God prepared everything and then sent Jesus Christ. God the Father first sent John—the high priest who passes the sins of every person of mankind on to the Son of God, Jesus Christ; the representative of mankind; the great prophet—and then He sent

Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind, to this earth. If Jesus Christ had come alone, it would have been nothing. Why could He not come alone? Because the Lord came to this earth in order to fulfill what He had spoken. Moses is the representative of the law, and Aaron is the representative of the high priests. God promised that when the high priest of the people of Israel laid his hands on a lamb, the sins would surely pass on to it. Because God promised in this way, the lamb is Jesus Christ, and the one who would pass sins on to Him on behalf of mankind had to be sent without fail as the servant of God, the representative of mankind. That is why, through Zacharias and Elizabeth of the house of Aaron the high priest, God sent one person as the representative of mankind—not by a human relationship but by the special power of God. His name is John, who gave baptism to Jesus, and so people of later generations record him as John the Baptist.

In the Book of Malachi it says, *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:5–6)*. The Lord said that the very person whom God had said He would send is John the Baptist. We must know the special providence of God, who sent John the Baptist before sending Jesus Christ to this earth—the fact that He had to send the servant of God. If there were no representative of mankind called John the Baptist, you and I would have no way to receive the remission of sins even though Jesus came. If John the Baptist had not given baptism to Jesus Christ in the Jordan River, and if Jesus had not done for us that work of receiving the baptism of the laying on of hands from John, having all our sins transferred to Him, being immersed in the water, rising again, and ascending, we could not have been saved. Because Jesus could not do that

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work by Himself, God, exactly as He had promised in the Old Testament, without fail placed one high priest of Aaron, raised up one person as the representative of mankind, and sent the Lamb of God, the Son of God, so that sins would be passed on to Him, and so fulfilled it exactly like the word He had promised in the Old Testament.

"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased" (Luke 2:14). We must give thanks for the fact that God sent two servants. We must give thanks that He sent Jesus to this earth, and also give thanks that He sent John the Baptist. If at this Christmas we know only Jesus Christ, we know only half. The Old Testament and the New Testament all have their counterparts. The word of God is divided into two: the promise and the fulfillment of the promise. In the Old Testament God established the system by which all the sins of the people of Israel were remitted through the high priest's laying on of hands. The Lamb of God is Jesus, and He is the Savior who would bear all the sin of mankind. Who is the one who would pass all the sin of mankind on to Him? John the Baptist, the greatest one. Do you know about John the Baptist? Do you know about Jesus? At this Christmas, we must give thanks for the fact that our God sent John the Baptist together with Jesus. Of course, there is no need to exalt John the Baptist. But without John the Baptist, the sins of you and me would remain as they are.

Yield your proud heart before the word

Who are those on earth in whom He is well pleased? It said that peace comes to such people; to those who, like Mary, kneel before the word of God and acknowledge and believe the word

of God, saying, "I am a lowly maidservant; let it be to me according to the word of the Lord," Jesus Christ comes, the salvation of Jesus Christ comes, peace comes, and the blessing of God comes. The blessing of God does not come through visions, miracles, or voices heard with the ears. Nor is one blessed by listening well to what the pastor says. The blessing of God comes when we acknowledge the word of God and accept that word.

Mary called herself a lowly maidservant. What about you? In this world there are those whose hearts are proud, there are kings who trust in their own power, and there are rich people who trust in their own riches. Such people do not receive Jesus even when He comes, but rather try to seize and kill Him. Herod was an atrocious king whom the Roman emperor had set up over the land of Judea, and when he heard the story that the baby Jesus Christ had come as the King of the Jews, he asked to be told where, saying that he, too, would go and worship Him. Then, after the wise men, having been directed by God, returned by another way, he realized that he had been deceived, and ordered that all the young children two years old and under, reckoned from the time Jesus Christ was born, be killed. This is what Satan the devil does. The king tries to kill Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ is not One who could be killed by kings. He is the King of kings who puts kings down from above; He is not One who could die at the hands of a mere king, nor One who could be killed by the rich or by the proud.

Our Lord brought low the proud and the rich, and exalted those who had been brought low. He raised up the valleys and brought low the high mountains. He came to save sinners who are destitute on this earth, whose hearts are in anguish, and who wait for the kingdom of God, and on the contrary He struck down those who are proud and full, who oppose God, and who

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trample on people and make them slaves. He saved people like us, who are like a lowly maidservant; He crushed all those who say there is no God; and He sent the rich away empty-handed.

Yield your proud heart. Do not even say before the word of God, "This is what I think." Before whom do you think you stand, that you dare to blabber before the word of God that the Bible is wrong? There are so many things in the Bible that we do not know. Yet among those who are called theologians, there are some who say that the Bible was recorded wrongly, that not all of it is the word of God—that there are the words of Jesus, the words of men, and the words of the devil in it—and so what should be taken out must be taken out and what should be sorted out must be sorted out. This is a proud thought. To put them into the lake that burns with unquenchable fire and brimstone and make them suffer forever without dying—this is the righteous judgment of God.

The purpose for which God made human beings is to make them the children of God. He made us so that we would live with God forever. Yet do you say that Jesus did not remove all sins, or that Jesus did not have sins passed on to Him when He received baptism from John the Baptist? 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, and when He came up from the water there was a voice from heaven saying, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)*. Who dares to say before the word of God, just because he has a mouth, that the baptism Jesus received was not the passing on of sins? God sends those who say such things to hell. Jesus did not come to this earth to save just anyone. He came to send the rich away empty-handed, to send the proud to hell, and to destroy without fail those who are to be destroyed, and He came to save

without fail the poor, those who truly feel that they are poor in spirit, those who are to be pitied.

This is the story of you and me. As we celebrate the birth of our Lord, we must remember two things. We must keep in mind the fact that the Lord came to save those who would receive mercy before God, and to judge proud human beings. Jesus Christ is not some good-natured gentleman. To make the arrogant feel torment forever in unquenchable fire, in bodies that do not die—this is the righteous judgment of God. But to those who truly fear God and know how to acknowledge the word of God, those who acknowledge the word of God even though their own deeds are not right, those who believe that Jesus Christ is God and the Savior, that our Lord came to this earth and had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River, and that as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world He went to the Cross and received all the judgment for the sin of mankind—to such people the Lord came to become the Savior. So He became the Savior of the lowly, made our souls truly blessed, made us praise God, and made our hearts glad. He regarded the lowly, saved us so that we would be called blessed by all people and all angels, clothed us with the glory of God, and made us the children of God.

In the future, when our Lord comes again as the Lord of the second coming, He will come to take those who have nothing to do with sin. At that time, those who are born again go to the eternal kingdom of heaven, while those who are not have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone and enter the second death. We must not interpret the birth of Jesus Christ only in a good sense. We must know that He came to put the arrogant into the fiery pit of hell. Do you believe the fact that He

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came to save those who say before the word of God that they are so very lacking? He came for these two reasons.

On those who, while believing in Jesus, are sinners and yet persecute the righteous, the righteous judgment of God must come. When the time comes, after that there is judgment. Those who mock the word of God, treat it with contempt, and take it lightly will come to know on that day that the taste of it lasts forever. I want you to know the fact that eternal bliss awaits those who now repent and turn, believe in Jesus Christ, receive the remission of sins, and become righteous, but eternal hell awaits those who do not. Our Lord was born on this earth in order to clearly divide heaven and hell. Does just anyone go to hell, and does just anyone go to heaven? Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).*

The God who is good and who judges

I like the word of God best of all. So I do not envy the rich of this world, nor do I envy kings who hold power. The words of those who fit the word of God to their own liking and judge it as they please carry no weight with me. What Mary said is my confession of faith and the confession of faith of us who are born again. What is there that Mary did? She called herself a lowly maidservant. It is clear that she did not know a man, but she was just like any ordinary virgin. Yet she was a Mary who had received grace. She had received the love of God. We, too, have received the love of God, so that Jesus Christ has come into our hearts, and by believing in Jesus Christ we have received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit has come into our hearts.

We must proclaim these things for a long, long time. Even among those who say they believe in Jesus, there are many who will go to hell because they do not believe this gospel. Then some might ask how a servant of God can take pleasure in that, but I take no pleasure in it. I feel pity. I do have a heart of pity, but it is because they do not accept it even though it is spoken clearly, even though they can hear it, even though they have heard it. I say it once, twice, three times, and keep on saying it. Yet those who refuse to accept it to the very end must go to hell. If both those who do not believe the fact that Jesus Christ received baptism from John in the Jordan River and bore all your sins and those who do believe it were to go to heaven, that would not be righteousness. God is the God of righteousness. He is the God who judges those who are to be judged and saves those who are to be saved. That is why our God is a good God. God is not only a good One. He is also the God who is good and who judges. He has put down the rich and kings from above. Where is there a king other than Jesus Christ? It has only been entrusted to them for a while; the true King of kings, the eternal King, is Jesus Christ, who saved us. Where is there a God of gods? Christ is the true God of gods. Miscellaneous gods are not gods but demons.

At this Christmas, we must give thanks. We must give thanks, knowing that it is the righteousness of God that the pitiable, like the shepherds, should be saved. Do you believe in Jesus as your Savior? Do you believe the fact that Jesus saved us with the water and the blood? If you do not believe this fact, you go to hell, and if you believe this fact, you go to heaven no matter how lacking you are. God makes those who have received salvation, no matter how lacking and weak their deeds may be, His children and lets them live enjoying eternal bliss together with

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God, and He judges forever those who reject and oppose the word of God. We praise this righteousness of God.

We are so thankful. We must know and believe the fact that God is not only a good God. God is infinitely good, but we must also know clearly the fact that there is eternal judgment for those who rebel against Him, do not believe in Him, and reject His love. At this Christmas, we give thanks for the fact that God sent two servants, that one of those servants is the Son of God, and that He sent these two in order to save you and me and all mankind. ✉

Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

Rejoice in your own Savior and praise Him

< Luke 1:39–56 >

“Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.’ And Mary said: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our

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fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever.' And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house."

The joy that overflowed in the meeting of two women

When Mary entered Elizabeth's house and greeted her, the babe in Elizabeth's womb leaped for joy. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, called Mary a blessed woman and marveled at the fact that the mother of the Lord had come to her. The joy of this meeting did not arise from the two women envying each other's circumstances or praising their own merits. It was joy that sprang from the fact that what God had spoken was being fulfilled and that the Savior was coming. Let us follow the meeting of these two women and think about what it is that the praise of our hearts, too, begins by seeing.

Elizabeth, while speaking of the fact that Mary had believed, made clear that the ground that keeps that faith from being in vain lies in the faithful word of the Lord. *"Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord" (Luke 1:45)*. The word that she is blessed and the word that what the Lord has spoken will be fulfilled are connected to each other. It does not mean that whatever Mary strongly desired would come to pass just so; it means that because the word the Lord spoke is true, the person who has received that word is blessed. Therefore, the joy of faith lies not in having gained the power to fulfill one's own wishes, but in having come to rely on the faithful Lord.

That Elizabeth called Mary the mother of the Lord also shows from whom the joy came. It does not mean that Mary had

become a divine being by herself; it is a confession that the One she had conceived was Elizabeth's Lord. Through the babe in the womb, the joy of John, who would later testify of Jesus, was also revealed. Since the work God had done came upon the two households together, their meeting could not become a place where they competed over which of them had received a higher grace than the other.

We, too, must be able to rejoice when grace comes upon those who hear the word together with us. If we think of what another person has received as though our own share had been reduced, it is hard to praise together the grace the same Savior has bestowed. The Lord did not accomplish a salvation so small that it could be left for only one person. Because He knew that all of us need salvation and came, it is a matter of thanks for us as well when another soul believes the word and rejoices in the Lord. Elizabeth's joy was precisely the joy of recognizing that grace together.

We praise the Savior who regarded the lowly state

Look at the center of the song Mary sings. *"And Mary said: 'My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed'" (Luke 1:46–48).* Just as the words say that it was her soul that magnified the Lord, this praise was not a sound made outwardly, but praise that came out of the inward man, that is, the soul. She did not call God the Savior of others only, but confessed Him to be her own Savior, which means that she herself needed salvation and that she rejoiced because of that Savior. The reason for that joy was not that her own ability had

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been recognized, but that God had regarded her in her lowliness. The greater the blessing he has received becomes, the more a person who clearly knows the fact that he has received grace praises the One who bestowed the grace rather than exalting himself.

When Mary spoke of herself as lowly, it was not a matter of using humble words to gain a good evaluation from people. It was a confession that she knew she was a person who could not accomplish salvation by herself unless the Lord regarded her. We, too, whether we have much or little outwardly, cannot remove our own sins before God. Even if we live a life that is recognized by people, the sin in our conscience can remain as it is, and the thought that we are better than others cannot receive the judgment for sin in our place either. When we know this fact, we come to see ourselves as those who need the Savior.

To such people as us, Jesus came. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the Lord bore all the sins of the world at one time, and even the sins we would commit throughout our whole lives were included in them without exception. That is why we can confess the Lord to be our own Savior. Rather than worrying whether each one of us might be excluded from the great word that He saves mankind, we must know that our own sins are also included in the work by which He received all the sins of the world. What the Lord bore tells us the scope of our faith.

Jesus bore those sins that had been passed on to Him, was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and took upon Himself in our place the judgment we were to receive. Moreover, He rose again from death and became the living Lord who has saved us. That is why there is a concrete reason in our praise, in which we rejoice in our Savior as Mary did. We do not rejoice by ignoring the responsibility for sin; we give thanks because the Lord bore even that responsibility in our place. When we

know the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, the love of the Savior goes beyond a vague emotion and gives peace to our conscience.

Mary praised, *"His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation" (Luke 1:50)*. A person who knows this mercy does not regard lightly the God who has saved him. Even if the word of the Lord differs from his own thoughts, he treasures and believes that word, and he does not reduce at his own will the salvation the Lord has bestowed. Fearing God and rejoicing because of the Savior are not opposites of each other. Because we know that the Holy One has had compassion on sinners, we exalt Him and rejoice in Him.

The mercy that filled empty hands follows the covenant

Mary's song also reveals the pride that refuses grace. *"He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty" (Luke 1:51–53)*. If people regard strength or power as the ground of their own salvation and exalt their hearts before God, they come to think that there is no reason for them to receive the grace the Lord gives. But the power of man cannot remit sins, and riches, too, cannot substitute for the price of life before God. That is why this song begins with the word that He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts and moves on to the word that He has filled the hungry.

We cannot draw the conclusion here that anyone who is merely in poor circumstances is saved automatically and that

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anyone who has riches is unconditionally excluded from salvation. The mercy Mary praises comes upon those who fear God, and salvation is received by believing what the Lord has done. A person who fills his heart with himself and considers that there is nothing more to receive does not see his own sins. On the other hand, a person who knows that there is no righteousness in himself and seeks salvation from the Lord obtains fullness with the righteousness He gives, just as the word says, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6)*. The ground of being filled lies not in boasting of one's own poverty, but in the abundant grace of the Savior.

This regarding of the lowly was not a capricious favor of God, but the work of salvation that He did in remembrance of the promise He had spoken long ago. The song ends with the word, *"He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever" (Luke 1:54–55)*. The grace that came upon one woman does not end within that woman's lifetime alone, but is connected to the will of salvation that God had spoken long before. This is why Mary, even while calling herself a blessed person, does not stay with herself but praises the covenant of God.

Our joy, too, must not be bound only to a pleasure that disappears every time our circumstances change. The work by which the Savior bore all sins and the grace by which He made that salvation known to us are not canceled by today's hardships. Even on a day when things do not go as we wish and our hearts are heavy, when we think of the One who delivered our souls from sin, we can find again the reason to give thanks. This is not a matter of pretending not to know our pain, but of clearly knowing the salvation we have not lost even in the midst of pain.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then

returned to her own house. But the song that was heard in this meeting remains for us as well, and asks what we will rejoice in as we live. Do not lend your ears only to how much others exalt you, but turn your hearts to the Savior who has regarded us. Just as Elizabeth and Mary recognized the same grace and rejoiced together, I hope that we, too, will testify to one another of the Lord who has remitted our sins and offer praise, rejoicing in our Savior. ✉

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Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

The mouth of the father who wrote the name John was opened

< Luke 1:57–66 >

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

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The mercy rejoiced over together with the neighbors

At the occasion of deciding a child's name, differing words came out. The neighbors and relatives wanted to call him Zacharias after his father, but his mother answered that he should be called John. When the father, who could not speak, was asked his will, the name written on the tablet was also John. Why did these parents accept that name instead of the name their relatives found familiar? We can know the answer when we remember by whose word the birth of this child began.

Elizabeth's full time came and she brought forth a son, and the neighbors and relatives rejoiced together over it. *"When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her" (Luke 1:58)*. These people heard of the obtaining of a son as a matter in which the Lord had shown great mercy. Therefore the joy of this household was not a feast boasting of an achievement accomplished by human strength, but an occasion of rejoicing together over the grace by which the Lord had given a son to an elderly couple according to His promise.

The expression that they rejoiced together is also precious. It is not merely looking on at the grace another person has received, but receiving his joy as one's own joy. The work by which God had regarded one household was made known to the neighbors as well, and they saw together what the Lord had done. When grace is conveyed among people, we can escape from the narrow heart that says blessing must be ours alone. We, too, must give thanks with the same heart when another soul comes to believe the word of the Savior and rejoice.

However, even among the people who rejoiced, their intentions regarding this child were not the same. When they

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came on the eighth day after the child was born to perform circumcision, the sign of being a descendant of Abraham, the relatives wanted to follow the father's name. To them, the familiar family name came to mind first, but the parents had the word God had already made known to them. What matters here is not which name sounds better, but who the One who gave this child is and what He has said.

The name written on the tablet was John

When the mother answered that he should be called John, the people said that there was no one among the relatives who had that name. They asked the father his will as well, by signs. Zacharias could not speak, but he clearly wrote down his will. *"And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, 'His name is John.' So they all marveled" (Luke 1:63)*. The mother's answer and the father's answer were the same, and the people marveled at it. The reason the parents did not follow the thinking of their relatives was not that they disregarded their family, but that they had received the word God had given.

Earlier, Gabriel had said to Zacharias, *"Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John" (Luke 1:13)*. At that time Zacharias, thinking of himself and his wife, who were advanced in years, could not believe those words. But now, before his eyes, there was a son born according to the word, and he wrote on the tablet the name God had determined. Instead of continuing to put forward his own calculations even with the accomplished fact before him, he fitted his answer to the word that had been given first.

Even after receiving the grace of God, we can put our own thoughts first when we explain that grace. Rather than knowing

how the Lord has saved us, we say that we have made this much effort and so deserve to be saved. But just as the giving of the child did not begin from the boasting of the parents, our salvation also did not begin from the evaluation we have attached to ourselves. Only when we receive what God has accomplished according to His word does the subject of grace also become clear. An explanation that people consider good cannot replace the salvation of the Scriptures.

Since there is no power to save people in the letters of the name John themselves, we must know what this child whom God sent would do in the future. John would go before Jesus and prepare the way of the Lord, give baptism to Jesus, and testify of Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The name the parents received is not separated from this will of God. Therefore we must not stop at the amazing event surrounding the name, but go on to the Savior of whom he would testify.

The opened mouth praised God

As soon as Zacharias wrote the name on the tablet, his mouth was opened. *"Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God" (Luke 1:64)*. He who had become unable to speak because he did not believe the word he heard in the temple of the Lord now praised God. He did not merely boast of the ability to speak that he had regained; he exalted the God who had spoken to him and fulfilled that word. The scene of the closed mouth being opened shows together what it was that he came to say.

When we come to know what God has done, our words, too, can change. Before, not knowing how to deal with the sins that

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tormented us, we spoke only of our own efforts and failures, but when we know the fact of salvation, we come to speak of the Lord who did that work. This is not a mere change of mood that replaces sad words with bright words. Because we have come to know who it is that solved the problem of sin, we have something to say. We who read Zacharias's praise must also clearly know the ground of the thanks we offer to the Lord.

God sent John to give baptism to Jesus, and Jesus, by receiving baptism from John, had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. The sins each of us commits throughout our whole lives are also entirely included in them. Jesus, who bore those sins, was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and received the judgment for sin in our place. Moreover, He rose again from death and saved us from sin and death, so our thanks do not stay at a vague sense that something good has happened.

Just as Zacharias's opened mouth praised God, we also give thanks to Jesus Christ, who has remitted our sins. John is the witness who received the mission for this salvation, and the One who actually bore our sins, died, and rose again is Jesus. That is why, while rejoicing that God sent John, we do not seek salvation from John. We know the way God prepared through him, and we believe in the Savior who came by that way and bore our sins. Faith that clearly knows who did the work makes us praise God rightly.

What kind of child will this be

When this became known, the people who lived nearby were afraid, and the report spread throughout all the hill country of Judea. *"And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts,*

saying, 'What kind of child will this be?' And the hand of the Lord was with him" (Luke 1:66). The people wondered about the future of the baby and kept in their hearts what they had heard, and Luke, along with the question they harbored, conveys the fact that the hand of the Lord was with the child. He moves the center of interest in the future from the vague expectations of people to what the Lord would do.

That the parents had a son was certainly a great joy, but the future of that son was not bound only to fulfilling the wishes of the parents. A son with whom the hand of the Lord was would live for the mission he received from the Lord. If we regard what God has given as only our own possession, it is easy to forget the will He has entrusted to us. The grace given to us, too, must not be left only as our own sense of relief, but must be used in testifying so that others may know the Savior. The reason a saved person serves the work of the Lord is that he cannot turn that grace into his own merit.

When we preach the gospel, we do not demand that those who hear it take on a new name or have a special experience. Just as the name written on the tablet was the name God had given first, what we are to preach is also what God accomplished first, that is, the fact of salvation by which He sent John to give baptism to the Son and caused the Son to bear our sins, die, and rise again. Just as Zacharias did not change the name God had given, we, too, must not alter with our own thoughts the content of the salvation God has accomplished. Even if those who preach it become many, the fact of salvation that must be preached is one.

Before the people who asked the child's name, the answer left on the tablet was John. The word given first, rather than the familiar thinking of the relatives, determined the answer of that household. I hope that we, too, when we wonder what to say

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about salvation, will examine what God has done rather than putting our own experience first. When we believe and preach the word we have received from the Lord just as it is, our mouths, too, will have a song praising the Savior instead of words putting ourselves forward. ✉

Sermon 11 by Paul C. Jong

To give knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins

< Luke 1:67–80 >

“Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: ‘Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace.’ So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.”

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The father who first praised God, who redeems

How can a person who feared God because of sin serve God without fear? If we forget the fact that God is holy, our hearts may be at ease for a while, but that does not make even the problem of sin disappear. Zacharias's praise answers this question with the word that God redeems His people. It is not a way of drawing near to God by thinking of Him as a less holy being, but the way of service that is opened by His delivering us from sin.

Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesying, did not first boast of the future of his own son. *"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David" (Luke 1:68–69)*. On the occasion of rejoicing over the birth of John, he praised the horn of salvation that God would raise up in the house of David. That Savior is not John but Jesus Christ. Because he saw the work of salvation, which was greater than the joy of having been given a son, Zacharias's praise began with the grace by which God had visited His people.

To redeem means to pay a price and deliver. A sinner does not only need to have his heart comforted; he must actually be saved from the responsibility for sin and from its judgment. This is because even if we tell one another that we are decent people, the price of sin does not disappear. God knew this problem and sent the Savior who would deliver us. That is why Zacharias's praise contains not the optimistic outlook of a person, but the power of the salvation God would accomplish.

The freedom of service given after being delivered

Zacharias, praising that God would fulfill the promise of salvation in remembrance of the oath He had sworn to Abraham, also conveys how the delivered people would live. *"To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74–75).* First they are delivered from the hand of their enemies, and then they serve before the Lord. If we reverse this order of serving as a people who have received salvation, service and devotion become heavy conditions for obtaining salvation rather than joy.

Nor should we narrow the word that He delivers us from our enemies to hostility between people only. Only when the power of sin and death, which truly brings us to death, is resolved can we live freely before God. Even if others cease to trouble us for a while, if sin remains as it is, the fear before God remains. That is why the Lord, in order to save us, put on a human body and came, received baptism from John the Baptist, and with that baptism had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all.

Included in that sin of the world are even all the sins each of us will commit throughout our whole lives. If we narrow the scope of what the Lord bore to a few wrongs we remember today, we cannot escape the fear of who will be responsible for the sins to come. But the Lord, knowing our whole lifetime, received all the sins of the world at one time. When we read the word Zacharias praised, that He would make us serve Him all the days of our life, we must also think of the Savior's remission of sins, which covers our whole life.

Jesus bore those sins, was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and thereby received in our place the judgment we

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were to receive. The baptism by which He received the sins and the Cross on which He paid the price of sin are not events separated from each other; they are connected as one work of salvation. And because the Lord rose again from death and saved us, we rely on the living Savior. The redemption Zacharias praised, that is, the salvation that pays the price and delivers, is precisely this, and what we believe is not our own faithfulness, but the fact that the Lord has solved the problem of sin and judgment in this way.

The word that we serve Him in holiness and righteousness must also be understood on the basis of that grace. Because Jesus has cleanly remitted our sins and clothed us with righteousness, we can come before God without adorning ourselves in order to obtain the remission of sins. That does not mean, however, that we call the wrongs of daily life right. We turn from our wrongs and follow the will of the Lord, but we walk all those steps within the grace of salvation we have already received. Service that struggles so as not to be forsaken by God and service that gives thanks as one who has been loved differ in their ground.

The mission of the prophet who would make salvation known

After praising the Savior, Zacharias prophesies toward his own son. *"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins" (Luke 1:76–77).* John is the prophet of the Highest and the one who would go before the Lord to prepare His way. What he would make known to the people is salvation by the remission of sins. It is not a word that he himself would

bear the sins of people in their place and die, but a word that he would make the way of salvation known.

The work of accomplishing salvation and the work of making that salvation known are distinct, but they are not unrelated to each other. This is because even though Jesus bore sins, if we do not know His work, we cannot believe that work as our own salvation. Since true faith is faith that knows and believes what the Lord has done, God sent, ahead of the One who would accomplish salvation, the one who would make that salvation known. John gave baptism to Jesus, and the next day, seeing Jesus, he testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*. Through his testimony we come to know clearly why Jesus went to the Cross and what relationship that death has with our sins.

Therefore, knowing the role of John is not a matter of making two Saviors. Because the witness God sent points to Jesus, we receive that testimony and come to know the Savior. Our faith does not stay with the greatness of John, but relies on the baptism and the atonement of Jesus Christ, of which he testified. We must not miss the relationship that John is the one who makes known and Jesus is the One who accomplished. Only then can we give the glory of salvation to the Lord while also respecting the witness.

From darkness into the way of peace

Zacharias reveals that the source of this salvation is the mercy of God. *"Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:78–79)*. For a person

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who sits in the shadow of death, what is needed is not a demand to open his eyes wider in order to see better, but light that actually shines. In the same way, for us who were in sin, what was needed was not a word telling us to try harder and become bright by ourselves, but the salvation of the Savior who has remitted our sins. The Lord visited us from on high and shone that light on us.

That light guides our feet into the way of peace. The knowledge of salvation does not end in merely making us speak well; it changes where we will walk before God. When a person who thought only that he could not escape the judgment of sin believes in the atonement of the Savior, instead of avoiding the Lord he comes near to Him with thanks. The peace of the heart has a clear ground: the fact that the Lord has solved the problem of sin between us and God.

The last verse conveys that John *"grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel" (Luke 1:80)*. That child, too, was being prepared toward the day when the work God had entrusted to him would be fulfilled. We who have heard Zacharias's praise must likewise not stop at knowing the grace of salvation, but learn the life of serving before the Lord. Since service is included in the purpose for which He delivered us, the days that remain can be not a time of striving to prove our salvation, but a time of revealing the grace we have received.

At the beginning we asked how a person who feared because of sin can serve God. The answer lies in Jesus Christ, who has redeemed us and remitted our sins. Go forward on the way of peace that the Lord has opened. By faith in the Savior who paid the price of sin in our place, I hope that you will enjoy the grace of giving thanks and serving all the days of your life, rather than hiding before God. ✉

Sermon 12 by Paul C. Jong

The holy covenant

< Luke 1:68–80 >

“‘Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace.’ So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.”

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Two things that had to be fulfilled before Christmas

It will not be long before Christmas. If we read today's passage, Zacharias, seeing John the Baptist being born, says, *"To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life" (Luke 1:72–75)*. As we celebrate Christmas, we reflect on the holy covenant of God. What is the holy covenant? As we celebrate Christmas, we must surely know it.

Everyone welcomes the fact that Jesus Christ came. Yet in people's hearts there is in fact no joy, and people simply enjoy the day Jesus Christ came as a pleasure of the flesh. They think of that day as a day for making some memories and say that they are glad. But we must celebrate a true Christmas. There must be true joy in our hearts, and we must know that God fulfills His holy covenant. We, too, must know that before Christmas came, God had remembered His holy covenant.

There is something that had to be fulfilled before Jesus Christ came. It is nothing other than that the holy covenant had to be fulfilled. Only when the holy promise of God concerning Jesus Christ was fulfilled could the birth of Jesus Christ take place. So before we celebrate the Christmas of Jesus Christ, we must take a look at this part, how the holy covenant was fulfilled.

What had to be fulfilled before Jesus Christ came is made up of two main strands. The first is the birth of the messenger of God on this earth. The birth of the messenger of God is the sending of the one who would finally complete all the things of the Old Testament, the one who would fulfill that covenant of

God. In the Book of Malachi, God said that He would send His messenger, and He sent the messenger of God; this means that He would first send the representative of mankind. If Jesus Christ was to come to this earth, there was one thing that had to be prepared. It was that the representative of mankind had to be born on this earth first. Only after the representative of mankind was born could the holy Lord Jesus Christ be born. The reason Zacharias, seeing his own son John being born, said that He had remembered His holy covenant is that Zacharias was one who knew all these things, for it was said that Zacharias, and of course his wife Elizabeth as well, were descendants of Aaron who walked blamelessly in the ordinances and commandments. The one who knew that one messenger of God, the representative of mankind, had to come to this earth and that after him Jesus Christ had to be born, the one who clearly knew the will of God, is none other than Zacharias.

Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke, speaks of two events first before telling of the birth of Jesus Christ. One is the time in history, and the other is the birth of the representative of mankind who had to be born before Jesus Christ came, namely that messenger of God of whom it was said, *"Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11)*. According to the word of the Old Testament, the word of God had to be fulfilled after John the Baptist came. There is the time when Jesus Christ had to be born, the representative of mankind who would be born before Jesus Christ came, and then, at the time Jesus Christ came, He had to come in exactly that way, according to the prophecy of the Old Testament, the word of the holy promise, and fulfill the word of the Old Testament exactly as it was. Luke tells us that the One who was born when history, time, circumstances, and the word were all fulfilled is Jesus Christ, the Savior whom God sent.

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Jesus Christ, who came at the time of history

If we look at Luke chapter 1, it says, *"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth" (Luke 1:5)*, and Matthew also records that it was in the days of King Herod. And Luke chapter 2 says, *"And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered" (Luke 2:1)*. This means that the Roman emperor called Caesar Augustus ruled this earth and made many nations his vassal states, and when the nation of Israel became a vassal state, he made a man named Herod the king of that nation. It was at that time that John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were born.

The reason the writers who recorded the Bible regarded this as important is that Jesus Christ, as promised, comes first as the Lord of the first coming and next as the Lord of the second coming, and He was born not in quick succession but at the very time when all the holy words of the Old Testament were being fulfilled. This means that Jesus Christ was born when the ruler of the whole world, the Roman emperor, was Caesar Augustus and the king of Judea was Herod. Why is it recorded like this? This was regarded as important lest, as time went by, people forget it, or think of it as some mythical event and wait again for Jesus Christ the Messiah. If it had not been recorded like this, the Jews would not have been able to find Jesus Christ, and we Gentiles, too, would have thought that the Messiah might still come in the future.

That is why Jesus Christ was born within history. He had to be born in actual fact at a certain point within the time of the world since Adam and Eve. Only if He was born within the time of this world, at the time of a certain event and in the days of a

certain king, could people receive salvation by believing in the Messiah who has already come, rather than waiting for a Messiah yet to come; that is why the writers who recorded the Bible point out the exact time, saying that it was in the days of King Herod. The Bible is the history of Jesus Christ. Many people have investigated it countless times, wondering whether it might be false or a novel, but those who have investigated the Bible say that it is a factual record of Jesus Christ, the King of kings, having been born on the basis of historical fact. That is why many scholars and wise men kneel before Jesus Christ and believe in Him as their Savior.

Then what must come first before Jesus Christ comes? The representative of mankind, one representative who can represent mankind, had to come into this world before Jesus Christ came. It does not work just by being glad, or just by saying that one believes in Jesus. There are many who doubt their own faith, and there are many who forget after believing. But we must call to mind and recall once again Jesus Christ, who came to us within history, and examine our faith again by the word. Only then can we know whether we truly stand firm in the faith that believes in Jesus Christ, and we can give thanks once again.

When we examine our faith by the word, we must clearly know how Jesus removed our sins. It is to believe 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, bore those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and was judged in our place.

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The tribe of priests and the tribe of kings

Luke explains by bringing up a person named Elizabeth, a descendant of Aaron. Zacharias is the son of a priest. We must know this. Later on, much became corrupted, and now there has been so much intermarriage that no one can tell who the descendants of Aaron are. They married people of other tribes and married Gentiles, so no one knows who belongs to which tribe. But in the old days, the twelve tribes always set up the banner of their own tribe and followed the Lord, and they married within their own tribe. They kept their own lineage well, passed it down through the tribe, and did well the things that the tribe had to do. If we look at the Old Testament, later on, in the case of the tribe of Benjamin, they fought with the people of Israel and then brought in women from other regions and intermarried, but at this time the birth of Jesus Christ had to come as the Seed of the woman, and the word also tells from which tribe He had to be born.

Then through which tribe did the representative of heaven have to be born? Our Lord tells us that part as well. The Book of Hebrews, speaking of how Jesus Christ was born not according to the order of Aaron but from another tribe, says, *"It is evident that our Lord arose from Judah" (Hebrews 7:14)*. That is why the writer of Hebrews keeps telling us that Jesus Christ is our Savior. God spoke through the house of Judah. When God blessed the twelve tribes of Israel, He said to the house of Judah that the scepter would not depart from their hand and that a ruler would always be with them. This means that Jesus Christ comes through the tribe of Judah. And it was said that Jesus Christ would come as the son of David. In the New Testament, even a Gentile woman called Jesus the son of David. Jesus Christ is without fail of royal lineage. The tribe of Judah was the royal

family among the people of Israel, and Jesus Christ comes through the royal family.

John was conceived first, and Jesus was conceived six months later

Zacharias was advanced in years, and since his wife could not conceive, it seems he probably had a wish. While he was burning incense inside the sanctuary, an angel appeared and said, *"Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth" (Luke 1:13–14).* God would give a baby to Elizabeth, a descendant of Aaron, and He said to call his name John. Zacharias was so overjoyed that he could not believe it, and as a sign of this, God made him mute and then released him from it after this promise was fulfilled. The angel said, *"For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:15–17),* and after that, it says, *"Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, 'Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people'" (Luke 1:24–25).* Elizabeth was an old woman, yet she had conceived a baby, so it seems she hid because she was not a little ashamed.

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But it says, *"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 1:26–27)*. Before Jesus Christ, the representative of heaven, came, the representative of mankind had to be born. In order to bring to birth one whom God specially sent, not a child of mere humans, God first caused John to be conceived through God Himself, and six months later the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary in the same way. We must pay attention to why this event was recorded first in the Bible before Jesus Christ was born on this earth. Luke the writer, who recorded it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, records this part, but people today disregard this part far too much. They know only that He was born; they neither try to know nor believe what had to be fulfilled before His birth, why this event is recorded first, and why John the Baptist came six months earlier than Jesus. Believing without knowing is precisely unbelief and superstitious faith.

God caused John the Baptist to be conceived in the womb of Elizabeth, and when six months had passed, He sent the angel Gabriel and caused Jesus to be born through a virgin named Mary, who was betrothed to a young man named Joseph, a descendant of David. Mary's husband was a descendant of David, and the descendants of David are of the tribe of Judah. As prophesied in Genesis, and as the prophets of the Old Testament prophesied, it was said that a king would be born through the tribe of Judah, and Jesus was born exactly so. God established David as king, and afterward, when He established Solomon as king, He promised that He would make that kingdom firm forever. But when Solomon died, that kingdom, which his father had labored so hard to cultivate, was soon divided in two. Then how is the prophecy that God promised

through David fulfilled? It is fulfilled through none other than Jesus Christ. So here there was a young man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The word says that Joseph, too, was a man who believed in God and a very righteous man. At that time, being a righteous person meant being a person who had become righteous by believing in Jesus Christ who was to come, according to the ordinances shown in the sacrificial law of the Old Testament.

The angel Gabriel appears to Mary and speaks. Before that, He had sent the representative of mankind through Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias. Just as God says that the greatest among those born of women is John the Baptist, He Himself sent one messenger of God to this earth six months before the birth of Jesus Christ. This is a clear fact. And this time the angel came to the virgin Mary, who was betrothed to a young man named Joseph, a descendant of David, and said, *"'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!' But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end'" (Luke 1:28–33).*

From whom is Jesus Christ born? He is born from the body of the virgin Mary. The baby Jesus Christ is conceived in the body of the virgin Mary according to the word of the Lord. *"Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I do not know a man?' And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest*

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will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God'" (Luke 1:34–35). The angel Gabriel spoke to Mary, but since Mary could not believe it, he gave an actual example and said, *"Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:36–37)*. He was telling her to believe. And it says, *"Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her" (Luke 1:38)*.

We see Mary submitting to the word of God. When Jesus Christ came to this earth, there is a part that our minds cannot understand. How can a virgin who does not know a man give birth to a baby? But if the Holy One intends to make a baby exist in the body of a virgin, He can make it exist. If He says that He placed Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind, in her body and caused Him to be born on this earth clothed in flesh, then that is how it is. If God has determined it so, Jesus Christ can be born that way. It is possible through revering His word. That Mary, after asking how she could give birth to a baby when she did not know a man, said, *"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38)*, is precisely something that transcended the human level. Mary was one who feared God. It was because she believed what the angel said. This is precisely the word of the holy covenant being fulfilled.

Jesus, who came clothed in flesh as promised, bore our sins and died, and rose again, and gave new life to us who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Now Elizabeth and Mary meet. Since Mary was a relative of Elizabeth, she went to see her and confirm it. Having listened to what the angel said when he appeared, she found it all to be right, and after accepting it for the time being, she went to see

Elizabeth because she wanted to confirm it with her own physical eyes. When she went to Elizabeth, Elizabeth was indeed visibly with child. And then, *"And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord'" (Luke 1:41–45)*. This means that both came to be so through the Holy Spirit. He caused John to be in the womb of the elderly Elizabeth, and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, dwelt in Mary by the word.

Mary, filled with the Holy Spirit, said, *"My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation" (Luke 1:46–50)*. She prophesied what Jesus Christ, who would be born from her body in the future, would do. So she said that she herself first rejoiced because of the Savior, and that she truly rejoiced that He had regarded the lowly state of His maidservant. The work by which God has pity on and saves the person who reveres and fears, believes and accepts God and the word of God happens to those who believe in God, even though they themselves are lacking.

"He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. He has filled

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the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty" (Luke 1:51–53). God does not look at deeds; rather, if the heart and thoughts are not right before God, He scatters them. Our Lord, as King, bestows grace on those on this earth who submit to Him, and mercilessly destroys those who are proud toward Him. This shows Jesus Christ, who came as King. Jesus Christ actually works even today, just as this word of prophecy says. He has saved people like this, pitiful people like you and me, whose deeds are not perfect, who wonder what to do because of their sins, and who, when the word of God says it is so, tremble before it and submit before the word, saying, *"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word."* And sending the rich away empty, putting down those who oppose Him, and utterly destroying the proud in heart, God comes to save His people Israel, pitiful ones like Jacob. This tells us that Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, has truly come to this earth as the King of righteousness, the King of peace, the King of mercy, and the King of truth.

The oath which He swore to Abraham

Elizabeth gave birth to a baby, and the family members said that since the father was Zacharias, the name should also be Zacharias, but because the angel had said to call him John, Zacharias, who could not speak, wrote John on a writing tablet. At that moment his mouth was opened. And Zacharias gave praise. *"Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: 'Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since*

the world began, That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to our father Abraham'" (Luke 1:67–73). Zacharias is now speaking of Jesus Christ, who was in the body of Mary. This means that God carried out the holy covenant that He had promised to the fathers long ago. It means that He sent Jesus Christ according to that promise, and fulfilled exactly what He had said to the people of Abraham, the father of faith.

This speaks of two things. The first is the birth of John. God promised at the last, in the Book of Malachi, that He would send the representative of mankind, the messenger of God. All the people of the Old Testament had become corrupt, but God said that before the great and dreadful day came, He Himself would first send the messenger of God. The second is that Jesus Christ comes exactly according to the prophecy of the Old Testament. It means that God remembered the word of His promise and came according to this word.

Let us examine whether He came according to that word. Jesus Christ had to come as the son of David, that is, through the tribe of Judah. The One who comes as the son of David is none other than Jesus Christ, and He comes from the royal tribe. Jacob speaks of this. Jacob called his twelve sons and told them beforehand what would befall them in the last days. Telling beforehand what will happen in the last days is prophecy, and God prophesied in this way through the servants of God. Concerning Judah, Jacob prophesied, *"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people" (Genesis 49:10)*. It was said that Judah was a lion's whelp, and it says, *"He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes" (Genesis 49:11)*, and what is spoken of here is

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all Jesus Christ. The scepter speaks of a king. It means that a king arises through the house of Judah. It means that Jesus Christ comes through this tribe of Judah, rules all the nations, and judges according to righteousness. In this way He spoke of our Lord being born from the tribe of Judah.

In Matthew it says, *"But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins'" (Matthew 1:20–21).* In the eyes of Joseph, the woman betrothed to him was becoming visibly with child even though he had not slept with her, so he intended to break this off quietly. If Joseph had made this public, Mary would have been stoned to death. But the angel who had appeared to Mary also appeared to Zacharias and appeared to Joseph as well. Do not be afraid but take her to you; she has not conceived a baby by the flesh, but God has borrowed the body of that virgin betrothed to you in order to fulfill the holy covenant of God, and what is conceived in her body is of the Holy Spirit, so when the baby is born, call His name Jesus; He is the One who will save His people from their sins. That is what it says.

Jesus, who came to save His people from their sins, bore all the sins of the world once and for all, including the lifelong sins of you and me, through the baptism He received from John.

Joseph was a descendant of David, and David was of the tribe of Judah. The Apostle Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin, not of the tribe of David. At that time, one could know which tribe had been passed down and how. The tribe of Judah married within the tribe of Judah, and unless there was something special, they carried on that tribe. But if you meet Jews now, they do not know

their own tribe; they know only that they are the people of Israel. It is because for over a thousand years they went to Gentile nations and even married Gentiles. The angel addressed Joseph as Joseph the son of David and told him not to be afraid to take his wife. This means that our Lord remembered the holy covenant. He had promised that He would be born through the tribe of Judah and had said that the scepter would not depart from Judah, and God sent Jesus Christ to this earth exactly according to that word of promise which Jacob prophesied concerning what would happen in the last days.

As we celebrate Christmas, we sing, "Joy, the Savior has come," but in actual fact, once we know this truth, there is no need to get so boisterously excited. If we have believed in our hearts in Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the holy word, and if, just as He was born from the body of Mary, He has been conceived through the word and we have received the word, we would not spend Christmas so noisily and excitedly.

He remembered the holy covenant: He had said that the scepter would not depart from the tribe of Judah, and He had told what would happen in the last days, that a King who would reign forever would be born, and exactly as He had said, Jesus Christ was born several thousand years later. This means that at this time, what had been prophesied several thousand years before was fulfilled. People often break even a promise made a week ago, and there are people who, having said that they would live together for a lifetime, separate not long after getting married; but God remembered His holy word even several thousand years later and sent John the Baptist, and fulfilled it just as He had said to the fathers of old. Zacharias is telling of that. Zacharias first prophesies, praising Jesus Christ, and in the latter verses he testifies of his own son John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, the prophet of prophets, the priest of priests. Jesus

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Christ came through the tribe of Judah exactly as God had said. It means that the King of heaven came to this earth through the royal family, as promised.

The Seed of the woman, from the body of a virgin

Jesus Christ was also born from the body of a virgin, as promised. Let us look for the part where it was said that He would be born from the body of a woman. God said to the serpent, *"And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15)*. He said that He would come as the Seed of the woman, and Jesus Christ comes through Mary. Why did He have to be born through Mary? This word says that He would come to remove the power of sin of Satan the devil, which is death itself. Jesus Christ was born on this earth by borrowing the body of a woman in order to deliver us from death, from the hand of the enemy, and cause us to receive salvation.

Why did He have to be born from the body of Mary? Because He had promised that He would come as the Seed of the woman, He borrowed the body of Mary. Jesus could have come alone. But ever since Adam and Eve sinned, all children who are born are sinners, and all people are the seed of a woman. No matter how loudly a man boasts, he cannot be born unless a mother gives birth to him. Those clothed in human flesh are all born with sin, commit sin, and must go to hell; and in order to save all this mankind, the Savior absolutely had to come as the Seed of the woman and bear and remove all the sins of humans, for only then could all mankind receive salvation, and that is why

He had to come as the Seed of the woman. That is why He prophesied that He would be born from the body of a woman.

Our Lord said that He would be called Immanuel. His being conceived in Mary was the exact fulfillment of what the prophets had said, and the word *"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14)* was a promise that He would come as the Savior clothed in human flesh. Immanuel, meaning that God is with us, means that God came to this earth clothed in the same form as a human being, the seed of a woman. Our Lord could save us only by being born from the body of a virgin. That is why He came. He remembered the holy covenant. God spoke to Moses and had him record the promise of God, and several thousand years later He fulfilled it according to this record. That is why God is faithful and is the Savior. He is the King of truth, the King of righteousness, the King of love, and the true shepherd. It says, *"Nor a lawgiver from between his feet" (Genesis 49:10).*

I will send My messenger first

He is the God who fulfills this holy promise. Before Jesus Christ came to this earth, two things absolutely had to be fulfilled, and that is precisely that John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, the messenger of God, had to come. The Book of Malachi says, *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5–6).* He said that He

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would send Elijah the prophet, and in the New Testament, did not Jesus say that John the Baptist is Elijah who was to come?

The Book of Malachi also says, "'*Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,' Says the LORD of hosts. 'But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderers' soap'" (Malachi 3:1–2)*. Who is the one who prepares the way? He is none other than John the Baptist. The Gospel of Mark says, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight."' John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:1–4)*. It says that he preached a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. This means that the One who was to come would receive baptism in this way and give the remission of sins, and it tells us to believe this gospel.

Before Jesus Christ came to this earth and bore all the sins of humans, who had to come? He said, *"Behold, I send My messenger" (Malachi 3:1)*. John the Baptist had to be sent before Jesus Christ was born. And only when the baby Jesus was conceived through a descendant of David, through Mary, the body of a woman, could all the promises of the Old Testament be fulfilled. When all had been satisfied exactly according to this holy word of the covenant of God, Jesus Christ, Immanuel, the Savior of mankind, is born. Mary had to be born, Joseph had to be born, Zacharias had to be there, and Jesus Christ had to come into a pitch-dark world, under the rule of King Herod, who was

under the power of darkness. Just as there was light when He said that there should be light in a world where there was darkness, the promise that Jesus Christ would be born on this earth full of emptiness and darkness and save us is fulfilled when the time has fully come.

The holy word of God was fulfilled as a historical event through Mary, through Zacharias, through Elizabeth, in the days of King Herod, in the days when Caesar Augustus was ruling, and Jesus Christ came to this earth clothed in human flesh. For the word of God that Jesus Christ would come to this earth to be fulfilled, the whole historical background of this age had to be set in place. Only then could Jesus Christ come. If God had not sent John the Baptist first, Jesus Christ would not have come first on His own. All the ordinances and statutes of the Old Testament had collapsed. Before the line of the few righteous people who feared the word of God and lived believing the word of God even though this world was wicked, people like Mary, Zacharias, and Elizabeth, was cut off, Jesus Christ had to be born and had to fulfill it according to that word. That is why, when the time came, He came to this earth two thousand years ago.

Jesus Christ came to this earth and, just as the word *"To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74–75)* says, He saved us from all sins, transgressions, and curses so that we might serve our Lord in holiness and righteousness. Because He fulfilled it according to His holy word, we can serve our Lord in holiness and righteousness like this. It is not that God came unilaterally and acted unilaterally. Before Jesus Christ came, all the conditions had to be fulfilled, and how well prepared John the Baptist, King Herod, Mary, Joseph, Zacharias, and Elizabeth were to fulfill the word of God! God sent them, and they were

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sufficient conditions for fulfilling the word of salvation of God. God Himself sent them and Himself fulfilled it. John the Baptist did not come merely according to human prayers, but was sent by the will of God. Our salvation, too, did not come about unilaterally on our part. We did not receive salvation because we were worthy; rather, God sent Jesus Christ according to His will and caused all who believe this word to receive salvation.

God's promise to send John the Baptist and the fulfillment of salvation

Before Christmas comes, we must think once about our salvation. How Jesus Christ, who is in our hearts, could be born in our hearts, how the Word could become flesh and dwell among us, how we could become His children and God's own people: this came about according to the holy covenant. We became the children of God according to the holy promise of God and were born again by the word, and just as Jesus Christ was conceived in the body of Mary, our God saved us from sin by the word, through Jesus Christ, as He had planned. In order to save us in actual fact, Jesus Christ came to this earth clothed in human flesh, had all our sins transferred to Him and bore them by receiving baptism from John according to the word of promise, delivered us from the curse and death, and caused us to serve our Lord in holiness and righteousness.

We must think of Jesus Christ, who was born in our hearts. Rather than just saying that we believe in Jesus Christ unconditionally, I believe we should, as we celebrate Christmas, think once again about what preparations He made before He saved us, how He accomplished that work and made us righteous

so that we became His own people, that is, the history of God, the things God has done, the promise of God, and the fulfillment of that promise, and give thanks, and set our faith and belief in order again and give thanks.

Let us give thanks that God recorded and remembered the word of the holy covenant. If Jesus Christ had come unilaterally, we could not be saved. If God had not sent John the Baptist, the salvation of all mankind would be entirely canceled. Why is that? Because He had promised to send the messenger, He had to do it in that way. Just as in the Old Testament the sins of a whole year were passed on to the scapegoat at one time, Jesus Himself became the Lamb and became the sacrificial offering, and cleansed all the sin of mankind once and for all, forever. Because He came to do that, if Jesus Christ had come unilaterally without sending John the Baptist according to the word, the faith of salvation that we believe would be imperfect, and because it would not have come about according to the word, it could be canceled at any time. But He saved us according to His holy promise. That is why we can give thanks before the Lord, and our salvation can continue forever.

As we celebrate Christmas, let us come to church and praise and give thanks to our Lord, who came according to the holy word and saved us. We must give thanks, striking the timbrel. It is not about making a commotion of the flesh in the world. We must not act like those who made a golden calf and danced before it. We must praise Jesus, who, before the Lord came, sent John the Baptist according to the word and the promise, and sent Mary, Joseph, Zacharias, and Elizabeth in the days of King Herod and fulfilled the word; and we must keep this in mind. In order to fulfill it according to the word, God first sent John the Baptist, and then sent Jesus Christ to this earth and caused Him to be conceived in the body of Mary and be born; and after time

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had passed, when John the Baptist was giving baptism, Jesus Christ came to him, bowed His head, said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and made everything righteous by receiving baptism from John. In order to remove all sins, Jesus Christ went to John the Baptist when He turned thirty. Why did He go to him at the age of thirty? Because in the Old Testament one had to reach the full age to be qualified to take up the duties of a priest. So when the time had come, when Jesus Christ had turned thirty and John the Baptist had also turned thirty, Jesus Christ, as the sacrificial Lamb of God, waited until John the Baptist was qualified to be the high priest, and then had our sins transferred to Him through John the Baptist and became our Savior.

We truly give thanks. We must remember and give thanks that He first sent John the Baptist, who would pass our sins on, to this earth, and we must preach it. Whether those who hear believe or do not believe, we must preach it, and if they do not believe, we must show them even by drawing a picture. There are many people who, while claiming to believe, deny this. The church is the lamp and the light of the world. He says to set the light on a hill and to light the lamp on a lampstand. Yet even those who claim to believe do not speak of this gospel of the water and the Spirit. If God had not sent John the Baptist before Jesus Christ was born, the Bible would have to be rewritten, and the opening chapters of the four Gospels would all have to be torn out. Before a king goes, he always sends an ambassador. He sends one representative of his own first to prepare everything, and when the time comes, the king goes; the king does not go first and make preparations. That is why He sent John the Baptist before Jesus Christ came. John preached to the people *"a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4)*. It means to repent and receive the remission of sins by believing

in that baptism. Satan the devil fears and hates this most of all. They like that the baby Jesus came, but Satan the devil and the people of the world hate the fact that He actually came to remove sins.

Do you believe the word of God? Even though we are lacking, do we hear and believe the word of God and fear and tremble before God? We must know that God is to be feared. God can send us to the kingdom of heaven, but He can also send us to hell. We believe that the word God has spoken is the truth, and we believe that His having done exactly as He promised is the truth. We give thanks that the Lord has saved us, and we must clearly testify of this. We must remember and give thanks for the fact that He sent John the Baptist before Christmas came. We give thanks before the Lord, who sent us John the Baptist to represent us in order to save us. Before the love of God, who saved us as the Word became flesh and the holy God came to this earth clothed in human flesh, and before the love of God, who had mercy on us, we give thanks and praise. ✉

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CHAPTER

2

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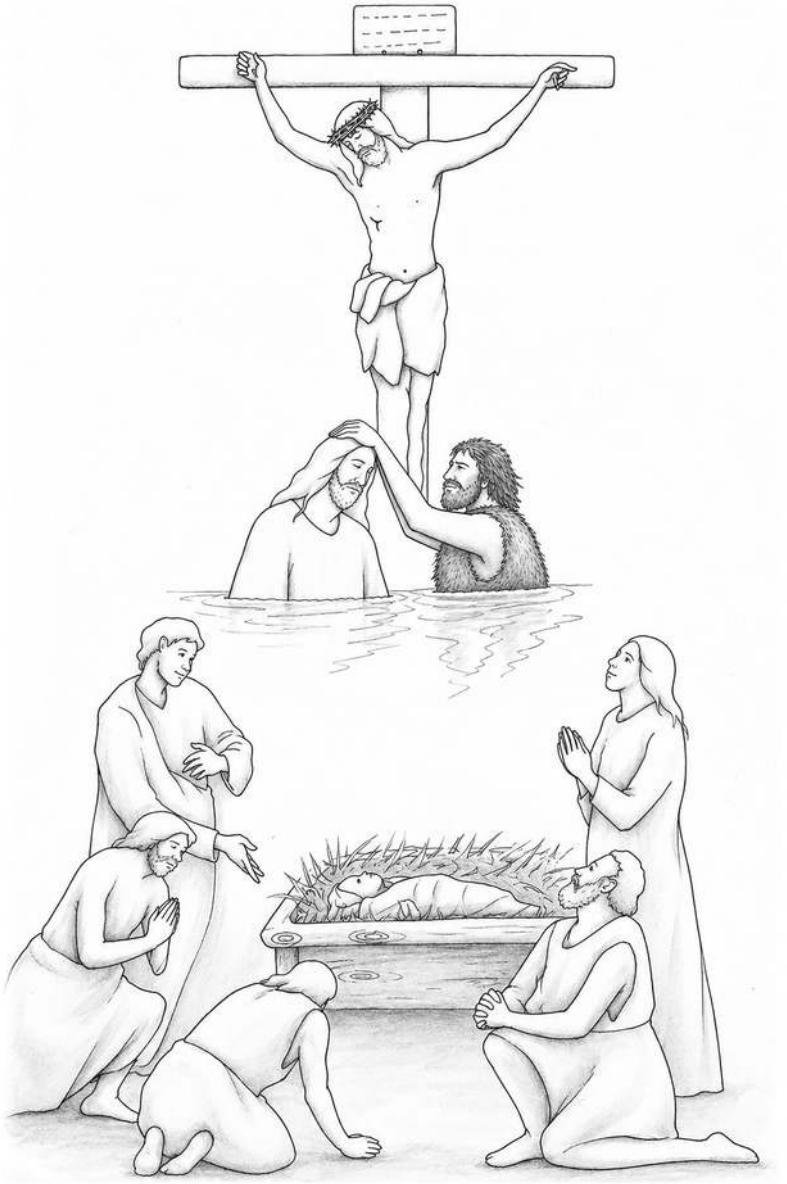

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The promise fulfilled in the manger of Bethlehem

< Luke 2:1–7 >

“And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

The city of David to which they went up to be registered

We easily think that God’s promise is being fulfilled only when things work out as we wish. But when we look at the place where Jesus was born, God fulfilled His promise in circumstances where people were busily coming and going and there was not even enough room to lie down. If we look only at the fact that there was no room in the inn, everything seems to

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have gone wrong, but when we know who the baby laid there is, our judgment changes. Luke relates the road leading to that birth in order, starting from the emperor's decree and the journey of one family.

Augustus gave out a decree that all should be registered, and everyone went back to his own hometown. Joseph also set out on the road under that decree, and Luke made clear that the reason Joseph headed for Bethlehem was that he was of the house and lineage of David. *"Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child" (Luke 2:4–5)*. Mary, who had not yet given birth to the baby, also went that road together with Joseph. In this way, the birth of Jesus was not handed down as a tale of some unknown time, but was recorded within concrete history, in which the names of the emperor and the governor remain.

The emperor's decree moved many people, but it was not the one who gave that decree who prepared salvation. Even while Joseph and Mary were going to be registered, God was fulfilling His promise to send the Savior. Therefore, we do not need to be afraid as though the power before our eyes decided everything. This is because, if we look only at the schedules people have set and the circumstances that have come upon us, we miss the work of God, who fulfills His word in the midst of them.

The great promise given to little Bethlehem

Bethlehem was the town they went to in order to be registered, and at the same time it was the place where the coming of the Savior had been spoken of long before. *"But you,*

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Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting" (Micah 5:2). God said to a little town that the Ruler would come out of it, so it was not that the Savior could come only to a great city that people paid attention to. The certainty of the promise lay not in the size of the place but in God, who had spoken it.

After recording that Joseph went up to Bethlehem, Luke relates that while they were there, the days were completed for Mary to be delivered. The word God had spoken was fulfilled in an actual birth. Knowing the prophecy and believing in the Lord who came according to that word must go together. If we pass by knowing only the name Bethlehem as something familiar, we may fail to receive into our hearts the grace of the One who came all the way there to save us.

We, too, have the knowledge that we need salvation, but there are times when we wait for our own circumstances to be put in order first, rather than waiting for the Lord. We even put off believing the word, saying that we will believe it when our hearts get a little better and our lives become stable. But God is not One who planned salvation only after our preparation was finished. Because we cannot escape from sin by ourselves, He promised the Savior, and according to that promise He sent His Son. What was fulfilled in Bethlehem makes us look to the faithfulness of God rather than to the possibilities people have built up.

Look at the baby laid in a manger

The promised Savior had come, but there was not enough space prepared for Mary to lay the baby. *"And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7)*. The Lord was wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger. The word that there was no room in the inn is far from the splendid birth we expect, but that lowly place could not change who Jesus is. This is because the One who made all things put on a human body and came among us in order to save sinners.

Looking at the manger, we must look back on the heart that had raised the threshold of salvation by itself. If we think that we can go before the Lord only when we have become better than others, we do not rightly know the will of the Lord, who came to us who are lowly. Lowly circumstances in themselves do not wash away a person's sins, but a person who acknowledges his own inability can accept the fact that he needs the Savior. Whether a person is rich or poor, there is no difference in the fact that he cannot remove sin by himself.

If our hearts, like the inn, are full of our own righteousness and the things of the world, we are satisfied even without the Lord, and so even when we hear the word of salvation we are unwilling to offer a place to receive that word. This is because we think of Jesus only while calculating what more we can gain. In the face of the scene where there was no room in the inn, let us examine our hearts as well. Rather than trying to become people fine enough to receive the Lord, we must acknowledge that we are sinners who cannot live without the Lord. Jesus, who was laid in a manger, is not One who came to add to our boasting, but the Savior who came to deliver us from sin.

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A heart that believes the purpose of the birth

In order to know the coming of the baby laid in a manger in connection with our own salvation, we must look into the meaning of the name Jesus, which the angel conveyed. *"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)*. He was called Jesus because He is the One who would save His people from sin. We cannot stop at being moved for a moment as we look at the figure of the baby Jesus. Only when we know from the gospel of the water and the Spirit the purpose for which He came and the work He actually accomplished can the heart that rejoices in His birth reach a clear faith.

This baby born in Bethlehem, when He turned thirty, received baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River, and through that baptism He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. In that sin of the world, the sins we commit throughout our whole lives in thought, word, and deed are also included without exception. The Lord bore the sins that were passed on to Him in that way, was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and received in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive. And He rose again from death and became the living Savior who has saved us. The event of His being born as a man in Bethlehem led directly to this work of salvation.

We must not try to complete what is lacking by adding our own good deeds to this salvation. Since the One who bore sin is Jesus and the One who paid the price of that sin is also Jesus, faith is receiving into our hearts the work the Lord has accomplished. If we entrust to the Lord only the sins we committed before we believed and try to deal with our future sins by our own strength, we are narrowing by ourselves the

salvation of the Lord, who bore the sin of the world. Because the Savior, who knows our whole lives, has taken all those sins upon Himself, we can go before the Lord without hiding our shortcomings.

At first, the decree of registration and the circumstances of having no place to stay caught our eyes, but when we looked according to the word, the promise of salvation was being fulfilled in that very place. Even if our circumstances today are not ample, there is no reason to put off believing in the Lord. The Savior, who came all the way to the little manger of Bethlehem, took our sins upon Himself and gave up His life. When we receive that Lord into our hearts, we can give thanks not because our circumstances have all been resolved, but because God's promise has been fulfilled. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus, who came in the flesh

< Luke 2:1–21 >

"And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!' So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one

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another, 'Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.' And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb."

The time when the Lord, the Master of history, came

The calendar year we use now takes the time when our Lord came as A.D. 1. Historians took the birth of the Lord as the standard and unified the calendar years of the whole world. Before the Lord came, every nation in the world had its own national calendar, but after the Lord came, the whole world has counted A.D. 1, 2, 3, and so on, with the birth of the Lord as the standard, and has come down to this day. It is so because our Lord is the Master of history. For this world was made through the Lord and is being run by Jesus.

When Caesar Augustus of Rome was emperor, all the nations that were colonies of Rome received the order that everyone should return to his own hometown and be registered. It was an order that Caesar Augustus gave when he became emperor,

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because only when the people were registered and a census was taken could he rule and collect taxes. At that time, in the nation of Israel, a young man named Joseph and a virgin named Mary were betrothed to each other. Our Lord had already spoken to Joseph and Mary, and He had also foretold the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias. Since everyone had to return to his original hometown to be registered, Joseph and Mary also went up to the town called Bethlehem to be registered. So, just as it was prophesied, saying, *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:2)*, our Lord came to be born in the town called Bethlehem. When Mary and Joseph came up to Bethlehem to be registered, the baby Jesus had already been conceived in the womb of Mary, and the days were completed for her to be delivered. They went to an inn to give birth to the baby there, but since everyone had flocked to their hometowns and there was no room in the inn, they had no choice but to go to a stable where animals were kept, and there she gave birth to the baby.

When the baby Jesus was born on this earth, shepherds were keeping watch over their flock out in the fields, and an angel came down from heaven and brought them good tidings of great joy. *"For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:11–12)*. And suddenly a multitude of the heavenly host from heaven were there together, praising God. *"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased –ASV" (Luke 2:14)*. Thus the sound of praise rang out, and the shepherds went and found the baby Jesus lying in the manger, saw Him, and returned, glorifying God.

The Holy One laid in the feeding trough of beasts

As we celebrate Christmas, we must become those who know the reason why Jesus was born in Bethlehem and why He was wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger, and who give thanks before God. When our Lord was born on this earth, there was no room in the inn, and so He was born in a stable where animals dwelt. This means that our Lord came to this earth and was born in a stable in order to save truly lowly people who could not but die because of sin—to save lowly you and me. We must know and believe this.

It says, *"She brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger" (Luke 2:7)*, but in fact our Lord is the Holy One. He is the holy God. Although our Lord came in the form of a man, He is in His essence the very being of God, and so He has nothing to do with sin; He was not a lowly being like us human beings, but truly the holy, almighty, and perfect God of creation. He was the Son of God the Father, and at the same time the One who came into this world as God. Swaddling cloths refer to white cloth. Mary gave birth in the stable, cut the umbilical cord, and wrapped the baby Jesus in white swaddling cloths, but since there was no place to lay the baby Jesus, she laid Him in a manger, the feeding trough of beasts. How much animal excrement there is in a stable! No matter how well it is cleaned, the smell of animals is soaked into it. We must know that because there was no place to put the baby Jesus, He was wrapped in swaddling cloths and placed in that manger.

I believe that although our Lord came in the form of a man, He is in His essence God. Although our Lord came to this earth in human form, He was not a created being like you and me. He was in His essence God. He was the very God who said that there

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should be light. Yet He, upholding the will of the Father, came to this earth in human form and was laid in a manger. This Lord sympathized with all the weaknesses and shortcomings of all of us. Knowing how weak and lacking we are, and that we are beings who cannot possibly keep the law, He sympathized with everything while He was on this earth for thirty-three years. That is why our Lord, in our place, bore all our sins through the baptism He received from John and was offered as the sacrificial offering of atonement. Through this word, we must clearly know the purpose for which our Lord came to this earth.

God, who moves all the history of the whole world, came to this earth to save us human beings, and we must know that His being laid in a manger from the time He came was His intention to become the bread of life for us. A manger is the feeding trough of beasts. Even goats have a feed trough, and when feed is put there, they eat it and grow. Our Lord was laid in a manger because He came to give life to you and me. This means that He was born in order to give Himself to you and me so that we might obtain new life. Our Lord did not come for any other purpose. He did not come to show that He is God or that He is One full of mercy; rather, He came to this earth to save us, who were made in the image of God, from sin, to cause our dead lives to be born again, and to give us new life so that we may live together with God the Father forever. Truly, there is only one purpose for which our Lord came to this earth. It is to give new life to you and me. So the Lord gave us His flesh and His blood of life for you and me. This means that our Lord received from John the baptism by which our sins were transferred onto His body, and so had all our sins transferred to Him, gave up His body to be nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and rose again, and thereby became the food of life for those who believe in Him.

There is life only when we eat the flesh and blood of Jesus

The Gospel of John speaks of the purpose for which the Lord came as follows. *"And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst'" (John 6:35).* And He went on to say the following.

"'Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.' The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, 'How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?' Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever'" (John 6:47–58).

Our Lord was born in a manger. People living in cities may not understand this, but a manger is a log hollowed out to hold feed for animals. This means that when our Lord was first born on this earth, He was wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in that manger. This is a scene that tells us what the birth of our

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Lord was meant to give us. The reason our Lord came to this earth was to give new life to you and me, and to cause those who eat His flesh and blood to obtain new life. Our Lord said, *"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53)*. Then how do we eat the flesh and blood of Jesus? Our Lord lived a life of thirty-three years on this earth, and at the Passover before He went to the Cross, He gathered His disciples and performed the rite of the Lord's Supper. At that time, giving them the bread, He said that this was His body, and giving them the cup, He said that this was the blood of the covenant established to give them new life.

Then how can we really eat the flesh and blood of Jesus? This does not mean actually eating the body of Jesus. Jesus gave us His flesh and blood, and He clearly said, *"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life" (John 6:54)*. Therefore, anyone who believes in Jesus must clearly eat the flesh and blood of Jesus. What is the way to eat the flesh and blood of Jesus? The place our Lord first came to was Bethlehem, and Bethlehem is the name of a village that means 'house of bread.' This means that He was born in the village called the house of bread and was laid in the manger of beasts. The Lord of creation, the Savior, came in this way to give His flesh and blood so that we might obtain new life; the question is how you and I eat the flesh and blood of Jesus. The Bible clearly speaks of eating the flesh and blood of Jesus. The Lord came to this earth and gave us His flesh and blood during His life of thirty-three years, and these were two things.

The flesh He gave through the baptism He received from John

First, Jesus gave us His flesh; how did He give that flesh, and how can we eat that flesh? Our Lord came to this earth under the law, and He came to save those who were oppressed by sin under the law. And at the age of thirty, He came to receive baptism from John. When Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River to receive baptism from John, John tried to prevent Him, saying, *"I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" (Matthew 3:14)*. Then our Lord said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. At this, John allowed Him, and Jesus received baptism. When Jesus received baptism from John and came up out of the water, heaven was opened and God spoke. *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)*.

The word our Lord spoke when He received baptism from John, the word that it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness in this way, was the word that it is fitting that, in this way, in the most fitting way, you baptize Me and I receive baptism from you, and so have the sins of all people transferred to Me and remove them. How did our Lord give us His flesh? At the Holy Supper, too, breaking the bread and giving it to His disciples, He said that this was His flesh, and when He was born on this earth, He was laid in a manger, and so clearly showed that He had come to give us life. That Jesus gave us His flesh does not mean that He told us to cut off His flesh and eat it; rather, it tells you and me that He received the baptism by which all the sins of the world were transferred onto His flesh through John, the representative of mankind.

That our Lord gave us His flesh means that He received baptism from John and had all the sins of you and me transferred

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to Him. Only when we eat by faith this spiritual word, the word of the truth of God, that the Lord had all the sins of this world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John in order to save us, does it become eating the flesh of Jesus. Do you eat the flesh of Jesus by faith? Do you believe that Jesus received baptism from John in the Jordan River in order to remove all the sins of you and me? Our Lord was born on this earth clothed in human form in order to remove our sins. He came among us, as Scripture says: *"the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14)*. And when we look at how He removed our sins through His life of thirty-three years on this earth, we see that He received baptism from John at the age of thirty.

We must know well about His receiving baptism from John. We must know it in the original language. We must not interpret it arbitrarily as we please, saying that He received baptism merely out of humility, or that He received baptism in order to become like people. In *"thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, the word for thus is houtos (οὕτως) in Greek, and its meaning is 'in this way,' 'this and nothing else,' 'only in this very way.' In this way, in order to fulfill all righteousness (dikaiosyne, δικαιοσύνη) in the most fitting way, John the Baptist, the greatest among those born of women, gave baptism to Jesus and transferred all the sins of mankind to Him, and Jesus received that baptism and made all people sinless. This is the evidence that our Lord bore all our sins.

To this day, while preaching the gospel of the water and the blood, I have never once left out the baptism Jesus received from John. This is because when Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River, my sins were passed on to Jesus, and not only my sins but all the sins of this world were passed

on to Jesus. Because Jesus received baptism and so became our true Savior who took the burden of our sins upon Himself, I have always preached this baptism.

The laying on of hands in the Old Testament and the baptism in the New Testament

We must not interpret the Bible arbitrarily. We must look at the Bible in the original languages, and if we do not know the original languages, we must look at the Old Testament and the New Testament in connection with each other. We must not look at just one verse. God gave the law to the people of Israel, and knowing that they would not be able to keep it, He established for them the sacrificial system in the Tabernacle by which they received the remission of sins. That was the daily sacrifice and the yearly sacrifice in which one laid his hands on a sheep to pass his sins on to it, slaughtered the sheep that had the sins passed on to it, took its blood and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, cut it into pieces, and offered it before God. Jesus, as the Lamb of God, was the sacrificial offering who came to save you and me, and all the people of this world. He was the sacrificial offering of atonement whom the Father sent in order to give us new life. God sent His only begotten Son Jesus to this earth to save you and me, who could not but die because of sin, and instead of our dying and being judged, He passed all our sins on to His Son and had that Son nailed to the Cross. Our Lord, in our place, had all our sins transferred to Him before God, and was nailed to the Cross, becoming the offering that removes sin.

The baptism Jesus received was not a simplified baptism of sprinkling a little water, but a baptism of the laying on of hands. Through the baptism in the manner of the laying on of hands, He

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had all the sins of mankind transferred to Him from John, went into the water, and came up again. The word baptism is baptizo (βαπτίζω) in Greek, and it means 'to be washed,' 'to be buried,' and 'to be passed on.' The reason Jesus received baptism from John was to wash away the sins of you and me. He received baptism in order to have all the sins of you and me transferred to Him and to bear death, the wages of sin, in our place. Just as in the Old Testament a person with sin brought an unblemished animal to the Tabernacle, laid his hands on the head of that sacrificial offering to pass his sins on to it, and had it accepted before God, so the laying on of hands was the way of passing on sins. Jesus received baptism from John in order to have the sins of you and me transferred to Him.

I am not advocating any particular denomination. This denomination and that denomination are things people have made; in fact, before God there are only the born-again and those who are not born again. I hope you will know that our Lord received baptism from John in order to have all our sins transferred to Him. Why was Jesus able to die on the Cross? It was because He had all the sins of you and me transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. Concerning John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, the Lord said, *"Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11)*, and He said, *"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12)*. Because the Lord had all the sins of mankind transferred to Himself through John the Baptist, He had to die on the Cross. Only if He received baptism in our place, received the punishment in our place, and as the sacrificial offering received before God the Father the punishment for the sins of us, mankind, could you and I be saved by believing in Jesus Christ the Savior;

that is why our Lord came to this earth, received baptism, and gave us His flesh.

The baptism we receive must not be received as a mere token of being a church member, either. When we receive baptism, we receive it before God and before the devil as a sign that we believe in the flesh and blood of Jesus, in order to testify of this faith: "When Jesus received baptism from John, He bore all my sins; when I go into the water, Jesus bore all my sins and shed His blood and died on the Cross; and when I come up out of the water, Jesus rose again and became my Savior. This is what I believe." We receive it with the faith that we believe in this way in the Son whom God the Father sent.

Second, it is a proclamation before Satan the devil. It is to proclaim before Satan the devil, who challenged God: "Devil, this is what I believe. When Jesus received baptism from John, He had all sins transferred to Him in the manner of the laying on of hands, bore the sin of the world, received the punishment on the Cross in my place, and rose again. This is what I believe." Third, it is a proclamation before the saints. It is to proclaim: "I, too, believe that this Jesus whom you believe in bore all my sins when He received baptism from John. And I believe that although I had to perish because I had sin, He received the punishment for sin on the Cross in my place, died in His own body, and rose again."

The Apostle Paul said, *"As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27),* and John said, *"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 Spirit refers to God, and it speaks of God coming to this earth clothed in human flesh; the water speaks of the baptism Jesus received from John; and the blood speaks of Jesus giving us new life by the blood He shed on the Cross. Peter,

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the Apostle John, and Paul, the disciples of Jesus, speak in this way.

The Bible records that General Naaman became clean by dipping his body seven times in the Jordan River. When we look at the Book of Joshua, the people had to cross the Jordan River to enter the land of Canaan, and it records that when the priests carrying the ark of the covenant set their feet in the water of the Jordan River, the water that had been flowing down was cut off at once and piled up like a wall upstream. The Jordan River refers to the river of death. The Jordan River tells us the fact that the Lord received through John the baptism by which all our sins were transferred onto His body, and so fulfilled all righteousness and bore all our sins. To those who truly believe, the flesh of Jesus has become true food and the blood of Jesus has become true drink. I cannot tell you how much relief it gives us that Jesus received in our place the judgment we were to receive. Because Jesus bore all the sins of you and me by receiving baptism from John, we have obtained true life.

Do you believe in the flesh and blood of Jesus? Have you eaten the flesh and blood of Jesus? Do you accept in your heart the will of our Lord, who was laid in a manger in order to become the food of life? Our Lord came to this earth to give new life to you and me, and by lying in a manger, He became our true food of life. The Lord first sent John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, six months ahead of Himself, and six months later He Himself came. He came to save you and me from the curse of the law, the persecution of Satan the devil, and all those punishments, and He saved you and me and removed our sins. Apart from the flesh and blood of Jesus, we could not become people without sin. But Jesus, the Lord of life, came to this earth clothed in human flesh, had all the sins of you and me transferred onto His flesh, and washed them away cleanly, and

thereby He fulfilled the righteousness of God, by which God removed all our sins. We have become people without sin by believing the fact that God the Father removed all our sins through His Son.

Only after receiving baptism from John did Jesus Christ begin to preach the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, going about for three years until He died on the Cross. To the woman caught in the act of adultery, to the leper, to the one with a flow of blood, and to the paralytic, He said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)* and *"Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more" (John 8:11)*, and He said, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12). "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6)*. Our Lord said this: "I am the way to the kingdom of heaven; I am the truth and the true God; I am the Savior who gives life." So our Lord gave life to you and me and removed our sins. After Jesus received baptism from John, John testified as follows. *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. Because Jesus had all sins transferred to Him from John the Baptist when He received baptism, all sin is now on Jesus. That Jesus bore sin on His body and went to the Cross. John, who gave Him baptism, testified of that.

To become a disciple of Jesus

When we look at the Acts of the Apostles, after Judas hanged himself, a disciple was chosen again; what was the standard then for who could be made a disciple? *"'Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went*

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in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection'" (Acts 1:21–22). This means that, taking as the standard the event of Jesus receiving baptism from John, they made a disciple of Jesus of the one who believed that the Lord bore all the sin of the world, and who believed that He died on the Cross, rose again on the third day after His death, and went up to heaven.

To become a true disciple of Jesus, one must believe in the baptism Jesus received from John, His death on the Cross, His rising again on the third day after His death, and that Jesus is the Son of God and is also God. Only those who believe in this way can become disciples of Jesus, do the work of God, and receive the Holy Spirit. Peter said, *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19)*. Sins are not washed away just because one goes into a river and receives baptism without even knowing its meaning; rather, God acknowledges the heart of the person who knows and believes the reason Jesus received baptism and the reason He died on the Cross, and washes away that person's sins. Jesus came to this earth, washed away all our sins, received the punishment of death in our place, died and rose again, and so became the true Savior of those who believe and gave them new life.

That is why our Lord is called the Savior. Our Lord is Christ the Lord. Christ means 'anointed,' and kings were anointed, and priests and prophets were anointed. The Lord came to this earth and is the Son of God who holds these three offices together, and He is our Savior. As the High Priest, He took away all the sin of mankind and all our sins, and received the judgment in our place. Those who have become disciples by believing in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross are the true disciples.

If even one of the flesh and the blood is left out, there is no life

"Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you'" (John 6:53). People say that they believe only in the blood of Jesus, but do you think there is life if you drink only the blood by faith? No matter how much one believes only in the blood of the Cross of Jesus, one still has sin. Even if one believes and says thank you to the Lord, there is sin in one's heart. The Lord said that whoever does not eat His flesh and drink His blood has no life in him. Such a person has no Holy Spirit and does not obtain new life. We must believe these two things. We must believe that Jesus came to this earth as the Savior and had all our sins transferred onto His flesh through the baptism He received from John, and we must believe that, having had the sin of the world transferred to Him in this way, He received the judgment for sin once and for all. If one does not believe in this way, there is no life in him even though he believes in Jesus. This means that although he calls Jesus the Savior with his mouth, there is no Holy Spirit in his heart.

Jesus received baptism from John in order to give us true life and to become our true Savior. Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John, received the punishment on the Cross in our place, washed us clean from all sins, and spared us the judgment for sin. We must believe in the baptism and the blood of Jesus Christ. Only then do we obtain life and go to the kingdom of heaven. Only when one believes in the flesh and blood of Jesus, that is, the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross, does the life of Jesus come into him and does Jesus come to have something to do with him. Our Lord received baptism from John and bore all the sins of this world and took

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them away.

Yet many people, deceived by the devil, believe in the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world as a lamb who takes away only original sin. Saying, "How could He have taken away all sins when I am sinning in this world? That is nonsense," and interpreting it arbitrarily, they try to go to the kingdom of heaven by repenting and begging each time for the sins they commit from then on, receiving remission, and so reaching sanctification. Such people have been deceived by the devil. Being born again of the water and the Spirit is not accomplished in two stages but is accomplished once and for all. In His life of thirty-three years, Jesus Himself received baptism from John, died on the Cross, rose again, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God, and so He has become the eternal Savior of those who believe in the salvation of the baptism He received and the shedding of His blood. Will you change the word of God into human doctrine and rewrite it? We must believe the written word just as it is. If it says that Jesus took away the sin of the world, then He took away the sin of the world. Then is there the sin of the world in this world, or is there not? There is not. The Bible says that because Jesus received baptism for sinners in the Jordan River and received the punishment on the Cross in their place, He has removed even the sins that you and I commit throughout our whole lives. From where to where does the sin of the world extend? From the beginning of mankind to the end of mankind.

We do not know when this world will pass away, nor do we know when our Lord will come again. But what is certain is that our Lord, who said, *"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last" (Revelation 22:13)*, made this earth, made man, and removed the sin of this earth. And just as it says, *"To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation"*

(Hebrews 9:28), the Lord who comes a second time comes to take those who have nothing to do with sin.

People interpret it by asking how He could have taken away the sin of the world when they sin like this, and by saying that He took away the sins committed until now but has not yet taken away the sins to be committed in the future. But that is a fleshly interpretation. Let us look at it spiritually, from the side of God. God came to remove the sin of the world belonging to you and me; would He then have borne that sin every time we sinned and died on the Cross again and again? Even dying once was so dreadful that He prayed, *"O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Matthew 26:39)*. Since it says, *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)* and *"without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22)*, Jesus removed all the sins of this world through the baptism He received from John, and bringing forward even the sins of the future, He bore them once and for all and received the judgment once and for all, and so saved us. If He had to wait until we sinned and die again each time, Jesus would have to die every day. Therefore, for those who do not believe in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross, those who do not believe in the water and the Spirit, to bow down every day and ask Him to wash away their sins is the same as nailing Jesus to the Cross again.

If you sacrificed your child for another person, and that person ignored the merit of your child and asked you to kill him just once more because it was not enough, would you like that? Do not ignore or despise the rightness of God by which He saved us, the love of God, and the righteous salvation of God through the water and the blood. To ask Him to wash away your sins every day means that, for the sins you have committed, Jesus would have to come down again into this harsh world, live thirty-three years, receive baptism again in the Jordan River, die

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again on the Cross and rise again, and then come down again when you sin—that He would have to do so every day. The Bible says, *"By one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14)*. As the Bible clearly shows, in the Old Testament sins were passed on by the laying on of hands, and the throat of the offering was cut, its blood was taken and sprinkled, and it was cut into pieces and burned with fire before God; and in the New Testament, Jesus received baptism from John, had all our sins transferred to Him, and received the judgment on the Cross in our place. Do not all these things have their counterparts? Jesus came to give us life by Himself receiving baptism from John and shedding His blood.

Jesus is He who *"will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)*. Jesus came to remove all our sins by receiving baptism from John and shedding His blood, and He did remove them. By receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, by receiving the punishment for sin on the Cross, and by dying and rising again, He became the God of salvation for those who truly believe. We must not look at the Bible one verse at a time only. The Bible as a whole is the word about salvation, and the word of the Old Testament and the word of the New Testament are connected with each other. Do you believe that the Gospel of John is the word of God? He said, *"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed" (John 6:54–55)*. Do you believe this word? No matter how much one believes in Jesus, one is saved only by believing in the flesh of Jesus, that is, that Jesus bore all our sins when He received baptism from John. Jesus rose again on the third day after His death and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. If one does not believe that this living God is our Savior

and believes while leaving out even one of the flesh and the blood of Jesus, that is a false faith. It is a counterfeit.

Why was our Lord laid in the manger of beasts? In order to become the food of life for those who believe, our Lord was born as the baby Jesus and grew up. When Jesus was twelve years old, He sat with the teachers of the law in the temple and discussed the law of God, and it says, *"All who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers" (Luke 2:47)*. Jesus came upholding the will of God the Father and became my Savior and the Savior of those who believe. He became the life of salvation for you and me. Jesus came in human flesh, had all our sins transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John and washed away our sins, gave up His body on the Cross and received the punishment, and rose again on the third day after His death, and so became the true Savior of those who believe.

Peace among men in whom He is well pleased

At Christmas, our Lord asks how many there are who truly believe in Him. There are many Bible scholars and theologians in this world, but He asks, "Do you really believe in Me? Have you eaten My flesh? Have you drunk My blood?" When Jesus came, the high priest, the scribes, and King Herod knew that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem. But they did not believe that our Lord was born in a lowly stable. Who believed? It was the shepherds, who were lowly people, and the wise men from the East who came from a distant Gentile land. The gifts the wise men offered were gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Gold is the true faith that Jesus is our Savior and that He bore all our sins through the baptism He received from John; frankincense is believing in God as our Savior and praying; and myrrh refers to the truth that

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came by the water and the Spirit, which never changes and never decays. Jesus is the God of the true truth. With this faith, the Gentiles came and believed in Jesus as their Savior.

But among the people of Israel themselves, the Bible scholars, the Pharisees, and the high priest did not believe. It is the same in this age. In this age, too, many people who hold offices do not believe in that baptism and blood, by which Jesus received baptism from John and bore the sin of the world. When Jesus received baptism from John, all the sins of this world were passed on to the head of Jesus, yet they interpret it as they please, saying that Jesus received baptism merely because He was humble. Jesus fulfilled all righteousness through the baptism He received in the Jordan River; what more words are needed there? Where in the Bible does it say that He received baptism in order to be humble? In this age, Jesus is the Lord who has become the food of life for us, yet we must know the fact that it is rather those who claim to believe in Jesus who reject the baptism Jesus received and the water of being born again. Rather, today it is those who do not know the Bible well who come, hear the word of truth that Jesus received baptism from John and bore the sin of mankind, believe it, and are saved. Those who have believed for a long time and have learned much of the doctrines people have established can speak of Jesus in terms of doctrine, but they cannot believe because they do not actually know what Jesus did. But the Bible is the truth. The baptism Jesus received is the truth of salvation, and there is only one truth. One must not think that one knows the baptism Jesus received just because one has believed in Jesus for a long time.

When I went to other countries, too, I preached the word of God just as it is, and they accepted the word just as it is and received the remission of all their sins. Just as the Holy Spirit came upon the people when Peter preached the word, they truly

received the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and their faces lit up brightly. They said with their own mouths that there was no sin in their hearts. Although Jesus came to this earth as the Savior of all people, those who accepted the baptism Jesus received and the gospel of being born again were extremely few. Scholars, those in power, and those who had much to boast of rejected Jesus. But those who were lowly and knew their own shortcomings—they were the ones who were saved.

Before God, all are the same human beings. We are all lowly people like the shepherds who lived in the days of Jesus. Are shepherds bad? They are those who raise sheep and guide people to the right place. Truly, in this age, the Lord, at Christmas, asks for such people—people who receive Jesus Christ into their hearts, people who believe in the water and the Spirit. He asks, "Do you believe that I received baptism from John for you, died on the Cross and rose again, and came in human flesh?" When we say that we believe in the baptism Jesus received and the gospel of being born again, our Lord rejoices and God the Father receives glory.

"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased" (Luke 2:14). Peace comes upon those who have received the remission of sins in their hearts. They receive the remission of sins, become children of God, and the Holy Spirit comes upon their hearts. Our Lord came to the feeding trough of beasts and was laid there. He came all the way down to that place, gave new life to you and me, and truly became the food of life for those who believe. I give Him true thanks. He came to this earth in a lowly body because He loved you and me, in order to save us, give us new life, and keep us from going to hell. How could we ever give thanks enough for all the grace of God? The Holy One came in human form, as One

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wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger, to save us. With what shall we repay that grace? How shall we ever give thanks enough? ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The birth of Jesus

< Luke 2:1–7 >

“And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

The birth recorded in world history

We are celebrating Christmas. The word Christmas, the holy birth, means that the holy God, that is, the Son of God, was born on this earth. That is why it is called Christmas. There are several servants of God who recorded this holy birth, and Luke in particular explains, by citing these facts, who the emperor of Rome was and who the governor of the region of Syria was in the history of mankind when Jesus was born on this earth.

“And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered”

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(Luke 2:1). At the time Jesus was born, it was no exaggeration to say that Rome ruled the whole world. The emperor of that Rome was Caesar Augustus, and this emperor gave a decree to the nation of Israel, which was his colony. It was that everyone should go to his own place of origin and be registered. It was a decree given in order to count the population, to control the people, and to collect taxes. Since it was the emperor's decree, all the people went up to their own hometowns and were registered.

And it says, *"This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria" (Luke 2:2)*. So this word is proving, by citing world history, that the event of the birth of Jesus actually took place within the frame of that history. It is speaking of a fact, and it is testifying of a fact. This is not a fiction that Christianity made up. It is something that happened at that very time when Rome was ruling the whole world, when Augustus had become emperor and had given the decree to the people of the colonies that all the world should be registered.

In a manger because there was no room in the inn

"So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child" (Luke 2:3–5). Joseph and Mary were of the house and lineage of David, and so they went up to Bethlehem, the city of David, to be registered. They went up and registered at their place of origin, and at that time the baby Jesus, who was in Mary's womb, was about to be born.

But because it was the emperor's decree and they could not help doing it, all the people had come up, and so far too many people had gathered in that small town of Bethlehem. So there was no place to stay. It says, *"There was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7)*, and the inn, to put it simply, is a lodging place where travelers sleep and go on their way. That inn was full of guests and the baby was about to come out, so Mary, having no other choice, went into some stable in the town, cleaned up one corner, and gave birth there.

What this word is telling us is this: Jesus is not a fiction, but One who actually existed in world history. This word proves to us that when Augustus of Rome was emperor, when the governor of Syria was Quirinius, at that very time, the baby Jesus was born in a stable for beasts.

The Scriptures consistently testify of Jesus Christ

Jesus is the King of kings and the One who made all things in the universe. Yet He promised that He would come as the Seed of the woman and become a man, and become the Savior who saves people from sin. God had said early on, *"He shall bruise your head" (Genesis 3:15)*. In order to fulfill that promise, this event took place at this very time.

But people may say that this is a fiction that Christianity made up, a story that Christians invented just like other religions. If we, too, set out to doubt who recorded these Scriptures, there is far too much to doubt. But how is it that these Scriptures, even though they were written by dozens of people over thousands of years, are put together so that they fit so exactly from beginning to end? If a single writer had written them over ten or twenty years, they could fit together like this, but when dozens of people

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wrote them over thousands of years, how is it that all of them testify of Jesus Christ, prophesy of Him, promise Him, and in the end are fulfilled here in the birth of Jesus?

Luke testifies by citing historical facts

Luke, who recorded the Gospel of Luke, was originally a physician. He was a learned man, and he is the one who also recorded the Acts of the Apostles. He had to testify of Jesus, but no matter how much he spoke, would people have been able to believe? So Luke testifies by citing historical facts. When Augustus, the emperor of Rome, was emperor, when there was a decree in the nation of Israel that all should be registered, when Mary and Joseph had gone up to be registered, Jesus was born in a stable where there was a manger from which beasts ate their feed. Because there was no room in the inn, Mary gave birth there and He was born, and Luke records that they laid that Jesus in a manger.

The reason He was born in a stable and not in a palace

What must we come to know through this fact? Why was Jesus not born in a palace? He is originally the King of kings and God. But if Jesus had been born in a palace as a member of a royal family, people of high standing could have become His friends, but none of the poor people could have gone near Jesus.

In order to save the poor, in order to save the lowly and those who would go to hell, Jesus humbled Himself and was born like this at this very time in history. That was for me and for you.

How lowly we ourselves are! In fact, we are those who can only be born on this earth, live fretting and fussing, live in a servile way, and then simply die. Yet in order to save me, and also in order to save you, the Lord was born in such a lowly place, a stable where horses are fed, and came to find us. And I believe that for our sake He received baptism from John, and for our sake He was nailed to the Cross, and so saved us and blessed us.

This Christmas is for me and for you, and this is a fact, not a falsehood. Even if we search through history, it is a fact. Much of the knowledge people enjoy today also came from the Bible. In the old days, people did not know that blood is the life of a person, and so they thought that when someone fell ill, he would get well if his blood was drawn out. But the Bible had long been saying, *"The life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11)*. The person who believes the word of the Bible is the wisest person.

I cannot tell everything, but what is clear is that it is also a fact that He has saved me and you. The Lord was born on this earth clothed in a human body, and when He turned thirty, He received baptism from John the Baptist and had our sins transferred to Him, bore the sin of the world, was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and rose again on the third day, and so He accomplished in full the work of saving me and you perfectly. And so He became the God of those who believe and the Savior of those who believe. What I am telling you is exactly this: know this fact clearly and believe it. This is not a fiction. If I believed a fiction, why would I do this work? You and I believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and believe in Jesus Christ, the Savior.

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The Lord, who came to become our friend

He is God, the Creator, and our Savior. He is the King of kings; He is our High Priest, who makes us sinless and causes us to enter the kingdom of heaven; and He is the Prophet, who teaches us the real truth. Who is the Master of these Scriptures? It is Jesus Christ. The Scriptures were given to tell us this: that our pitch-black sins are washed clean by the baptism Jesus received from John and by the blood of the Cross, and that we receive the remission of sins and enter the golden kingdom. I believe. Do you believe?

The Lord was born in a stable in order to become a friend to me and to you. If He had been born inside a palace, we could neither have believed in Him nor met Him. Neither could He have become our friend. But I believe that, in order to become the friend of such people—however low and lowly a person may be on this earth, however many, many sins a person may have—He humbled Himself, came to this earth, and saved us. I give thanks to the Lord. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The joy of salvation heard on a fearful night

< Luke 2:8–14 >

"Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!'"

The news brought to the frightened shepherds

An angel of the Lord stood beside the shepherds who were keeping watch over their flock by night. When the glory of the Lord shone around them, the shepherds were greatly afraid. It seems that people would welcome light, but when they stand before the glory of the holy God, what they feel first is the fear that they, being sinful, cannot stand there. However, the angel did not tell them to flee; rather, telling them not to be afraid, he brought them the news that the Savior had been born. That news,

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which God had sent, opened the way of joy to those who were gripped by fear.

"*Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people'" (Luke 2:10)*. The angel spoke of great joy even though he knew that the shepherds were startled. It was not because the shepherds had first calmed their hearts or changed themselves into fine people that they heard such news. Because God made the birth of the Savior known to them, they could hear a word different from the fear that had come over them. The basis of the joy was not a confidence that arose within their hearts but what God had actually done.

We, too, have times when, thinking of our sins, we want to hide rather than come before God. Because we know the greed of the heart that is not visible to others and the wrongs that have been exposed, even the word that God examines us sounds fearful. At such a time, insisting that our sins are small or comparing them with the faults of others does not bring us peace. Just as the angel pointed the frightened shepherds to the Savior, what we need is also not words that cover up sin but the news of the One who will deliver us from that sin.

It was said that this news was good news that would come to all people. God did not make known something that would end as the pleasure of a few people; He announced the coming of the Son who would save sinners. The shepherds were not people far removed from God's news just because they were in the fields. Since God first came to them and spoke to them, there was no reason for them to doubt the grace on the grounds that their position was low. We, too, must not make our own circumstances and status the measure that determines whether or not we can be saved.

The baby in the manger is Christ the Lord

The angel did not merely say to rejoice; he made clear on whose account they could rejoice. *"For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11)*. The joy given to the shepherds was not some nameless good fortune or vague comfort. It was the clear news that in the city of David a Savior had been born for them, and that He was Christ the Lord. If we receive into our hearts the word that He came for us, we cannot keep the Lord's birth at a distance and look at it as though it were a happy event that took place in someone else's house.

Christ is the One who fulfills the work of king, priest, and prophet. Among these, what we want to look at here is the office of the High Priest, who bears the sin of sinners and causes them to come before God. Therefore, when we hear the name Savior, we must not think only of someone who helps us for a while with troublesome matters. Since the One who restores our relationship with God—which was severed by sin—and grants us life has come, we cannot be satisfied with merely having a few deficiencies in our daily lives filled.

However, the sign the angel taught them was different from what people would expect. *"And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12)*. While telling them to look for the One who is King, he had them see a baby lying in a manger. In order to recognize Jesus, the shepherds had to follow the word God had told them, rather than look for the image of a king that they themselves had imagined. This is because, although the place where the baby lay was lowly, God's word concerning that baby was clear. If we cast aside that word because of the outward appearance, we cannot recognize even the Savior who has come before our eyes.

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Jesus did not merely appear as though He had become a man; He was actually born clothed in a human body. Because He, who is God, came in a body in which He would be with us, He could bear our sins and die in our place. What salvation this baby laid in the manger accomplished is revealed in the things He did after He grew up. His birth does not end as merely a scene showing His lowliness, but is connected to the work of the Lord, who gives life to sinners.

The Lord, who is the Christ, as our High Priest, had the sin of the whole world passed on to His own body once and for all when He received baptism from John the Baptist. Since the sins of our whole lives also belong to that sin of the world, the Lord bore even the past we want to hide, the faults being exposed now, and the sins we will commit in the future. Jesus bore that sin, offered His own body on the Cross as a burnt offering, shed His blood and died, and thereby received in our place the judgment we were to suffer, and He rose again from death. Because the work of taking sin upon Himself and the work of paying the price of sin together accomplished our salvation, we receive the remission of sins by believing in the Lord's baptism and the blood of the Cross.

Glory to God, peace in the heart that has received the remission of sins

Following the news that the Savior had been born, a multitude of the heavenly host praised God together with the angel. *"'Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased'" (Luke 2:14)*. The reason that glory was given to God is that God fulfilled the salvation He had promised and revealed His love toward people. Since He

removed through His Son the sin that could not be resolved by human strength, those who have been saved cannot attribute that merit to themselves. We, too, who have heard the praise of heaven, must clearly know to whom we must give thanks.

Peace on earth, too, does not mean a vague tranquility separated from the Savior. It is the peace by which we, who were under the judgment of sin, have come to approach God by believing in Jesus. Even if we can be relieved for a while when the affairs of the world quiet down, if sin remains as it is, we cannot obtain the peace to be enjoyed before God. But when we believe the fact that the Lord took our sins upon Himself and even received the judgment for them, the remission of sins is accomplished in our hearts and the Holy Spirit comes upon those hearts, and so the heart that was hiding because of fear toward God is changed into a heart that comes forward with thanksgiving.

This peace is not something that gives one more thing to boast of to a person who boasts of his own strength. It is the grace given to a person who acknowledges that he is a sinner in need of the Savior and accepts the Lord's salvation. Whether one is in a lowly position like the shepherds or not, being a sinner who needs the Savior is the same. Everyone must lay down the thought that he can resolve his sins himself and believe in the salvation Jesus accomplished. The faith that pleases God is the faith that does not rely on our possessions or reputation but relies on His Son.

Therefore, we who have received the remission of sins must not set our hearts on exalting ourselves and putting others down. This is because we know that without the same grace, we, too, could not have stood before God. Even when we preach the word of salvation to others, rather than putting forward how excellent our faith is, we must preach what the Lord has done for fearful

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sinners. Just as the angel turned the eyes of the shepherds toward the Savior, we, too, must lead those who hear to know Jesus and rely on Him.

The shepherds of the night were at first afraid before the glory of the Lord, but the word God sent them revealed to them the reason for great joy. Today our hearts, too, need not remain in fear while thinking of sin. Believe in the Savior, who was born for us, took our sins upon Himself and died, and rose again. The fact of that salvation gives peace to a fearful heart and causes praise giving glory to God to come from our mouths as well. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Let us give thanks to the Lord, who came in a lowly form for us who are lowly

< Luke 2:8–14 >

"Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: (Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased –ASV)."

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"The glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid"

"Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid" (Luke 2:8–9). While the shepherds were out in the fields keeping watch over their flock, an angel of the Lord stood beside them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. People of old were afraid when the presence of God appeared. Because God is so holy and exalted, when they saw Him appear, they could be put to death if they were not careful. So when a sign of God appearing was seen or a light shone, people thought of death. When Moses went up Mount Sinai, too, lightning flashed in the sky, light appeared, and the voice of God was heard; and God told Moses to come up, but told the rest of the people not to come up, saying that anyone who crossed the boundary that had been set would be put to death. So the people were afraid of the presence of God.

Here, too, an angel of the Lord stood beside the shepherds and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and the glory of the Lord refers to light. A very bright light shone in dazzling splendor. When the bright light of God suddenly lit up everything around them in the night, the shepherds did not know what to do, but the angel, the messenger of God, came up beside them and told them not to be afraid.

People say that since the shepherds were keeping watch over their flock at night, it could not have been a winter cold enough to freeze to death. Usually in winter there is a pen into which the flock is driven; it is kept warm and the sheep are put inside, and people bring them feed and so they pass the winter, and after that

they go out and graze them. So those who criticize the Bible say that December 25 is now kept as Christmas, but that it is an absurd claim that shepherds kept watch over their flock out in the fields at such a cold time. It is also said that December 25 was originally the day on which a pagan religion worshiped the sun god, and so some denominations do not keep December 25 even though they believe in Jesus. But for us, it does not matter. Jesus would have come on some day of the year, and on this day, which the people of the world call Christmas, we too celebrate the birth of Jesus together.

Christ the Lord, who came with three offices

While the shepherds were afraid, the angel spoke. *"Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10–11).* Bethlehem is the town where David was born long ago and grew up running about and playing. It means that Jesus came to that city of David.

"For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Because those who wrote the Scriptures wrote by the inspiration of God, where ordinarily one would write in a single sentence that Jesus Christ came to this earth, it says *"who is Christ the Lord,"* and thus it speaks first of that office—of what office the Son of God came to this earth with and became our Savior.

Jesus is the Christ. The word Christ, in Greek, means that one has been anointed; when the three offices of king, high priest, and prophet were established, oil was put in a large horn and poured on the head. Saying, "I establish you as a prophet," "I

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establish you as king of Israel," they poured oil and established the office. Therefore the words *"who is Christ the Lord"* mean that the Lord came with these three offices and became our Savior. Jesus Christ is the King of kings and the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, and He came to this earth with the office of a prophet and speaks Himself: "I am your Savior"; "I am the King of kings and the One who created the universe"; "I am the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, and if you want to enter the kingdom of heaven, you can enter only by receiving the remission of sins through the sacrifice that I offer, and I make this fact known to you." He speaks of these three things one after another. That is why it says *"Christ the Lord."* The Lord came to this earth, but He is not a lowly one.

Jesus, the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and Himself became the sacrificial offering. By bearing the sins He had thus taken upon Himself and shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, He received our judgment in our place, and He rose again and accomplished the remission of sins; so we are saved by believing in this Christ.

The miracle of miracles: the Creator became a man

"And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12). A sign means a miracle. It means that your Savior, your Christ, the One who is your King and the Creator and the High Priest and the true Prophet, came to this earth with these three offices to do the work of saving you; and that when you go to Bethlehem, the

city of David, there is a mother who has given birth to a baby, and you will see that baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger from which beasts eat, and that is the sign, that is, the miracle. The word miracle is used also when we see a great event, but the point is that such a glorious One—the King of kings, the Creator who created heaven and earth, and the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven—came clothed in human flesh in order to make it known that He had come as the Savior, and that this is the great miracle.

God became a man and came to this earth. This is the miracle of miracles. God's making all things in the universe also seems like a great miracle, but what is greater than that is this very thing: that the Creator came as a man, that He came as the baby Jesus, and that He was laid in a manger where beasts are raised. The angel told them that this is something like a great miracle.

"On earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased"

And a bright light shone from heaven. We think that since a few angels were gathered, it lit up only that spot like a spotlight, but that wide field would not be lit up by any ordinary lighting. How great a light must have shone on that field! The lighting on this earth would not come anywhere near it. The light kept shining from heaven, and then suddenly the heavenly host and the angels came down in the sky above that wide field and sang praises like a great choir. *"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased'" (Luke 2:13–14)*.

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There are angels who praise God. They always sing praises, and that scene was shown to us for a little while. The shepherds saw the angels appear, saw the bright light, heard the voice, and also saw the multitude of the heavenly host praising God together with the angel in the sky. When we pray, we call Him the LORD of hosts, and "hosts" means that He is the God who moves all the soldiers in heaven. There are soldiers of God in heaven, and the God of hosts who moves all the soldiers of heaven is Jesus Christ. Here the soldiers of heaven also came down, and the angels also came down, and they sang praises together. It was majestic beyond words.

Of God's sending His Son to this earth to save mankind, it said, *"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased" (Luke 2:14)*. Who are those on earth in whom He is well pleased? It means that the Lord came for people like the shepherds who are not splendid in themselves, people who do not think their status is high, people who, as they live in the world, cannot possibly feel any self-esteem, wondering why they were born on this earth and why they have to live like this. As an example, we can take Esau and Jacob. It is not that Jacob was inferior to Esau. Esau was a person who thought he had strength, and Jacob was a person who did not think of himself as strong and fine. Among people, there are those who have nothing yet have only a strong sense of self-esteem, and there are those who have much yet have little self-esteem. There are people who think that what they have is nothing, that they are people who could die if they fell ill just once, and that what they have learned is nothing either. Some people walk with their shoulders squared all their lives because they graduated from college. But some people, even while studying in school, think: "I am learning what would be finished by reading a few books; since it is advantageous for living in the

world, let me get the diploma, but there is nothing worth relying on or boasting of; among those without a diploma, too, there are many excellent people." It means that God came to save the people on earth in whom He is well pleased, such people.

The Lord, who came to save a person like me

I believe in the Lord, who came to save a person like me. As I lived in the world, I agonized a great deal. When I was born, my family could afford to keep a nanny to raise me, so it seems we were not poor. Then my parents fell into a certain superstition-like religion. The whole family fell into it, sold all the property and offered it up, and following those people we came to a big city and ended up living in a shanty. Our house was still big, and in the houses next door the entrance was the kitchen, and when you opened one door there was the room, and that was all. I grew up in such a place. Unable even to solve the immediate problems of food, clothing, and shelter, let alone school and study, I thought from childhood, "If I live in this neighborhood, I am ruined; I must leave this neighborhood." So I began to travel early on. There were many times when I went to a big city and slept on a mountain. During the day I walked around, and in the evening I spread newspaper on the ground, covered myself with a sheet of it, and slept. Nowadays that would be a homeless person, but at that time ordinary people lived that way. If they had no money to go to an inn, they lived that way. When I got older and had to study, I knuckled down and studied only what was absolutely necessary.

I had little self-esteem. I thought, "Why must I live in this world? Wouldn't it be better for a person like me to disappear from this world?" Because I had seen and felt many things while

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wandering about, more than my age would suggest, when I saw people pretending to be rich over trifles, I felt the emptiness of life and thought that human beings are nothing much. And then illness came to my body. It was pulmonary tuberculosis. When I suffered from my lungs breaking down and blood coming up, my life was nothing. "Ah, I am nothing." But it was said that Jesus had removed people's sins, and after I too believed in that Jesus and said, "Please remove my sins. I believe in You. And I will go without regret," hope to live arose in my heart. After I asked Jesus, telling Him that I had committed such and such sins and asking Him to remove these sins, an inexplicable hope began to spring up within me. It is not that I received the remission of sins at that time. But from that time I studied, and I knew the emptiness of life. My ancestors and my parents, too, were born, lived, grew old, fell ill, became aged, and simply died. For a human being, everything is contained in this one phrase: birth, aging, sickness, and death. Being born, growing old, falling ill, and dying—that is all there is to a human being. Though a person may seem great, though an emperor may seem great, he is nothing.

Those who know that they are nothing, the people of whom it says *"on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased" (Luke 2:14)*—who are they? They are people who know their true selves. The point is that ours is a life in which we are born, get older, grow old, fall ill, die, become mere ashes, and return to the dust, and that it does not end there, but ours is a life that will go to hell because we have sin. How can such a life put on such airs, and however much money one may have, how can one talk big? Money is nothing more than a tool that is a little necessary for a person to live, and power and knowledge and everything else are the same. They are a little necessary within this span of being born, growing old, falling ill, and dying, but

one cannot take them along. That is all they amount to. As I read the word of the Scriptures, I truly found what I was looking for. I came to know that Jesus Christ came to save someone like me and saved me with the water and the blood. I did not learn it from anyone; God taught me through the word of the Scriptures. Ordinary people learn in seminary, learn from theologians, and come to know by hearing from someone, but even now when I think of it, it is amazing to me. While preaching to you what I had realized through the word of the Scriptures, and publishing books and preaching it to people all over the world, at first I thought this was a matter of course. But when I listened to what people said, knowing this through the word of God was something great. Because I came to know it through the word of God, every time I have preached the word, I have never once left out the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This is because it is the truth.

Though I could not find self-esteem, there was just one thing by which I could have self-esteem. It was in rescuing people in this world who were pushed around and beaten because they had no strength and no one to back them up; from that I had self-esteem. But when I contracted pulmonary tuberculosis, I could see my true self. All of the health, strength, and guts I had had until then vanished completely. When I lost the one thing, health, I lost everything. From that time I believed in Jesus, and the Lord caused me to understand the word, and so I have come to be as I am today. The point is that God met me.

Only those who need God are saved

"On earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased" (Luke 2:14). It means that God came to save those who truly

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know their own lowliness in their hearts, those who truly need Jesus in their hearts, those who need the Savior—such people. He did not come to save those whose hearts are proud. Such people He simply casts out. God does not look after the great people who talk big with their possessions, power, and religion.

God came to save only those who need God. It is not that everyone is saved, and it is not that everyone can have faith. Those who need God are saved. Do you need God? Do you need Jesus Christ? There are people who do not need Jesus. People who, having believed in Jesus, try to live by their own strength—for those people, Jesus is not needed. Jesus not only saved us, but He is the King, He is alive even now, and He is the God who even now delights to hear and answer our prayers. By believing in that God we obtain peace, by faith we become His people, and by faith we receive His love.

The Lord did not come to save people like the nobles of this world. Did He come to save the Roman emperor Augustus, who appears in this passage? Augustus was a lucky man who went in as the adopted son of a man of power, lived in fear and trembling, and then inherited the power in its entirety. In such an age Jesus came to this earth. Did Jesus come to save Augustus? The word said *"on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased" (Luke 2:14)*. He came to save people like us. Those who are lowly, who did not want it but were born on this earth and found that they have no worldly power, cannot have it no matter how hard they try, and have no satisfaction even if they have it; those who are poor in spirit; those who cannot enjoy satisfaction apart from God—only such people God came to save. The Lord said, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)*.

So as for those who live in this world trusting only their own strength, God saved them too, but because they do not believe,

they do not receive salvation. God wants to help them too, but because they do not rely on Him and do not ask for help, He does not help them. Those who have made it on their own in this world may talk big, but God does not like that very much. Even if a person has made it on his own, one who knows that he himself is a mere created being, a being who will vanish like dust, that he is nothing—a person who has become poor in heart—such people God came to save. When we meet that glorious God and rely on Him and believe all His word, we become glorious like God. We have no need to exalt our hearts before God, and no need to put on airs in this world.

If we happen to have the ability to do this and that, it is a gift and a talent that God has given us. To us He gave only that talent, and to other people He gave other talents. Therefore, the talent we have is not everything. It is when these talents blend together and are joined with one another that things become good. There is no reason to look down on others. That person does not have the talent we have, but he has a talent we do not have. So we must regard others as precious, and must not think of them as inferior to ourselves. Especially, even among born-again people, each person's gifts are all different. We must make the most of those gifts, and, without putting on airs, faithfully gather them all and use them to accomplish God's will.

How many emperors there were in Rome, shining like stars! Did God come to save such men of power and religious leaders? People like the shepherds, people who, when God speaks, receive it trembling with fear—such people He came to save, and such people He saved. We have no need to fear those in power. They, too, live a life that belongs within birth, aging, sickness, and death, and then pass away; they are not special beings. They are exactly the same as us. Do not envy them, but give thanks that you have met the Lord.

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Give thanks to the Lord, who came to us in a lowly form

The Lord, who was born in a lowly manger, shows us what we are like. How lowly must we have been for Him to do so! If the Lord had been born in a royal palace and said, "I have come like this and will bear your sins and die for your sins," wouldn't more people have believed? But He did not do so. He was born in a manger and laid in a manger, and at thirty years of age He went to John the Baptist and received baptism, bore the sin of the world, died for us on the Cross, rose again from death, and became our Savior. For whom did the Lord, who did this for us, come? It means that He came for me and you, for those who do not have the wealth and power of the world.

The Lord said, *"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24)*. How can a camel go through the eye of a needle? Yet it says that this is easier than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, so it is a word that a rich man can never enter the kingdom of heaven. But with the Bible, we must not read only one verse. We must read all the way to what follows. *"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26)*. Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John, was crucified and died, and rose again from death, and thus saved those who believe. If one was poor in heart and believed this, one could obtain salvation. If one knew the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, one could obtain salvation.

Jesus came to save a person like me. Jesus came to save a person like you. Do you resent your life, your birth? "Why was I born into such a poor family and have to live like this?"—do you perhaps have such thoughts? There is no need to exalt your

heart. Even if you resent it, you cannot change it. Rather, look into what the will of God is, seek out the will of God, seek out Jesus Christ, and obtain salvation. And live a life that gives glory to God. Then you will be glorified. There is no life more glorious than that life.

There is no need to be puffed up because you are good at something. There are a great many things I am worse at than you. Brothers are worse at many things than sisters, and sisters are worse at many things than brothers. Even so, we can be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. We must not look down on others and lord it over them. A person who does that is the worst person. Do not try to lord it over others, but love one another and serve one another. Fill one another's lack with what you have. When we do so, we all become glorious beings together. I am exactly the same as you. I am only one who has been saved, one who serves the Lord, and one who has been glorified by the Lord, and nothing else. I will try to fill what you need, and you fill what I need, and fill one another's needs.

There are many people in this world who are to be saved. There are so many people who are held captive by evil ones and are enslaved to sin, enslaved to death, and enslaved to the curse. We must save them. Those who believe only in the Cross must also be saved. I will preach the gospel not in order to slander them but in order to save them. I will live for the gospel until the day when all mankind believes in Jesus Christ and obtains salvation. I give thanks to the Lord, who came in a lowly form for us who are lowly and saved us. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Let us go and see the thing that the Lord has made known

< Luke 2:15–20 >

“So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.’ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.”

The steps that the news from heaven led to Bethlehem

There are times when, even though we hear amazing news, it ends with our merely marveling at it where we heard it. If we do not think about what relation the news has to our own lives, that marveling, too, fades as time passes. But the shepherds who

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heard the angel's words said that they would go to Bethlehem and see the thing that had come to pass. They did not leave the news the Lord had made known to them as something that had nothing to do with them. The ears that heard the word led to the steps that went to find the baby, and what they saw and heard there led in turn to praise.

"So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us'" (Luke 2:15). The shepherds accepted what the angel had told them as the thing the Lord had made known to them. They did not merely remember the marvelous sight in the sky; they held on to what God had said. Because that word was the news that the Savior had been born in the city of David, the place they were to go also became clear: Bethlehem. They did not set out to look for a grander sign according to their own thinking.

The shepherds went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. Since they saw the baby just as the angel had said, the lowly manger was no hindrance to their recognizing the Savior. There were many people who knew from the Scriptures where Jesus would be born, but they did not go to find Him, whereas the shepherds in the fields went according to the word they had heard. There are times when we readily accept what some person says, yet say that we will believe the word of God only if it is fulfilled in a form that fits our own thinking. But faith is not setting aside the sign the Lord has appointed and setting up new conditions. Like the shepherds, we must see who Jesus is by following the word God has made known.

Since the Savior had already been born before the shepherds went to find Him, their hurried steps did not produce salvation; rather, they caused them to see what God had accomplished. We,

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too, do not obtain salvation as the reward for moving diligently; we accept by faith the salvation the Lord has already accomplished. Only, when we know that the news is truly for us, we turn from the attitude of passing over the word lightly and turn our hearts toward the Savior.

Making known the word they had heard concerning the baby they saw

The shepherds who had found the baby made known the word they had heard. *"Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child" (Luke 2:17)*. What they made known was what the angel had said concerning this baby. They did not merely boast of what a special experience they had had; they made known the news that the baby was the Savior and Christ the Lord. The reason people marveled at the shepherds' words, too, was that there had been a word heard from heaven concerning Him, who looked like an ordinary baby.

For us, too, when we preach salvation, there is a central point we must not miss. Who Jesus is and what He has done for us comes before what feelings we felt. If we put forward only human experience, those who hear are apt to think that they must have the same experience in order to believe. But what the gospel of the water and the Spirit conveys is not the magnitude of experience but the work of Jesus, who saved all sinners. Our words must be used to make Him clearly known.

This baby, whom the shepherds made known, grew up and received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, and with that baptism He bore the sin of the world once and for all. Since the sins each of us will commit throughout our lives were

also included in it, He did not leave behind separately either the sins harbored in the heart or the sins shown in deeds. Jesus, bearing that sin, was hung on the Cross, shed His blood and died, thereby bearing in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death. The shepherds made known what they had heard concerning the baby, and what we are to preach today is the salvation that this baby completed by thus taking sin upon Himself and paying its price.

Therefore, if we say we know of the Savior's birth yet do not receive into our hearts His baptism and the blood of the Cross, we miss the purpose for which He came for us. We cannot explain how our sins were resolved merely by saying that Jesus is a wonderful person. We must know and believe that sin was passed on to the Lord and that the Lord received the judgment for that sin. Just as the shepherds made known the word they had heard concerning the baby, we, too, must preach what the Savior did without blurring it.

The words Mary kept in her heart

All those who heard the shepherds' words marveled, but Luke recorded separately how Mary treasured those words. *"But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19).* Although Mary was caring for the baby up close, she did not, on account of that fact alone, pass lightly over the word that had come to her; she kept in her heart and pondered the words concerning the baby she had borne. She treasured in her heart together what she herself had experienced with her eyes and the words God had made known.

We, too, may think there is no need to think further on the grounds that we have heard the word many times. When a

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familiar passage comes up, we think we know all its content, and yet we do not look back on what relation that word has to our own sins that are being exposed now. But living in the knowledge of salvation is different from putting words heard long ago into a list of memories. It must lead to a life of believing that the Lord bore even the pride and craving that are exposed within us today, and of turning our hearts before that grace.

This does not mean that we are to produce a new salvation every day. It means that we are to engrave on our hearts the fact that the salvation Jesus accomplished once and for all is sufficient for our today as well. We easily pass over small faults as nothing much, yet when a great fault is exposed, we are apt to doubt even our salvation. But weighing great and small and leaving sin outside the Lord's work is our own judgment. If we believe in the Savior, who took the sin of the world upon Himself, we can honestly acknowledge our own faults and yet come boldly before Him.

The faith that keeps and ponders in the heart is also different from the attitude of endlessly judging by one's own standard whether the word is right. It is trusting the fact that God has spoken and coming to know that grace more deeply. When our thoughts clash with the word, we must not set up our thoughts as the absolute standard but look back on what we are relying on. Just as Mary treasured the words concerning the baby, we, too, must not push out of our hearts the word that testifies of the Savior.

Seeing as they had heard and returning with praise

The steps of the shepherds did not end at the place where they met the baby. "*Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and*

praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them" (Luke 2:20). They experienced that the word told to them and what they had actually heard and seen agreed, and they gave glory to God. The reason for their praise did not lie merely in the fact that they had seen an amazing sight at night. The fact that the word God had spoken was true and that the Savior had come according to that word became their thanksgiving.

The record that the shepherds returned shows that the joy of having met the Savior continued on the way back as well. We, too, need not give thanks only during the time we hear the word and then, returning to daily life, live as though it had nothing to do with salvation. Even if the circumstances of our lives are still hard, the fact that the Lord has removed our sins does not change. That is why, even in the places where we work and where we meet people, we can remember the Lord's grace and live, laying down the heart that used to put forward its own righteousness.

Let us, too, examine whether we will stop at hearing and marveling, or receive into our hearts the word we have heard. The shepherds said that they would go and see this thing that had come to pass, which the Lord had made known, and having seen the thing that had come to pass according to the word, they returned praising God. To us, too, the word that clearly testifies of the salvation of Jesus has been given. When we believe that word, treasure it in our hearts, and preach it, a thanksgiving that relies on the Savior, going beyond a heart that is momentarily astonished, will accompany our steps. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Why was His name called Jesus?

< Luke 2:21 >

"And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb."

The name called on the eighth day

A child's name usually carries the wishes of the parents. Parents give a name while thinking about what kind of person they want the child to become, but even the parents cannot fully know what kind of life that child will actually live. Yet when Luke recorded the giving of the name Jesus to the baby, he added that the name had been given through the angel even before He was conceived. This means that the word of God came before the hope of the parents. In this short record, we must see together the One who sent the Savior and the purpose for which He came.

"And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb" (Luke 2:21). After the baby was born, the eighth day for His circumcision came, and His name was called Jesus. Earlier, the shepherds saw the baby and went back, but here the record sets down the day of circumcision according to the ordinance of the law, and the name.

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The Son whom God sent was not in some far-off place removed from human life; He was actually born and came into the time in which people live, under the law. The day on which His name was called was also within this concrete life.

When we think of Jesus, who came under the law, we must not suppose that He was born with the same sin as we have. The holy Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit, came among us to save sinners. Because we could not keep the law perfectly and were under judgment, the Lord came to this earth as the Savior who would deliver us. The circumcision on the eighth day shows among what people and under what law Jesus was born, but it cannot be read as something done to wash away His own sin.

Luke then separately tells of Joseph and Mary going up to the temple when the days of purification were completed. This eighth day is a day recorded separately, before that. The present word, through the name called on the eighth day, lets us see that the word of God, which had already been given, was kept. Even in what looks like a small procedure, the word that God spoke first and the act of following that word are connected.

The word already given before He was conceived

The angel told Mary that she would conceive a Son and also told her His name. *"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS" (Luke 1:31)*. Since the name was decided even before He was conceived, the name Jesus is not an assessment attached after watching how the child grew up. Nor is it a name that arose as the result of people acknowledging Jesus as excellent. From the time God sent His Son, there was a purpose in His coming, and God made that purpose known together with the name.

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If we miss this order, we come to think of Jesus according to our own expectations. If He fulfills our wishes, we call Him the Savior, and if our circumstances stay the same, we doubt whether He is the Savior. But who the Lord is does not change according to our satisfaction. Since God first sent His Son and made His name known, what we must do is to hear and accept the will of God contained in that name. We must not think as though the authority to decide on the Savior were ours.

Nor can the assessment we attach to ourselves come before the name of the Lord. Some people conclude that they have too many faults to be saved, and some think that they have lived relatively uprightly and so do not need a great salvation. In both cases, they are setting the bounds of sin and salvation by their own thinking. But God did not send His Son without knowing the condition of sinners. Because He knew that we could not escape from sin, He established the will of salvation ahead of us and had His Son called Jesus.

Therefore, the fact that the name was given first does not stop at a mere order of time. It shows that our salvation did not begin from human judgment and resolve, but began from the will of God. Just as He gave the name before anything had yet been done, God is not One who waited for our good deeds and then decided on salvation. When we know this grace, we cannot boast of ourselves, nor do we need to despair, regarding our own failures as greater than the power of the Lord.

The One who will save His people from their sins

The purpose contained in the name Jesus appears clearly also in the word conveyed to Joseph. *"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people*

from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). The name Jesus means Savior. Since the Savior whom God sent is the One who will save His people from their sins, we must not think of the coming of the Lord as something on the level of life becoming a little easier or one's reputation among people rising. Delivering those who cannot stand before God because of sin is the reason Jesus came.

We have many difficulties, but among them, the one we cannot resolve by our own strength is the sin before God. Regretting our wrongs does not make the price of the sins we have already committed disappear, and resolving to live well from tomorrow cannot wash away our past sins. Moreover, since our hearts do not always move rightly as we intend, if we make our resolutions the basis of salvation, we collapse in the face of the sin that is revealed again. The name Jesus makes precisely such people as we are believe in the Savior whom God sent, instead of trying to become our own saviors.

This name, Savior, was later fulfilled in an actual work at the Jordan River. There Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. That sin also includes all the sins we commit throughout our whole lives, from birth until death. The Lord bore the sins He had thus taken upon Himself, 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. Because He took the sins upon Himself and bore even their punishment, He became our actual Savior.

We must not think that, apart from this work, we obtain salvation merely by repeating the name Jesus. To believe in Him is to accept the salvation that He accomplished for us. If we leave out His bearing of sins through His baptism and think only of His death, or if we speak of the fact that He took sins upon Himself but miss the fact that He received the judgment for those

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sins on the Cross, the relation of salvation is severed. When we believe together the fact that Jesus took our sins upon Himself, died, and rose again, the meaning of salvation contained in the name also becomes clear.

The right given to those who believe in His name

Now we must also examine our own hearts as we call on the name Jesus. *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12)*. It is said that to those who receive the Lord and believe in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. Faith is not merely introducing oneself as a person who knows Jesus; it is accepting Him, who saved us from sin, as one's own Savior. We must not leave the salvation that the name of the Lord makes known unrelated to our hearts.

When we believe the fact that our sins are also included in the sin of the world that Jesus took upon Himself, salvation is not a beautiful story that has nothing to do with us. Because the Lord took upon Himself in our place the sins that we ourselves had to bear and be judged for, we can now draw near to God relying on that grace. Yet this does not turn our wrongs into right conduct, so an attitude of acknowledging sin and turning from it must also be present. Those who believe in grace do not try to appear righteous by hiding their faults, but gratefully accept the righteousness that the Savior has bestowed.

The name called on the eighth day was not a wish containing the future the parents hoped for, but the promise of salvation that God had determined beforehand. According to that promise, Jesus bore our sins and gave up His life. Therefore, we are not people who call Jesus the Savior only when our circumstances

are good. We are people who, even when we see lack in ourselves, believe the fact of salvation contained in that name, and live in the grace of the Lord, who has delivered us from sin. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

Truly believe in Jesus Christ in your heart

< Luke 2:25–35 >

“And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: ‘Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.’ And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, ‘Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’”

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Simeon, who recognized the baby Jesus

This word is about what happened when Jesus Christ, after His birth, came to the temple in Jerusalem to be presented before God according to the custom of the law. In the past and today alike, people who wait for God, people who believe in God, have been in every part of the earth. They waited and waited, one and all, for the Savior to come. A man named Simeon, who lived in Israel, also waited and waited for Jesus Christ, and he was waiting, having received through the Holy Spirit the instruction that he would not see death before he had seen the Christ who was to be born on this earth. Just then, this man, moved by the Holy Spirit, came to enter the temple in Jerusalem, and at that very moment Mary and the baby Jesus had come to offer a sacrifice before God. Simeon took the baby Jesus up in his arms and praised God. *"'Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel'" (Luke 2:29–32)*. And he gave a blessing.

After giving the blessing, he went on to say, *"Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also)" (Luke 2:34–35)*. This means that Simeon, who believed in God, recognized the baby Jesus, who had been born through the Holy Spirit. And he said that, for mankind and also for the people of Israel, the rising and falling of many people depended on this baby Jesus. He recognized Him rightly and spoke rightly. He said that this Child was destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign which would be spoken against, and this was actually fulfilled just so. Those who believe in that God who made all things in the

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universe and is their Master, who made man in the image of God and sent him to this earth, and who saves from sin, giving salvation to those who believe and judging those who do not believe—such people come to give thanks for, and also to believe, the fact that this baby Jesus Christ came to this earth clothed in human flesh. We are so very weak, and we are created beings made by God. Yet when we think of the fact that He had to come to this earth for us, we are so thankful and our hearts are moved, and we come to see a glory that truly cannot be fully expressed in words.

Not a faith that has become a religion, but faith that believes in the heart

As we greet this Christmas, I hope that it will be a time when we truly reflect rightly on the meaning of Christmas, recognize Jesus Christ properly and believe in Him, and so receive a precious blessing like the shepherds. But today we see many Christians who are not like this. Christianity has become a religion, and now people have little interest in what the word of God says. They say that as long as one believes in Jesus and becomes a good person, and does not steal, does not cheat, and does not do evil things, Christianity is fine, Buddhism is fine, and any religion at all is fine. It is now turning into a religion. At the time of the Reformation, many people who truly feared God rose up, saying, “Let us return to the word of God; let us believe by the word,” and they lived sacrificing much for the gospel and for God. But today there are also people who are intoxicated with the idea of establishing a church, gathering in many church members, and living well and enjoying wealth and honor.

Nevertheless, about two thousand years ago our Lord came to this earth. Who was this Jesus Christ who came to this earth, and what did He do for us when He came to this earth? First, He was the Master of all things. He was our God. Though He was God, He became like a created being. Though He was God, He put on the same form as we humans and was born on this earth, borrowing the body of a woman. He was born in that way in order to save us from sin. So even now, if a person believes in Jesus Christ as God, as the Savior who came to this earth to remove his sins and did remove his sins, as the Judge, and as the God who is above him, he rises before God, truly receives the blessing of becoming a child of God, and comes to enjoy everlasting life. If not, he falls.

"For the fall and rising of many in Israel"

Simeon said that this Child was born on this earth for the fall and rising of many people. On what does it depend whether all people fare well or badly? It depends on whether you believe that the Son of God, the very God who made all things in this universe, became a man and came to this earth to save you from sin, and having come, received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again from death, and so saved you—on whether you accept it in your heart or do not accept it; according to this, you rise or you fall. This is what destiny is. On whom does the destiny of mankind depend? It depends on Jesus Christ. All the history of the world is His work. He wills and plans, and when the time comes, He moves and works all things in the universe. Therefore, for every person in the whole world, for every brother and sister in the church, for anyone at all—whether a person in a communist country, a person in a Buddhist country, or a person

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in a country of another religion—whether that person fares well or badly depends on whether or not he accepts Jesus Christ as his God and his Savior. According to whether or not you believe as your Savior in that Jesus Christ, who came to this earth and received baptism from John and had the sin of the world transferred to Him, who was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood and received the judgment for sin, and who rose again from death, you become a child of God or do not, and you receive every blessing before God, or, on the other hand, if you do not believe, you receive every curse. This is what it meant.

We who have nothing to be proud of before God

You and I have nothing to be proud of before God. When we think about ourselves by ourselves, we may seem to have something to be proud of, but before God we have nothing to be proud of. Why not? It is because in fact there is nothing. It is not that we have something and say we have nothing out of humility; in fact we have nothing to be proud of. When we stand before the perfect God who made all things in the universe, when each of you individually stands before Him who said, *"You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3)*, do you really have anything to be proud of? Rather, there is nothing but what is worthless. We are stubborn, wicked, beggarly in heart, lacking, and self-righteous; we know only how to be loved and not how to love; we know only how to be cared for and not how to care for others; and though He said not to have other gods, we ourselves have become idols before God. Though we are rather lacking before God, we set God aside and try to become higher than God, and we challenge God in order to become the highest ones ourselves. All of God's created beings in this universe are

lacking before God. We are beings who always sin, think evil thoughts, and do evil deeds, and who are lacking, weak, and filthy. The Lord said, *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21–22)*. He said that man is born with these twelve sins and commits such sins, but in reality, people do not see their own form before God and look only at the form of others; they make a religion and make doctrines, set themselves firmly up on those doctrines, and try to lord it over God.

We must not have other gods before God. We must know that we are lacking. Only when we know that we are lacking, only when you know your own form, can you believe as your Savior in that Jesus Christ who came to this earth, and to save you received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again from death, and now sits at the right hand of the throne of God the Father truly as the King of kings. One who does not know his own lack does not accept Jesus Christ. Not accepting Jesus Christ means not accepting all the work of salvation He did for you—that He came to this earth to save you from sin, received baptism from John and bore your sins, and died on the Cross. That is why such a person becomes a devil before God. The devil did not become the devil from the beginning. An angel challenged God and was cast out from before God, and so became the devil. People, too, can very well become devils. Such a person does not know his own form, does not know his own lacking parts, and thinks that he is a perfect being, as hard as a stone, with no change of feeling and no weakness at all, not cold when a cold wind blows and not hot when a hot wind blows; but that is not how man is. Man is like a reed shaken by the wind. Wounded, torn, weak, lacking, filthy, and feeble—this is

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precisely the form of you and me ourselves. That is why a Savior was needed. The God of salvation was needed. That is why God had to become a man in order to come as the Savior of you and me. So Jesus Christ came to this earth as the Savior, as the King of kings, as God. That is why He is called the Christ. He, as the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, as God, put on human flesh and came to this earth, became a man in order to save us from sin, bore our sins on His own body through the baptism He received from John, and gave His body over to the Cross and shed His blood, and thereby saved you and me.

If you want to fare well, believe

Do you want to fare well? If you want to fare well, I ask you to believe in that Jesus Christ as your Savior, and in the work that Jesus Christ did. Believe. Believe as your Savior in that Jesus who is the Savior and who is your God, and who concretely came to this earth, received baptism from John and bore your sins and washed them away, hung on the Cross and suffered harsh suffering and received the judgment for sin, and so saved you from all sins and made you children of God. If you do not believe in that Jesus Christ, you fall. You perish. The way Jesus Christ saved us is so simple, concise, and clear. It is not difficult like philosophy, nor something that comes back to the same place however much one goes around it every day. Just as He said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)*, it is exactly the truth, the life, and the way by which we can go to the kingdom of heaven. He became our Savior. As it says, *"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ" (1 John 5:6)*, He came by water and blood and became our Savior.

Then why do you not believe? Is there some wound in your heart? Is there in you a heart that says, “If God exists, how can this be?” Were you not fundamentally one who was to suffer destruction before God? Were you not fundamentally one who was to go to hell? Do you have the qualification to say, “If God exists, how can He do this to me?” What right do you have? Your ancestors sinned and handed down that sin and curse to you, and by what right can people who were born inheriting that curse say that God made them this way, or say, “If God exists, how can He do this to me?” Is it not your own fault? It is not a matter for resenting God. It is a matter for believing in God, a matter for believing in what Jesus Christ has done—and yet are you judging God? That is precisely pride. You must take to heart the words that Socrates spoke: “Know yourself.” Such a person is one who does not yet believe. You must believe.

To fall is to have everything taken away

It was said that this Child would be a sign of the fall and rising of Israel. It is a matter of whether one truly believes in Jesus Christ as one’s God and one’s Savior. It is said, *“He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12)*, but what does it mean to believe in the name of Jesus Christ? To believe that He came to this earth and was born, that when He turned thirty He received baptism from John and bore the sins of you and me, that He died on the Cross in place of you and me, and that He rose again from death and became the true Savior—this is precisely what it is to accept Jesus Christ in the heart. What is it to believe? It is to believe in Him, and that is to believe in what He did—or is it telling us to believe only in the name of Jesus Christ? Is it to put up a

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photograph and say, “I believe in You”? When I went to a certain country, I saw that in one house they had put up a photograph of their religious leader in front and a photograph of Jesus behind it, and in that house they said that they believed in Jesus. If one puts up a picture frame and believes in Jesus, is that believing in Jesus?

What has God done wrong to you? Whether people believe or not may depend on you yourselves, but in fact God has done nothing wrong to us. God is supplying us with everything, and being merciful, He is patient for a long, long time. Then why do you not believe? If you do not believe, you fall. What does it mean to fall? In the Book of Esther, there was a queen named Vashti, and when the king held a feast, the queen was also holding a feast. Because the queen was so beautiful, the king told her to come so that he might show her to his officials, but the queen did not come, saying that she too was holding a feast. It seems the king urged her a few more times, yet she said she could not go. From that day on, the king deposed the queen. She was driven out from the position of queen and had to go outside the palace. That is what it is to fall. One may say, “If you want to fall, then fall,” but when one falls, some effect comes upon one’s own body. Falling is not a mere word. It is immediately death and a curse, and having everything one has taken away. It means that if you do not believe in what Jesus Christ has done, everything you have will be taken away. Your life will be taken away, your soul will go into the fire that is not quenched, and everything you have will be taken away.

We must know what happens if we do not believe that He came to this earth and became the Savior for you. If we do not believe, we fall. And we must know what happens if we believe. We rise. I want you to know that whether you win or not, and whether your life goes well or badly, is not according to what

you do well or badly. Romans says, *"So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy" (Romans 9:16)*. Your life does not succeed because you are diligent and good, do no evil to others, and work well. It is a matter of whether you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior, in what Jesus Christ did. When told to accept Him, people think that something great is being demanded and do not accept Him, but it is decided according to whether you believe or do not believe. Believing in the heart is simple. You just open the door of your heart and accept Him. If you want to fall, you do not accept Him, and if you want to rise, you accept Him. A person who says, "I do not know why my life is like this," must look back on himself once. I ask you to examine whether you have truly believed, and if you believed, why it is like this—whether you have truly believed or not. Think about whether, after believing, you have truly believed the word of God, the word that Jesus Christ spoke, and followed His guidance, and whether even so it does not work out. All mankind, every person, whether great or worthless, must accept Jesus Christ as his Savior. You must accept the salvation by which He saved you. Only then do you receive blessings. You receive the blessings of heaven and the blessings of the earth. If you do not accept Him, you fall and lose everything.

As we greet this Christmas, we must truly know its meaning properly. The meaning of Christmas is not that we are told merely to commemorate that a holy One was born on this earth. It is that He who made all things in the universe and made you and me, the God of you and me, put on human flesh and came to this earth. It is that He came and saved you and me from sin, from destruction, and from the curse. It is that we are told to accept Him. It is that if we do not accept Him we fall, and if we accept Him we rise. As we greet Christmas, we must think about

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this, look back and consider whether we truly believe or do not believe, and if we have not believed rightly, we must pull ourselves together once more and believe rightly. That is what makes it a meaningful Christmas. Sending cards and gifts is not all there is to it. Is there anything God has done wrong to you? There is not. He has unchangingly run the four seasons, unchangingly given the sun, unchangingly given the air, and unchangingly treated you and me with mercy. Even though we were lacking, He treated us with mercy. If, even so, one does not believe and resents Him, if one does not believe in Jesus Christ as one's Savior, one will fall. Then one will have even more of what one has now taken away, and will have it all taken away entirely. And one will receive a curse. Those who are not like that will rise. If one truly believes, though his deeds are lacking, he believes the word of God, follows the words of the guides, and is united with the church, and such people rise.

When your heart is pierced, believe quickly

We must remember that word which said that the word of Jesus Christ pierces the hearts of people like a sword. *"(yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:35)*. When your heart is pierced, quickly reckon it up, quickly think about why your heart is pierced, what is wrong with you now, and what you must believe, and believe quickly. Do not listen to one sermon and say that is the end of it. Do you not all truly want to rise? Do you not want to fare well? Do you not want to fare well in both spirit and body? Do you want only your body to fare well? It is said that only when the soul fares well, only when you accept the Savior in your heart, does the body fare well also. If you want to fare

well, you just have to believe. If you come to the Church of God and yet do not know the truth, if you do not know how Jesus Christ has saved you, that is a foolish thing. If you pick and choose, saying this is right and this is wrong, about His having saved you with the water and the Spirit, that is an even more wrongful thing.

When Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, He also bore all the sins that you and I will commit throughout our whole lives. Accept in your heart the fact that it was precisely because of those sins that Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and was judged in our place.

Jesus Christ is not One who is only the God of love at all times. He speaks the truth, and if we accept it, He gives blessings just as the word of truth says, but to those who do not accept it He is not the God of love but the God of wrath. As we greet this Christmas, we must know Jesus Christ rightly and believe in Him rightly. We must not treat Him too lightly. This means that we must not think of Him carelessly, as a laughable being. Though He is the baby Jesus held in Mary's arms, Jesus Christ is the One who made mankind and made this Mary. We must not regard Jesus Christ too lightly. Do you come out saying that it is fine to believe or not to believe, fine to believe according to the word or not, that one just has to believe any way one pleases, that one just has to come to church and become a good person and not do evil things—and then, "Please give me many blessings"?

The Lord came to save us, who are lacking, from destruction and from the curse. Although He came as our Savior, He was not a weak One. He is the perfect One, the righteous One, the omniscient and omnipotent God, and the Creator. His eyes are like a flame of fire. Before Him, nothing can be hidden—neither

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the heart, thoughts, or actions that you have hidden away in your spirit, nor the past, the present, or the future. When you stand before Him, there is no way to escape His judgment unless you believe in Him. That is why He told us to believe, and that is why He had to come to save us from sin and from destruction. And through His servants He is exhorting you to believe. I ask you to believe this Christmas. God is not One who is only merciful at all times. When a certain line is crossed, He judges. Ask for mercy before God every day and believe in God. To believe in God is precisely to believe in Jesus Christ. It is to believe with the heart. What the Lord earnestly desires of you is this: "Truly believe; believe in Me; believe that I am your Savior; believe that I am your God." If you believe, your soul comes to be guided, and once it is guided, it keeps being guided onto the right way even when you do not want it, but if you do not believe, you cannot be guided even if you want to be. That is why I tell you to believe. It may seem that I have said something excessive, but it is not excessive. Those whose hearts are pierced, I ask you to turn back. It was said that His word pierces the hearts of people like a sword. Even while your heart is pierced, you just have to reckon quickly and believe quickly. Then you will not be pierced again. I am absolutely not piercing you in order to attack you personally. Believe while God is being patient. Believe while there is still a chance. It is not always such a good world, and the peace of the family, the peace of society, or the peace of the nation does not always last. No one knows when something will come upon us.

Let us believe and receive blessings

Greeting this Christmas, I have truly come to know my own lack much more. Nevertheless, when I believe and think about the fact that the Lord came to this earth to save you and me and became the true Savior of you and me, I give thanks. I am truly thankful that He came to this earth to give us such a blessing—to save us, who are so lacking, from sin, from destruction, and from the curse, to make us children of God, and to let us enjoy the glory of God in the future. But one more thing that grieves my heart is this: if there are still those who do not believe in Jesus Christ as their God and their Savior, my heart aches so much. If only such a person would believe and receive the remission of sins, I would want to give up anything I have—that is my heart. If even I am like this, how much more must God grieve over the hearts of those who do not believe? What God will give is one of two things, blessing or curse, and if someone is to receive the curse, how much must He grieve? How great must His desire be to give blessing? If a child, lacking sense—if a person made in the image of God—keeps running down the road to the curse because he does not believe, and finally receives the curse, how grieved must be the heart of the Father who is watching it? You must know that heart of God. You must know the very center of the hearts of the preachers who preach the word. Do not think that it is a personal attack. In human terms, I too am as gentle a person as any of you. I am a person who asks how you are when you are hurting. But I am a preacher who leads you before God so that you may receive blessings. What if I were to say, “It’s all right; joy, the Savior has come; it’s Christmas, so let’s eat something delicious and have fun”? Even if I did not say such things, we would eat well and have fun. But whatever may have happened in the past, if there is a way for

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your present and your future to receive the blessing of God, I must present that way and teach and convey it so that you may receive that blessing. You must believe, and I must convey it. I ask you to believe with your heart. You can believe with your heart, individually. To believe with the heart is precisely to receive Him.

I ask you to believe with your heart. To save us, who are so lowly and truly worthless and lacking, who only sin and rebel and are wicked, Jesus Christ came to this earth and saved you and me with the water and the blood. So those who believe in Jesus Christ, who came to this earth, rise, and those who do not believe fall and perish, because they do not believe even though He came as the Savior. There is no middle ground. Jesus Christ is the life, the Savior, and the blessing of you and me. He is a bundle of treasure and a bundle of blessing. When that Jesus Christ comes to you, believe in your heart. Let us believe and receive blessings. Let us receive even more blessings in the future. You do nothing and are lacking in many things, but you should at least receive the blessings that God gives and live by them; if you kick away even the blessings that God gives, by what strength will you live? Those who believe receive blessings spiritually and share that gospel with others too, and after giving to others it seems they have nothing, but in fact God gives them a great deal. While we live receiving such blessings, if the people near you and me do not believe and so do not receive blessings, what could be more grievous than that? I truly hope that you will be people who believe and receive blessings. I hope that all people in the whole world will believe and receive blessings. Let us believe and receive blessings. ✉

Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus Christ, who came to save all mankind

< Luke 2:25–35 >

“And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: ‘Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.’ And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, ‘Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’”

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Reflect on the true meaning of Christmas

It is Christmas. Jesus, the holy Son of God, gave up the throne of glory and came to this earth to save all of us sinners. It is joyful indeed, but we see people rejoicing in a different direction. Many sinners who have no desire even to receive the remission of sins by believing in Jesus are enjoying this day as a day to play lavishly for a day. It is true that it is a joyful day. The whole world keeps this day.

Both you and I, as we welcome Christmas, must not let our hearts be giddy with thoughts of eating, drinking, and playing, but must think carefully about the meaning of His coming to save us who were sinners. We must examine ourselves once again, come to our senses, and gather our hearts to live the rest of our lives by faith.

"My eyes have seen Your salvation"

"Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25). After Jesus was born through the body of the virgin Mary, His parents took the baby to the temple according to the custom of the law. The temple was the place where the sacrifices appointed for Israel were offered. When Mary, as a virgin, gave birth to Jesus Christ and brought the baby Jesus to the temple, there was in that city a man who believed in God, named Simeon. This man was one who was waiting for Jesus Christ, one who had been waiting for the Savior to come. He had received the instruction of the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he saw our Lord come to this earth. When the parents were about to offer the sacrifice

according to the custom, Simeon took the baby in his arms and gave praise. *"Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel" (Luke 2:29–32)*.

Simeon recognized, when Jesus Christ was a baby, that He was the Savior of all mankind. This man, who had been waiting for God, says that his eyes have seen the salvation of the Lord. That Jesus came to this earth clothed in human flesh is salvation to sinners. The name Jesus means Savior; then why was Jesus born, clothed in human flesh, in Bethlehem, a tiny country village of Israel? It is that God came clothed in flesh, in the likeness of man, in order to save all mankind who had become sinners. That is why Simeon says, *"My eyes have seen Your salvation" (Luke 2:30)*.

You and I cannot see Jesus with our eyes now. Jesus rose again and ascended into heaven, and so He is not visible to our eyes. However, when Jesus Christ was born, Simeon met the baby Jesus. Although Jesus was a baby, Simeon recognized the fact that He was the Savior of sinners, and said that he had seen salvation with his own eyes—that he had seen God come to this earth clothed in a human body in order to save people.

We see salvation when we believe with the eyes of the heart

Secondly, Simeon says, *"Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples" (Luke 2:31)*. This means that Jesus is the One who was prepared to save all the sinners of the whole world. Jesus is the Savior who came to this earth to save all the sinners

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of this world from all their sins and delivered everyone from their sins.

Just as Simeon said, *"My eyes have seen Your salvation" (Luke 2:30)*, when he saw the baby Jesus, we receive the remission of sins when we have the faith that believes in our hearts—though we cannot see with the eyes of the flesh—that Jesus Christ came to this earth and removed all the sins of us who were sinners. How do the many sinners of this world receive the remission of sins? It is that, rather than only eating and drinking at Christmas while singing "Joy, the Savior has come," they must believe in their hearts in Jesus Christ, who is the King of kings, God, and the Savior of sinners. We must believe in our hearts that the Savior Jesus Christ came to this earth clothed in a human body. When we believe that He put on human flesh in order to save people, and believe that the Savior received baptism from John at the Jordan River and thereby bore all our sins in the most appropriate and most fitting way, we can say, like Simeon, that we have seen the salvation of the Lord.

Our Lord, who became the Savior of sinners, had all the sins of sinners transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, and shed His blood on the Cross, and thereby saved all sinners. We must see this with the eyes of our hearts and believe it in our hearts. If, at Christmas, we do not see with the eyes of the heart, with the eyes of faith, that work which Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners, accomplished, we are welcoming a vain Christmas. If there is clear faith in the hearts of sinners, they become righteous through that faith, and they can say, like Simeon, that they have seen. When we believe that our Lord came as the Savior and removed all our sins, we too can say that we have seen salvation. We must accept in our hearts that the Savior Jesus saved all sinners, and engrave it on our hearts once

again. Only then will the joy of the birth of Jesus Christ become the possession of the righteous and also the possession of sinners.

"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). Our God so loved all the sinners in the world. In order to save sinners who were to perish, sinners who were to die because of sin, God Himself came as the Savior clothed in human flesh and saved them. Thus He caused those who believe to receive everlasting life and to receive the remission of sins. Jesus is the Savior prepared in advance to save all sinners; He was born on this earth even before you and I were born, bore all the sins of us sinners, received the judgment, and thereby became the Savior of sinners. Do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe that Jesus was born about two thousand years ago in order to deliver us from all these sins when you and I were sinners, that He had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, which was the most appropriate way, and that He was nailed to the Cross and received the judgment in place of you and me? This is faith.

"A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles"

"Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:31–32). This means that Jesus is the Savior not only of the people of Israel but also of the people of all other nations. The Savior Jesus is the Savior who gives the remission of sins to the sinners of all nations. The salvation of the remission of sins that Jesus gives is not a narrow salvation that delivers only the sinners of one place, Israel, but a salvation that reaches the whole world, that reaches

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the whole universe. Our Lord became the Savior who saves everyone from all sins.

It said that He is a light that shines on the Gentiles. Apart from the nation of Israel, all the nations of the whole world were Gentiles. We, too, were Gentiles. We were those who did not know God, did not know the One who made us, did not know the law of God, and did not know the love of God. However, all the people of the whole world were made by God, who created the heavens and the earth—by that very Creator before He came as Jesus Christ. It is that God the Creator came to this earth Himself in order to save the people He had made, who were floundering in sin and could not but die because of sin. Simeon testifies of this Savior, *"Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:31–32),* that all Gentiles also receive the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ.

Now the whole world is rejoicing as it welcomes Christmas. Just as the people of the whole world use the calendar years that take the Lord's birth as their standard, everyone rejoices and delights in the birth of Jesus. The reason is that He came to save them, who had become sinners, from all those sins, and also saved them, and so He has become the Savior to you and me today as well. This salvation of Jesus is universal. The sinners in all the nations of the whole world have received the remission of sins in their hearts by accepting into their hearts the salvation of the remission of sins that Jesus gives. We must listen to this truth of salvation that shines on the sinners of all the earth. Jesus is the Savior of all sinners, and all sinners are saved from all their sins by believing in the salvation of this Savior Jesus.

We can see that the meaning of Christmas has been greatly corrupted. Like a game of passing on words, the Christmas of Jesus, too, has changed very much over the course of two

thousand years. People say that this day is a day for eating and drinking, not a day for old-fashioned worship services and for talking about whether one has sin or not. However, if we go back to the original, it is that Jesus is the Savior of sinners. God spoke this to Simeon, and Simeon in turn told it to people. God came to this earth clothed in human flesh, and it says that Jesus, who came clothed in a human body, became the Savior of people. We must tune in to the right frequency. We must cast away faded thoughts and know the true meaning of Christmas. God became a man to save sinners, and having become a man, He saved people from all sins. That is why we sing, "Joy, the Savior has come; let all people receive Him."

The Savior who is truly God and truly man

God came to this earth clothed in the form of man and lived just the same as all the people of the whole world. However, He did not commit sin. Because He came clothed in human flesh, He also knew hunger. There were two things in Jesus: He was God on the inside and man on the outside. Therefore, He knows God well and also knows man well. He is the very Son of God the Father, the One who came as the Savior of sinners. Jesus is God, who came as the Savior of sinners.

Jesus, the Son of God the Father, who came as the Savior, bore all the sins of sinners in the most appropriate way. Jesus held out His head to John, who was giving baptism, and told him to give Him baptism. It was that John should lay his hands on His head, put Him into the water, and raise Him up again. When John tried to stop Him, Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. This means that it must be done this way in order to remove all

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sins. The word "thus" means the most fitting and most appropriate way. Jesus came to this earth to save us and saved us sinners in the most fitting and most appropriate way. When Jesus received baptism from John, all our sins were passed on to Jesus. What sins were passed on? All sins were passed on. Jesus had all sins transferred to Him through that baptism. And by Himself being nailed to the Cross and receiving the judgment that we sinners had to receive, He saved all sinners. That is why, just as the very name Jesus is the name that means Savior, Jesus became the Savior of sinners. When we say that we believe in Jesus, it is precisely this that we must believe.

Our Lord received baptism from John at the Jordan River, received punishment on the Cross, rose again three days after He died, and now sits at the right hand of the throne of God as God the Judge. Sitting there, He speaks to all of us sinners. He tells us to believe in Him and be saved.

"The glory of Your people Israel"

Simeon says further: *"Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel" (Luke 2:31–32)*. That Jesus came to this earth and saved sinners was so that they would believe in Him and become righteous. It was so that they would become people without sin, people who have received the remission of sins. To the righteous who have received the remission of sins, Jesus is glory. Jesus became the Savior to sinners, and to the righteous who have received the remission of sins He became all blessing and glory.

As we welcome Christmas, the righteous give thanks and glory to Jesus, God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit. To those

who believe in Jesus Christ, Jesus has become glory. He has become true joy to us, and He has become the true Savior and blessing to sinners. Believe this fact. Simeon, looking at the baby Jesus, said that he had seen salvation. We, too, have seen the salvation of the Lord by faith. Have you seen it? You must keep looking until you see. Then you will see clearly.

Live the rest of your life by faith

We must know and accept the true meaning of Christmas. We must accept in our hearts that God came to save us sinners and did save us, give thanks for the Lord's salvation, celebrate the Lord's birth together with all our neighbors, and, though we do not know how much of our lives remains, as we live our lives of faith from now on, not give our hearts to vain things, but be faithful in good works and not go anywhere near sinful things. We must live such a life. Do not live in disorder and say that you are striving to live for the Lord. Once you fall, it is death. I cannot tell you how fearfully the world is heading. I exhort you because I cannot pretend not to know while knowing that it leads to ruin. Because the age is becoming an ever more sinful and evil age, I am saying that we should come to our senses. As the second coming of the Lord draws nearer, *"not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some" (Hebrews 10:25)*, we must make every effort to assemble; when we assemble, we must pray and learn the word; when we are scattered, we must live faithfully each in our own place; and we must also gather in church, do the work of God, and live good lives. We must offer our hearts, thoughts, and bodies to what is good by faith and finish these last days well.

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As we welcome Christmas, we are truly glad. Our Lord bore all the sins of us sinners. We give thanks. Since the Lord completely removed the sin of the world that was ours and bestowed so much grace on us, can we not generously embrace, as much as need be, those who have wronged us? That is what each of us must do. Only, I myself and you yourself must not fall into sin and die. I tell you to be careful because it is you yourself who will suffer and die. Let us give thanks for Christmas and spread the joy of Christmas to the people around us. ✉

Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

The two people who recognized the Savior in the temple

< Luke 2:22–39 >

"Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD'), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, 'A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.' And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 'Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.' And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and

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said to Mary His mother, 'Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.' Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth."

Going up with the baby according to the law

Even when they see the same baby, the eyes that recognize who He is differ from person to person. The parents who brought the baby to the temple were trying to perform the custom of the law, but there Simeon took the baby in his arms and gave praise, saying that he had seen the salvation of the Lord. Anna, too, came forward, gave thanks to God, and spoke about the baby to those who were waiting for redemption. In the young life that was visible outwardly was the salvation God had promised, and those who had been waiting recognized that Savior.

"Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD'), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the

law of the Lord, 'A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons'" (Luke 2:22–24). When the days of purification were completed, the parents went up to Jerusalem with Jesus. It was to present to the Lord the firstborn male who opened the womb and to offer the appointed sacrifice. In explaining this event, Luke repeatedly mentions the law of Moses and the law of the Lord. Jesus actually came among them clothed in a human body in order to deliver the sinners who were under the law.

This sacrifice was the purification rite that the law had appointed for a woman who had given birth, and the Lord was Himself born under the law in order to redeem us who had committed sin under the law. Jesus is the holy Son conceived by the Holy Spirit, the One who came under the law to save sinners. We have the sin of not having kept the law perfectly, but He did not come to commit sin together with us. Because He came as the Savior who would take the place of us who were placed under judgment because of sin, the eyes that look upon this baby must not stop at a mere family ceremony either.

Simeon, who held the promised salvation in his arms

It was said of Simeon that he was *"just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25)*. He had received the instruction of the Holy Spirit that he would not die *"before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:26)*, and he came into the temple, moved by the Holy Spirit. He, who had been waiting according to the promise God had given, took the baby in his arms and gave praise. *"Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all*

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peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel" (Luke 2:29–32). The baby was still young, and the many people who came and went in the temple did not see that baby differently from other babies, but Simeon recognized, not with the eyes of the flesh but with the eyes of faith, that the salvation God had prepared for all peoples was in Him.

Simeon's peace did not lie in having had the merit of his long waiting acknowledged. It lay in having seen the Christ just as God had said. If, while waiting, he had only built up his own expectations, the baby before his eyes might not have seemed a sufficient answer. However, he confessed that baby to be the salvation of the Lord, just as the Holy Spirit had made known to him. We, too, must believe in Jesus, whom God sent, rather than first deciding what salvation ought to look like.

That salvation was not a narrow salvation for Israel alone. Simeon praised, saying that it was prepared before all peoples and was a light that shines on the Gentiles. God, who fulfilled the promise to Israel, shone the light of salvation on the sinners of other nations as well. Therefore, we need not make the nation we were born into, or how much we knew of God before, a limit of salvation. The salvation Jesus accomplished is the salvation we also need, and it is the gospel we believe and preach.

The salvation of the Lord that Simeon said he had seen was completed by the work this baby accomplished when He grew up. Jesus, who was born under the law, received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River at the age of thirty and thereby bore all the sins of the sinners under the law once and for all, and He included in it even the sins we commit throughout our lifetime. The Lord bore those sins, 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. We, too, receive

the remission of sins by believing that salvation in our hearts, and we enjoy the peace of being able to stand before God. The Scriptures say of this baptism, *"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),* and so that work by which the Lord bore our sins in His flesh is the sign that has saved us.

The Savior who reveals the thoughts of hearts

However, after praising, Simeon did not go on with words of blessing only. He told Mary that because of this baby, people would fall and also rise. *"Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, 'Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed'" (Luke 2:34–35)*. The word that it would be as though a sword pierced through your heart refers to the pain that Mary the mother would suffer because of that Son. At the same time, Luke conveys that through this baby the thoughts of many hearts would come to be revealed.

When faced with the news that Jesus came to save sinners, the hearts of people are revealed. If one acknowledges that one needs the Savior, one gladly accepts His salvation, but if one holds on to one's own righteousness, one ends up pushing away what Jesus accomplished. Even if one seemed to believe in God well before hearing the word, what one has believed in is shown before the word that tells us to acknowledge our sin and rely on

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the Savior. The Lord does not merely dress up our outward appearance nicely; He reveals what we hold on to in our hearts.

Therefore, we must not think of falling and rising only as a matter of wealth decreasing or increasing. Because it is a matter of whether one accepts or rejects the Savior who came to deliver sinners, it is a word concerning our life and salvation. If we regard the Lord's baptism and the blood of the Cross as unnecessary on the grounds that our deeds are fine, or if we believe only in the blood of the Cross and leave out the work in which the Lord had sins passed on to Him through His baptism, sin remains in our hearts and we come to stand in the place of falling. On the contrary, those who acknowledge their own shortcomings and rely on Him come to stand before God not by the righteousness they have established but by the righteousness the Savior accomplished.

When the word reveals our hearts, we must not refuse to listen on the grounds that it is uncomfortable. Since the Lord knows even the sins we try to hide and has borne those sins, the way is open for us to acknowledge them honestly and accept salvation. The reason that realizing our wrongs does not end only in despair is also that the Savior has already borne the sins and received the judgment. As we listen to Simeon's words, we must look back at whether there is faith in our own hearts as we look upon the baby Jesus.

Anna's thanksgiving to those who were waiting for redemption

In the place where Simeon testified, a prophetess named Anna also came forward. She had lived with her husband seven years and then become a widow, and she was a person who for

a long time had not departed from the temple but served with fasting and prayer night and day. *"Coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38)*. After giving thanks to God, Anna spoke about the baby to those who were looking for redemption. Waiting led to the thanksgiving of recognizing the baby, and that thanksgiving led to testimony toward others.

What Anna made known to people was not a request that her long service be praised. She pointed those who were waiting for redemption to the baby, the Savior. We, too, rather than putting forward the fact that we have believed for a long time or the years we have labored, must preach what the Lord has done to those who are waiting for salvation. For if the joy of having received salvation only circles around within ourselves, we fail to look after those who are still afraid because of sin.

After finishing all these things, the parents and the baby returned to their own town. *"So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth" (Luke 2:39)*. Though there was wonderful praise and testimony in the temple, Jesus returned to the life of Nazareth. The fact that He is the Lord of salvation did not disappear because He returned there, and the work He would accomplish in the future was also not something to be carried out only in places splendid to people's eyes.

Simeon and Anna recognized the baby who came to the temple as the promised Savior and gave thanks. We, too, must not be satisfied merely with the fact that we are close to the word, but must believe in Jesus, to whom that word points. When we recognize the Savior who bore our sins and received the judgment in our place, the heart that was counting its own labors comes to praise the salvation of God. And, like Anna, we come

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to go forward into a life of preaching the Lord to those who are waiting for that salvation. ✉

Sermon 11 by Paul C. Jong

He bore our sins with that body in which He had grown

< Luke 2:40 >

“And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him –ASV”

The baby growing up in Nazareth

When we read the news that the Savior was born and come upon the word that the baby grew, we easily pass over it as an ordinary line. This is because, compared with the tidings of the angel and the praise of Simeon, it seems to be no special event. However, when we think of who this baby is, we cannot lightly pass over the record that He grew, either. Contained in it is the fact that the Lord, who came to save us, actually put on a human body and grew, passing through the time of being a baby.

“And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40). After His parents had finished all things according to the law of the Lord and returned to Nazareth, Luke records that the baby grew and became strong. The baby who had been laid in a manger did not remain in the manger forever. Jesus was in the time in which people live their lives, and He actually lived a life in which His

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body grew. If we think of Him only as a baby in a picture far removed from us, we miss the weight of the word that He came among us.

That He grew does not mean that Jesus was gradually casting off sin. The holy Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit, came as the Savior from the beginning, and it is not that He grew up and only then became One without sin. The body growing and becoming strong and sin being washed away are different matters. Only when we make this distinction clear do we avoid reading the childhood of Jesus by turning it into a story in which our sins are washed away little by little.

We easily think that as we get older, our own sins will naturally decrease as well, and that one day we will become good enough to stand before God. However, the passing of time itself does not remove sin. Even if we think and act in ways different from when we were young, the heart that sets up its own righteousness and hates others still shows itself. What a sinner needs is not waiting for time to pass, but the Savior who will bear sin. Even when we look at Jesus growing up, we must not leave Him merely as a child to imitate, but must see Him as the One who came to take our sins upon Himself.

Filled with wisdom, and grace being with Him

Following the word that His body became strong, Luke goes on to convey that He was *"filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40)*. The growth of Jesus was not explained by the size of His body alone. The reaction shown by the people who met Jesus when He had become twelve years old, in the same chapter, also testifies of that wisdom. *"And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers"*

(Luke 2:47). That they marveled as they heard the answers Jesus gave is connected with the word that wisdom was abundant in the life of the Lord as He grew.

Here we do not need to imagine when, what, and how much Jesus studied and make that the basis of our faith. What Luke conveyed is His wisdom and the grace of God that was upon Him. Even in the childhood that we do not fully know, the Son whom God sent was growing among us. If we think that only the events greatly visible to people's eyes are evidence that God is working, we pass over a fact of grace recorded as briefly as this.

Look at the word that says *"the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40)*. It is evidence that the grace of God was with the life in which the Son grew. Neither the coming of the Savior nor His growing was separated from the will of God, who sent the Son. Therefore, when we think of who Jesus is, we must not stop after looking only at the one moment of His birth, but must also look at the life He walked for us.

We, too, need eyes that look to grace. For if we set our hearts only on increasing our own strength and knowledge, we are deluded into thinking that we can accomplish even salvation with that strength. Before God, rather than boasting of the fact that we know much, we must accept the word of salvation that the Lord makes known to us. The wisdom that is truly needed leads us to acknowledge our own condition as sinners and to know the Savior whom God sent. Like the people who marveled as they heard the wisdom of the Lord, we, too, must listen to His word rather than to our own thoughts.

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The Word who dwelt among us

Jesus, who grew up as a man, is God in His very nature. The Gospel of John conveys His coming among us as follows: *"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)*. Because the Word became flesh, the body of Jesus was not an outward appearance that made Him look like a man. Nor does it mean that He who is God ceased to be God. The only begotten Son actually became a man and dwelt among us, and Luke is conveying that within that life the baby grew.

The reason the Lord came clothed in a human body was to accomplish the salvation we need. The One who would take our sins upon Himself in our place and be judged came among us. If we think of the coming of Jesus as if He had briefly looked around at how people live, we also come to regard lightly the work of salvation that He took upon Himself with His body. The Lord did not merely sympathize from afar, but came as the Savior who would give up His own body for sinners.

When we look at this fact together with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the record that the baby grew makes us know more clearly who saved us. That very Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem and grew up in Nazareth, bore our sins. We believe not in an ideal savior we have made up in our heads, but in the One who came among men and accomplished the actual work. Faith is not an imagination that makes us strong by ourselves, but a heart that accepts what the Savior has done for us.

Bearing our sins with the body in which He had grown

After He had grown up, Jesus came to the Jordan River and sought to receive baptism from John the Baptist. When John tried to stop Him, the Lord spoke of the purpose of fulfilling all righteousness. *"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him" (Matthew 3:15)*. The Lord, who came among us as a man, went forward on the way of taking the sin of the world upon that very body. Here is the reason why the word that recorded the growth of the baby and the work by which He saved sinners cannot be set apart as matters unrelated to each other.

By receiving baptism from John, the Lord had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. Since the sins of our whole lives also belong to all that sin, He bore not only the wrongs of our childhood but also the sins we commit after growing up and even our future sins. Jesus, who thus took the sins upon Himself, gave up His body on the Cross, shed His blood and died, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death. The baptism, death, and resurrection of Him who came as a man became our actual salvation.

Therefore, we cannot find in our own growth the basis on which we stand before God. For even if we have come to know more and to be more self-controlled than yesterday, that cannot take the place of the price of the sins that Jesus bore. We believe in the salvation the Lord has completed and receive the remission of sins, and within that grace we live, reflecting on our own faults. The life in which a believer grows is a life of giving

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thanks for and learning the salvation already given, not a process of filling up an insufficient salvation with one's own efforts.

The one line that the baby grew now no longer remains for us as merely ordinary news. For our Savior actually lived through human time, and with that body in which He had grown He bore our sins and gave up even His life. Remembering the word that the grace of God was upon Him, believe in the Lord who came among us. To us, who cannot save ourselves because of sin, Jesus has become the true Savior. ✉

Sermon 12 by Paul C. Jong

What is a life of walking with God?

< Luke 2:40–52 >

"And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, 'Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.' And He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?' But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

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Where do we meet Jesus?

Where do we meet Jesus Christ? Where do we meet God? We meet Him in the temple. If you ask where God and the saints meet, they meet in the temple. This temple means that there is no sin because the Lord has removed all our sins, and it means that we meet God in the temple where there is no sin.

God has cleanly removed our sins. Our Lord has made us people without sin. When we know and believe that God has removed our sins, the fact that He has taken away all our sins, we come to meet the Lord. As the years go by, we usually forget that we ourselves have received the remission of sins. And yet, in the midst of many affairs, we think that we are walking with the Lord. But as for what a life of truly walking with the Lord is, and where the place is in which we meet the Lord, dwell with the Lord, and live with the Lord—it is none other than the temple. The Lord has taken away all our sins, and through this we have become people without sin. God said, *"Where I will meet you to speak with you" (Exodus 29:42)*. We meet God in that place where our Lord has taken away even our wrong thoughts and even our most minute sins, in that place of salvation where our Lord has removed our sins.

Do you know how minute the sins are that the Lord has taken away from you and me? It is said that when the priest offered a sacrifice, he offered it with flour. If we look at Leviticus, it says that he made unleavened bread of fine flour and offered unleavened cakes and wafers baked with oil spread on them, together with the offering to be presented on the altar of burnt offering. When we know that He has taken away all our minute sins, we come to meet the Lord and also to walk with the Lord. We ourselves live on, having received the remission of sins.

Yet the Lord has also cleanly removed all the sins we commit as we live. If we know only this much—that the Lord took away only the great sins from before we believed and the sins of a few mistakes after we believed—then even while walking with the Lord, we come to live separately, we on our own and the Lord on His own. But when we know that the Lord has removed all our sins, all those minute wrongs, all those minute iniquities we commit in our hearts or in our actions or as we live our lives, that He has taken them all away, we come to meet that Lord, our fellowship with that Lord becomes more intimate, and we meet the Lord and walk with Him.

Jesus, who stayed behind in the temple

If we look at this passage, Jesus' parents in the flesh went up to the temple in Jerusalem at the Passover and attended all the sacrifices. *"They went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:42–43).* When the boy Jesus was young, He went to Jerusalem, the great city of Israel, the place where the temple was, and took part in the place where the sacrifices were offered. And after all the Passover rites were finished, His parents joined the ranks of the many people and were going down to their hometown. Thinking that the boy Jesus was following behind them, the couple mingled with the people of their town and were on their way back, talking with one another about the many things that had happened in Jerusalem. But after they had gone on for a good while, they looked back, and the child was not there. Since He had turned twelve, He was fully old enough to find His parents and follow after them. So, taking it for granted that He would

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follow, they went down with their minds at ease, talking with the people of their town, but the child was not there. Suddenly alarmed, they inquired after the child, asking their relatives whether they had seen their Jesus, saying that the child had gone missing on the way down, that they had seen Him in Jerusalem but He had disappeared; and so the place they went back up to was Jerusalem. When they went into that town again and went to the temple, the twelve-year-old boy Jesus was there, sitting and conversing with the scholars of the law. It was there that Mary and Joseph found Jesus.

This is speaking to us saints who have met Jesus Christ, to the servants of God. We take it for granted that once we have received the remission of sins, we are walking with the Lord. We always live that way. We live always conscious that we are working together with the Lord and are always living in company with Him. But though we have been saved before the Lord and are living a life of faith, have you ever felt that you were going about alone by yourself, not attending the Lord, not going about together with the Lord? There will be times when you feel, when you experience, that you judge by yourself, decide by yourself, do certain things by yourself, and go about alone. Although in our hearts we clearly believe the fact that the Lord is our Savior, because we do not feel it vividly, we go about by ourselves. At such times, how can we meet Jesus Christ again?

It is that one leaves unacknowledged all one's very small sins—very minute faults, very small faults that are not even great wrongs, faults in thought, in heart, or in action that others do not know well and that one does not feel much oneself, and that pass quickly even if one does feel them—and does not acknowledge the fact that the Lord has taken those faults away, and thinks only of Jesus, who took away the great sins, until before one knows it, dregs have settled in one's heart. That is why one does

not know. One thinks that one is walking with the Lord, but just as Jesus was found in the temple, it is when one knows for oneself that there is not a single sin in one's heart, that the Lord has taken away all one's sins, the fact that the Lord has taken away even our minute sins and we are people without sin, the fact that we are a people without sin, that we meet the Lord in the temple, in the place where there is no sin.

Acknowledge even the slightest sins

For you and me to meet the Lord in the place where there is no sin, we must acknowledge the Lord, who bore even our minute sins. Because we leave it unacknowledged—because we have been indifferent to the sins we have committed knowingly or unknowingly as we live our lives now, whether great or small, though He took away the great sins and took away the sins of the past; indifferent to this gospel, to the fact that the Lord has removed all our sins, to what our Lord has done—we come to go about alone by ourselves. So we must know, again and again, that the Lord has taken away even our minute sins and that a person who has received the remission of sins has no sin, that we ourselves are people without sin. There we can meet the Lord. Just as He was found in the temple, when we know that we have no sin we can meet the Lord, and in that holy place, in the place where there is no sin, the Lord is with us and we can walk with the Lord.

Then when is it that we lose the Lord? It is that when we actually forget the fact that Jesus has taken away our sins every day, we come to go about in our own way, apart from the Lord. We come to live in our own way. We lose the Lord and come to go about as we please. We must never, at any time, forget that

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the Lord has taken away our sins, that we have no sin. We must confirm in our own hearts that we are people without sin.

Only then can we meet the Lord there, have fellowship with the Lord there, receive His guidance, and walk with the Lord. Walking with the Lord is meeting Him in the temple, meeting Him in the holy temple. That holy temple is that we meet Him within this gospel that He has removed all your sins and mine. When we believe at all times in that Lord who has removed all our sins, when we believe every day in our lives the fact that the Lord has taken away this sin, too, when we acknowledge the fact that even if our hearts have perhaps gone wrong, the Lord has taken this away, too, our hearts can become holy at any time.

The sins of that wrong heart and thought are also included in all the sins of the world that Jesus had passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Since Jesus bore those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and so was judged in our place, we believe in this salvation that has remitted even our small sins and go before the Lord.

So we come to have fellowship with the Lord. Whenever we try to meet the Lord, at the moment we confirm that our Lord has taken away all our sins, that we have no sin, that the Lord has made us people without sin, and that we ourselves also have no sin, we are walking with the Lord. We come to live without losing the Lord, walking with the Lord, living the same life as His, and being led by Him.

Having lost the Lord

Haven’t there been many times when you and I, after receiving the remission of sins, lost the Lord and did as we pleased? Just as Mary here lost the boy Jesus while going down

to her hometown but, not knowing that she had lost Him, went down thinking that He was in their company, our Lord is telling us, asking whether we are not living that way. It is that by knowing and believing the fact that that Lord has removed all your sins and mine, we can again meet the Lord, have fellowship with the Lord, and walk with the Lord. Meeting the Lord—that is the gospel. When we know that the Lord has removed all our sins, that we ourselves are people without sin, we can walk with the Lord; and whenever we know that our hearts are clean, when we know that there is no sin, we can walk with the Lord. Though we have no sin at any time, we still always commit sins, and if we do not recognize that the Lord has taken away these sins, then although we have received the remission of sins, we cannot walk with the Lord. Because dregs have settled in our hearts, we cannot help but look at something irrelevant, something hazy, lose the Lord, and go about as we please. We must always confirm that there is no sin in our hearts. We must confirm it at all times. This is precisely a life of faith.

The priest made unleavened cakes of fine flour and burned them together with the sacrificial offering on the altar of burnt offering, and offered the sacrifice before God. In this way the priest held his consecration. All of us who have received the remission of sins before God are priests. Then, when we acknowledge that our Lord has taken away even our minute sins, when we acknowledge that the Lord has taken away all these sins we commit every day in thought and in heart, all these sins we commit in action, and when we confirm that the Lord has taken away our sins, has removed our sins, and that we are also people without sin, we can carry out the office of priest, live a life of faith, and walk with the Lord. When we know that He has taken away even our minute sins, we always walk with the Lord. If, just because we have received the remission of sins, we

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simply treat those minute sins by saying, “He has taken all of these away, so what more is there to think about? The answer is obvious—there is no sin,” then dregs settle in our hearts, too, and we come to act as we please.

Wipe the mirror clean

However clear a mirror may be, if grime is on it, it looks dirty. What is originally clear must be preserved as clear. That is why we have truly received the remission of sins from the Lord in our hearts. Our Lord has taken away all our sins. He took away the sin of the world. Our Lord has taken away all our sins, which are like mist and as many as clouds. He has made us without sin. If so, our hearts are like clear glass and like a mirror. If so, it is that even when dust has settled on our hearts at any time, we must always recognize that the Lord has taken this away, too.

At such times we can always give thanks to the Lord, pray to the Lord, have fellowship with Him, and walk with Him. A heart that wants to pray—“Lord, what shall I do? Help me with this, too. And keep this, too”—arises, a heart that wants to walk with Him arises, and we come to walk with Him and come to be led by Him. Our Lord is telling us that when we meet the Lord in the temple, we can walk with that Lord. It is that because we are born-again people, we can live a life of faith in this way. That is why our Lord had this recorded in order to find a home for us again, to find a nest for us again. It is that to us Christians who, when people who believe in Jesus live a life of faith, think that we are walking with the Lord but are living as we please and living in this world by ourselves, our Lord is presenting through His word the way to meet the Lord again in the temple, within the gospel, and to walk with Him.

Dear beloved saints, has our Lord taken away all our sins, or has He not? Has He taken away a sin the size of a stone, or has He not? He has taken them all away. The Lord has taken away even a sin the size of a speck of dust. But we do not readily acknowledge the ones the size of a speck of dust. The great ones we acknowledge readily. Because they are so enormous, because if we leave them they cannot be digested and are too enormous, we believe clearly and believe with certainty that He has taken them away. But people who have committed many great sins, when a small sin comes in, think, "What is this little thing?" and though they say that He has taken it away, they do not really confirm it. They think that since He took away even the great sins, He could not have failed to take away the small sins—that of course He has taken them away. And without really confirming it, they are at ease, saying, "He has taken it away." But if we carry it around hanging on us, it is heavy. So later, because even this is heavy, we cannot but admit in our hearts that He has taken this away, too. But as for the things that are not the size of a fist but the size of a bean, the size of a grain of millet, the size of a grain of flour, people think, "Would the One who took away the great things now quibble over the small things? It was said, *'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' (John 1:29)*, and they are all included in that; who would take that so literally and quibble over it?"

But where is it that we actually become dark? We become dark because of great sins, but great sins we cannot help resolving right away—we resolve them because only by resolving them can we live—whereas in fact it is from these things the size of a grain of millet, from these wrongs the size of a grain of flour, that we can grow distant from our Lord. In fact, it is not in the great part that we grow distant, but in the small part; when we fail to live meticulously, when we fail to live the

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holy life of a Christian meticulously, we come to grow distant from the Lord. We grow distant, we come not to know where we lost the Lord, we wonder, “I certainly do believe, so why am I like this?” we pray not because we feel much need for prayer but as a matter of form, and we think, “Why am I like this? It is strange”—that is actually because we have not offered a meticulous sacrifice. That is why we cannot walk meticulously with the Lord.

The Master of the word

Clearly, Jesus is the child whom Mary bore with her own body. Yet although that Jesus was born from Mary’s body, He was not made by Mary or her husband. He was not born by man. In order to save mankind, God, the Creator, borrowed a human body for a while and was born. In fact, Mary was His mother in the flesh, but the things the boy Jesus did were so extraordinary. A twelve-year-old was conversing with the great scholars of the law inside the temple. *“After three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers” (Luke 2:46–47)*. At that time, when the Passover came, the scholars of the law of Israel all gathered. Yet a twelve-year-old child was conversing with them and giving answers, and the people around them who heard the conversation marveled greatly. When had He learned the law, when had He mastered that learning, when had He finished all the Scriptures, and how did He know it?

Because this word is a word recorded about Jesus Himself, Jesus explained and spoke of the word itself. Jesus is the main character. And the place where Mary found Jesus was this

temple. The place where we meet Jesus Christ is the place where we have received the remission of sins. It is at the altar of burnt offering that we meet Him.

Through the gospel, Jesus Christ has cleanly removed our sins, and Jesus, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, received baptism from John and fulfilled all righteousness. *"Where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18)*. We come to meet the holy Lord in this gospel, at the altar of burnt offering, in the place where our Lord has removed our sins. Sins, whether tiny sins or great sins, must all be judged, and the great sins and the small sins alike, our Lord has taken them all away.

But in our hearts we do not think much about small sins. Our Lord died for those sins and was judged for them, yet we are too dull. It is that we come to fall into such a life of faith. If we want to get out of this perfunctory life of faith, we must go to the temple again. Again, we must acknowledge that the Lord has taken away all those sins we have committed knowingly or unknowingly, all those wrongful sins we did not think much of. And we must know that there is no sin in our hearts. When we come to know that there is no sin in our hearts, in our consciences, within us, we can boldly call on the Lord, meet Him, and have fellowship with Him. If one's heart is uneasy, how can one call on God and how can one have fellowship with Him?

A precious saint is one who walks with God

Let us look at the word of 1 John. *"Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God" (1 John 3:21)*. If our heart does not condemn us before God, we have confidence toward God, and it says that *"whatever we ask we*

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receive from Him" (1 John 3:22). But because, as we actually live, there are many things that have gone wrong in minute ways in our hearts which we do not confess, do not perceive, and simply pass over, in the end we come to lose the Lord. And one loses the confidence in one's heart before the Lord, fails to meet that Lord, comes to do as one pleases, comes to act wrongly, and so on. In fact, Christians are extremely sensitive. Though they may look easygoing on the outside, Christians are in fact extremely sensitive. The Spirit of Jesus Christ is sensitive and keen. When we too believe that our Lord has taken away even our minute sins, when we know that there is no sin within us, we come to be able to have fellowship with the Lord and walk with Him.

Otherwise, if we do not acknowledge that He has taken away even our minute sins, we have only received the remission of sins, we will only go to the kingdom of heaven, but there is no walking with Jesus. Once we have been born again, we need a life of walking with the Lord. When going up to the temple at the Passover, when going down, when doing business, when working at a job, when living daily life, when carrying out any undertaking, when doing the work of God, whatever we do, we walk with Him. We need a life of walking with Him. Only when we walk with the Lord on this earth can we live. If we do not walk with the Lord, we by ourselves are nothing. It is the one who walks with the Lord who is precious; one who has received the remission of sins but does not walk with the Lord is not very precious.

When dogs walk along the road with their master, those dogs become precious dogs; but if a dog has no master, it can do nothing even if someone comes up and kicks it, and it can do nothing even if someone throws a stone at it. It does not become a precious dog. When it walks with its master, that dog is

protected and becomes a precious dog. Even a dog becomes a precious dog only when it has a master. We, too, become precious saints when we walk with the Lord. It is that we live as truly precious saints, shining the light of the world. And if we ourselves are to become honorable, we must walk with the Lord.

We can harbor dark intentions or wrong things in our hearts as we please and do as we please, but if the Holy Spirit points out that it is not right before God, we must acknowledge that it is wrong, and we must acknowledge that the Lord has taken that sin away. Only then can we walk with the Lord. How much are you and I walking with the Lord? Every day, wrong things come into us, and we must think over how much we are living acknowledging that our Lord has taken them all away, and how much we are living assured that we have no sin; and by going to the temple again, by entering into that gospel in which the Lord removes our sins, by entering into that gospel in which He took away the sin of the world, laying down our sins and confirming that the Lord has taken those sins away, we must meet the Lord again and live a life of walking with the Lord. It is exactly so when our hearts are dark.

The two disciples going down to Emmaus met the Lord. The Lord was walking together with them. The Lord appeared to those two disciples going down to Emmaus, but they did not recognize that He was the Lord. At that time, on the road, the Lord explained in detail the word prophesied in the Old Testament, and sitting together with them, He broke bread and blessed it. That was precisely the gospel. When they heard that gospel, they recognized that the One who broke the bread and gave it to them was Jesus Himself, but at that moment Jesus vanished. Clearly, Jesus' disciples were born-again people who believed in the Lord. Yet although they thought they were walking with Him, they did not know Jesus, who was walking

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with them; and even while they were walking with Him, they thought they were walking with Him, yet they were not walking with Him. That means precisely that the problem was not with our Lord, but that the problem was in our hearts.

The One who came to the two disciples of Emmaus is Jesus, who bore our sins, died, and rose again. Today we, too, believe in the remission of sins that the living Jesus has accomplished and walk with Him.

It is telling us this: how much we have acknowledged the gospel, how much we have done so, as one wipes a mirror every day. We have a great many wrong things. Not only do we do wrong to others, but we often allow evil things to come into our own hearts. But although we are human beings who are weak and cannot help it, we must at all times acknowledge that our Lord has taken away all those sins. This is the life of people who have truly realized the truth, and the life of one who truly lives a life of faith. This is faith.

"His mother said to Him, 'Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.' And He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?'" (Luke 2:48–49). It is that Jesus Christ is in our Father's house. The One who did the Father's will is in the Father's house. It is that Jesus Christ was within that will of God, who removed all our sins, who wanted to walk with us and be with us, who wanted to make us His people, and who removed all our sins; within that Father who saved us and loved us.

Return to the gospel

If we want to meet Jesus, we must return again to the gospel. Though we have received the remission of sins, we must return again to the gospel. In fact, it is only that we cannot tell it all; how many sins have we committed in minute ways? When people give their testimony of salvation after receiving the remission of sins, they always speak only of the sins they committed long ago. They just say that they drank, did many bad things, and got into fistfights, but that Jesus took away all those sins so they have no sin, and that He took away even their future sins so they have no sin. But we must give our testimony of salvation every day. If we try to testify truly and minutely—that we are such people, yet the Lord has taken away this sin, that the Lord has taken away what is not right in us—there is a tremendous amount.

Of course, it is not the law. The law brings about wrath for us, but the salvation of Jesus Christ removes wrath and gives us salvation. As we live in this world, how many great and small matters do we meet? How many large stones and small stones do we meet? We meet calm things, we meet drain holes, we meet clean sheets of ice, we meet asphalt, we meet green meadows—how many things we meet! In all those things, sin is always there. Our Lord has removed all those sins. He has taken them all away. We must acknowledge that.

By offering the sacrifice of burnt offering before God, by offering this sacrifice of the gospel, we must meet the Lord in our hearts, and, always confirming that there is no sin in our hearts, acknowledging that there is no sin, we must live that life of meeting the Lord and walking with the Lord. Dear beloved saints, do you know what a life of walking with the Lord is? It lies in acknowledging that our Lord has taken away our sins in

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minute detail. We must acknowledge that our Lord has taken away not only the sins revealed in action or on the outside, but even the sins committed in thought within the heart, even the sins of wrong plans for the future. The evil thoughts or evil deeds we have done are all brought to nothing. They are void. If we sin, sin ought to be there, but because there is no sin, because He has taken away even the sin of having made that evil plan, that plan is void. At any time, before the Lord, we start anew at any time. We must build up what is right and build our house on the rock before God, so that we live with a faith that does not collapse. What is not right is void at any time. We must build again. So it is good for us. We can start afresh at any time, we can meet the Lord and walk with the Lord at any time, we can give thanks at any time—and so it is good. Do you know what is wrong with your faith and mine? It is not that once we have received the remission of sins, that is it. From now on, we walk with the Lord. We have been walking with Him from the time we received the remission of sins until now, and we can walk with Him from now on as well.

A life of faith like fine flour

Enoch lived in such a way that he *"walked with God three hundred years" (Genesis 5:22)*. From now on is the real life of faith. And we must recognize at all times that there is no sin in our hearts. We must know it. We must always keep this. We must always clean so that it does not become defiled. Rather than cleaning because there is sin, we must always do the cleaning of faith with that faith in the fact that the Lord has removed our sins. From then on we come to walk with the Lord. From now on we can live a life of faith well. Having been saved, we can now live

a life of faith like fine flour. We can walk with the Lord even in the most minute parts.

The Lord has bestowed such graces on us. It is that the Lord, who saved us and did not abandon us but walks with us, keeps us, blesses us, and is always with us at all times, is with us. Our Lord has made us His people and has become our Lord. He has become our shepherd. We must truly give thanks before our Lord. If there is something wrong with our faith—if, in offering sacrifices until now, we have offered only meat in lumps on the altar of burnt offering, if we have offered only blood on the altar of burnt offering—then now we must offer the sacrifice together with fine flour as well. This is the life of a mature Christian. Fine flour is needed.

We must know the fact that the Lord has taken away even our minute sins, and in that respect we must give thanks to the Lord. We feel and know sin sensitively, but that does not mean that we always live clearly and cleanly—we do not. It is only that we must do the cleaning of faith in that way; as we live, the things of the flesh come out, and we quarrel over who did right, you or I—we are people with a flesh that cannot be helped. The Lord said, *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6)*. It is speaking of the nature of the flesh. The flesh still feels only what is sensual and demands to feel only what is good for itself, but the spirit is not so. The spirit always demands what is clean. Even if it is not sensual, it exists, and it exists in reality. In reality there is no sin, and the flesh and worldly things are different from spiritual things. That is what it is saying. We must always offer the sacrifice of fine flour. We must offer such a sacrifice. Our Lord has taken away even all our minute sins so that we may offer such a sacrifice. He has made us without sin. We have no sin. It is truly a thing to be thankful for. Our Lord has granted us to be

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able to live such a life of offering a meticulous sacrifice and walking meticulously with the Lord. ✉

Sermon 13 by Paul C. Jong

Seek Jesus, who is in His Father's house

< Luke 2:41–51 >

"His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, 'Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.' And He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?' But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart."

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The parents who supposed Him to be in the company

The parents of Jesus went up to Jerusalem every year at the Passover. When Jesus was twelve years old, too, they went up according to the custom of the feast, and as they were returning, they thought that the boy would be in the company. However, since Jesus had stayed behind in Jerusalem, the thought of the parents that He was going along with them and the place where the boy actually was were different from each other. Just because they were walking a familiar road did not mean that they always knew where the One who was going with them was.

"Supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances" (Luke 2:44). After going a day's journey, the parents sought Jesus among their relatives and acquaintances, but when they did not find Him, they had to return to Jerusalem. It was not that they set out on the road intending to abandon the child from the beginning; they supposed that He would be with them, but precisely because of that thought, they walked on without knowing where Jesus was. This scene makes us look back on whether we, too, are leaving our life of faith to familiar assumptions.

We, too, since we hear the word and do the work of God, easily suppose that the Lord is always with us on our way, but the Lord is in the place where the will of the Father is. Yet in reality, when we decide on some matter, we can follow only our own thoughts and pass on without reflecting on the sins that show up in our hearts. Speaking the name of the Lord often is not the same as living in reliance on His word. Like the parents who thought they were going along with Him, we, too, can look

only at the form of faith we have long grown used to and fail to examine our hearts.

That said, we do not need to think that the salvation the Lord accomplished has itself disappeared just because our hearts have become clouded for a while. What we must look back on is not the unchanging salvation, but our hearts, which are walking by our own judgment while having forgotten that salvation. When the parents realized that the child was not there, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. We, too, when we come to know that we are at odds with the word, must not simply pass on, but must return to the gospel that the Lord has removed all our sins, and meet the Lord in that place.

The boy who listened and asked questions in the temple

The parents finally found Jesus in the temple. *"Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers" (Luke 2:46–47)*. Jesus sat in the midst of the teachers, both listening and asking questions, and those who heard Him marveled at His understanding and answers. Through this scene, Luke does not merely tell us where the boy was. He also shows what wisdom Jesus, whom the parents had been seeking, was displaying.

People saw the age of Jesus, but they were amazed when they heard His words. We, too, must not neglect listening to His word because of the familiarity of having known Jesus for a long time. If we do not try to hear what Jesus is saying, and instead decide beforehand that the Lord we know must be a certain way, we

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end up following our own thoughts. What is needed in a life of faith is not continually confirming our own thoughts about the Lord, but listening to the words the Lord has spoken.

The parents who found Jesus in the temple were amazed, and Mary said that they had sought the boy anxiously. That anxiety was the real anxiety of parents who had lost their child. However, Jesus did not merely give an explanation about the fact that His parents had had a hard time seeking Him; He spoke of whose house He must be in. If we do not hear this answer, then even after finding the boy again, we still shut up who He is within our own thoughts.

That He must be in His Father's house

The answer of Jesus makes clear the relationship between Him and God the Father. *"And He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?'" (Luke 2:49)*. Mary said that she had sought Him together with Joseph, but Jesus said that He must be in His Father's house. He was the Son born of Mary and at the same time the Son who had come to fulfill the will of God the Father. Since the parents did not understand that word, the fact that they had lived close to Him did not by itself mean that they knew all of the will of the Lord.

We, too, must not regard Jesus as One who always goes along with our own plans. The Lord came to do the will of the Father, and we must know that will and follow it by faith. If we first settle our own thoughts and circumstances and then only ask the Lord to keep us on that road, then just as the parents guessed where the child was, we, too, end up placing the Lord

within our own thoughts. True walking with Him begins with hearing the will of the Father that Jesus spoke of.

God the Father sent the Son to save sinners, and the Son, who said that He must be in His Father's house, grew up and fulfilled that will exactly as it was. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus had the sins of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. Since He took upon Himself the sins of our whole lives without exception, not only the great wrongs shown to others but also the small evil thoughts we harbored inside are included in those sins. The Lord bore those sins, 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 seek Jesus again does not mean passing the sins we have committed on to the Lord anew and asking Him to die again. It means believing that the salvation the Lord has already accomplished is sufficient even for the sins now revealed in us, and going before Him. If we forget this fact, we say that the Lord took the great sins upon Himself, while leaving the envy and pride of our hearts alone, saying that they are no big problem. Then, when our consciences grow heavy, we may also lose the joy of being with the Lord. We must not take sin lightly, but we must believe in the Savior who has already borne that sin.

If we rely on Jesus, who fulfilled the will of the Father, we can honestly confess our faults to Him and follow the word again. We become bold not because our deeds have become perfect, but because the salvation by which He removed our sins through the baptism and the Cross is certain. Without this faith, even if we outwardly continue a life of faith, inwardly we live judging and worrying all by ourselves. Carrying the heart that believes in salvation all the way into the thoughts and choices of real life is the life of walking with the Lord.

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Being subject to His parents in obedience in Nazareth

Jesus, who had said that He must be in His Father's house, went down to Nazareth with His parents. *"Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:51)*. It is not that the Lord, because He had spoken of the will of God the Father, disregarded and abandoned His parents in the flesh. Since He went down with them and was subject to them in obedience, we must not read the scene in the temple as meaning that it is all right to turn away from our responsibility to our families. The Lord, the Son of the Father, actually lived the life of Nazareth as well.

Mary kept all these things in her heart. She did not throw away the word she could not understand right away, but kept it. We, too, cannot easily conclude that we have fully understood the will of the Lord, so we must keep it in our hearts and think according to the word. Faith is not an attitude of erasing what we do not understand by our own judgment, but an attitude of learning while trusting the fact that the Savior has spoken.

A life of walking with the Lord is not a matter of the time of worship alone. When we return home and deal with our families, and when we are entrusted with work and make decisions, we must remember the word of salvation. Before we blame others for our own faults, we must acknowledge the sins revealed in our hearts, and rely on the Lord, who took those sins upon Himself, to seek the right way. When we rely on the Savior even in such small thoughts and matters, we come to know the difference between a familiar religious life and actually walking with Him.

The parents of Jesus had to stop thinking that He was going along with them, and listen to His word in the place where the Lord actually was. Let us, too, not be satisfied with assuming that we are walking with the Lord. Let us believe in Jesus, who fulfilled the will of the Father and removed our sins, and keep His word in our hearts and follow it in today's life. I hope that you will turn from the heart that tried to keep the Lord on your own way, and walk together on the way the Savior has shown. ✉

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Sermon 14 by Paul C. Jong

Salvation is once and for all; learn how to live day by day

< Luke 2:52 >

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

Growing in wisdom and stature together

When we hear that a person has grown, we first think of age and changes in the body. As time passes, one grows taller and the things one can do also increase, but the heart with which one treats other people does not grow on its own as well. Concerning the growth of Jesus, Luke recorded that He *“increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52)*. Luke did not explain the life the Lord lived among people by changes in the body alone. Before this word, we also come to look back on our own lives as those who believe in the Savior.

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). Jesus showed wisdom in the temple at the age of twelve, and He kept on growing even after He went down to Nazareth. The Lord, who had astonished people with His amazing answers, did not skip over the time of daily life. The word that He grew in wisdom and stature together shows that the Son who came among us lived a real human life. The Savior we believe in is not One who only preached the word from afar, but One who dwelt among us.

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The word that He grew does not mean that the Lord was filling up a divinity that was lacking. It is a record concerning the life that the Son, who is God, lived after becoming a man. He did not grow up and one day come to be acknowledged as the Son of God; rather, He came as the Son of God from the beginning. Therefore, we must not think of the growth of Jesus as if it were a process of obtaining the qualification of God by His own effort. Only when we clearly know who the Savior is do we also avoid confusing our own growth with merit for obtaining salvation.

When people grow older and gain more knowledge, they easily think that they have become better than before. However, since it is also possible to hold on to one's own thoughts more firmly, we cannot say that faith has grown merely on the basis of the fact that one knows a lot. A person who believes in the Savior must not remain in boasting of knowledge, but must look back on his own thoughts and actions according to the word of the Lord. The fact that the One who saved us lived a real life makes it impossible for us to leave faith, too, as mere words separated from daily life.

Increasing in favor with God and men

Luke spoke of God and men together and said that Jesus increased in favor with them. Right before this word is the record of His going down to Nazareth and being subject to His parents. *"Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:51)*. Jesus had said that He must be in His Father's house, but He went down with His parents and obeyed. His making clear His relationship with God the Father and His life of being

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subject to His parents among people were not cut off from each other.

We may think that, because the work of serving God is important, it is all right to treat those close to us carelessly. When the feeling that we do a lot of God's work grows, we even demand that others must fully understand our hearts because we are the ones who toil. However, the Lord, even though He was the Son of God the Father, obeyed and was subject to His parents. We, too, must not separate the word that we have been saved from our attitude in treating our family and neighbors.

Nor can the word that He increased in favor with men be read as meaning that He changed the truth to suit what people liked. Even while His parents did not understand, Jesus spoke the word about His Father's house, and after that He was subject to His parents. Following the will that God had entrusted to Him and a life of respecting people were present together. We, too, need an attitude of believing the word firmly while not being arrogant toward people, so we must not mistake our own assertions growing stronger for the growth of faith.

Serving those close to us clearly reveals what is in our hearts. This is because we find ourselves speaking kind words to people far away while easily getting irritated with those we live with. At that time, if we count only the faults of others, we cannot see what we ourselves are like. Before the word that Jesus lived in obedience among people, we must acknowledge our pride and self-centered hearts and learn the right attitude by relying on the Savior.

Salvation once and for all and a life of learning day by day

When they know that shortcomings remain in themselves, some people think that they have not yet been fully saved. However, being saved from sin and learning how to live after being saved must be distinguished. *"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14)*. Since it says that the Lord has perfected forever by one offering, the fact that our character is slowly refined does not mean that the Lord's salvation, too, is completed little by little. Only when we know how that one offering was offered can we believe in the salvation that has already been accomplished and live in that grace.

When Jesus had grown in wisdom and stature and turned thirty, He bore all the sins of the world once and for all by receiving baptism from John the Baptist. Since that sin of the world includes all the sins we commit as we live our whole lives, even the sins that are revealed after we believe in salvation were not excluded. The Lord bore that sin, shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and rose again from death. Because we believe in the baptism by which He bore sin and in the death by which He paid the price of that sin, we receive the remission of sins.

However, having believed in salvation does not mean that the stubbornness and habits hardened from before all disappear in an instant. The wish to hear only words favorable to ourselves and the heart that wants others to do things for us also show themselves in daily life. Each time, rather than regarding the Lord's salvation as insufficient, we must lay down our own thoughts before the Lord, who bore even that sin, and follow the word. The remission of sins was accomplished once and for all,

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but it takes time for our character and personality to be refined so that God can use them well, and continual turning back is needed.

When we know this distinction, growth does not become points we pile up out of fear of losing salvation. It becomes a life of humbling our hearts in thankfulness to the Savior, who has already taken our sins upon Himself. Also, we cannot make the excuse that, because salvation is complete, it is all right to leave our own faults as they are. This is because, if we believe that the Lord shed His blood and died because of that sin, we cannot hurt another person and think nothing of it. Grace is not a pretext for hiding faults, but the basis that makes us acknowledge them honestly and learn.

Do not follow the stubbornness of the flesh, but follow the word

The Lord has clearly said what, within us, we are to live by. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6)*. Grown stature and increased knowledge belong to the flesh, so a person is not made new by them alone, but a person who has been born again of the Spirit has gained the way to live according to the word of the Lord. Therefore, we must not justify every fault with the words that our nature is just this way, but must look back on whether that thought is right before the word. Because the Lord has saved us, we can now learn while relying on Him.

Even when we hear another person's exhortation, if we only weigh whether our dignity has been wounded, it is hard to grow. We need to examine whether those words agree with the word of God and, if we have come to know our actual fault, to

acknowledge it. Since the righteousness the Lord has given does not disappear because we acknowledge a fault, we do not need to spend all our strength on defending ourselves. The clearer the grace of salvation is, the more we can humble our hearts and learn how to live together with others.

Our day, lived before God and before people, is not divided into separate parts. If we relied on the Lord in the place where we hear the word, we must remember that grace also in the place where we meet our family and fellow members. Let us begin learning from small things: listening to what the other person says while thinking of the fact that the Lord took our sins upon Himself, and looking into what is needed before putting our own stubbornness first. Such a life does not produce the remission of sins, but it becomes the way of giving thanks in actual life for the grace we have received.

At the beginning we considered that a person's growth cannot be fully described by time and changes in the body alone, and of Jesus it says that He *"increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52)*. Let us who believe in that Lord also not be satisfied counting only our age and what we know. I hope that you will firmly believe in the salvation He accomplished once and for all, and, humbling your hearts in that grace, learn day by day how to live before God and people. ✉

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CHAPTER

3

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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 way of salvation opened in the wilderness

< Luke 3:1–6 >

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”’”

The cry of repentance that began in the wilderness

The Gospel of Luke, after stating the names of the emperor, the governor, and the tetrarchs, shows John, who was in the wilderness. At the very time when many rulers were governing the world, the word that made known the way to save people from sin came to John the son of Zacharias. Before we look at whose words sound loud and powerful, we must examine to

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whom God spoke and what He said. Through the cry of John, God caused the people living in sin to prepare to receive the Lord.

"While Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness" (Luke 3:2). This word tells us that John's preaching did not begin from his own thoughts or from people's expectations. The reason Luke recorded that time as if nailing it down, with the names of the emperor, the governor, the tetrarchs, and the high priests, is also that John's work was not a made-up story or a legend, but something that actually happened within human history. God did not speak of salvation in a place detached from human history; rather, He sent His servant into the very history in which sinners live.

John, having received the word, went out into all the region around the Jordan and preached the baptism of repentance. He was not content with what he had realized alone in the wilderness, but cried out so that people would know their sins and return to God. Since the purpose for which God entrusted him with the word was not to exalt John's name, when we hear of his work, too, we must give ear to the call to repentance directed toward us.

There are times when we, though standing on a wrong path, try to keep going on it for the reason that the path is familiar. We may leave as they are a heart that oppresses others for our own gain, or thoughts that regard ourselves as right without God, and merely add religious words. But the word John preached did not comfortably preserve such a state. The call to return to God makes us acknowledge that the thoughts we were holding on to and the direction of our lives were wrong.

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The remission of sins that the baptism of repentance points to

"He went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Luke 3:3). The baptism John gave to the people was a sign that they had to turn from the wrong path and receive the washing of sins. If all their sins had disappeared merely by the fact that they went into that water, they would not have needed the Savior who was to come. John did not make people stay before himself, but led them to Jesus Christ, who would remit their sins.

Repentance is not begging with one's mouth that one has done wrong, but turning from the path one was going and returning to God; therefore, it must be clear from what one turns and to whom one returns. If a person says with his mouth that he has done wrong while in his heart he still wants a life of harming and robbing others, he has not turned toward God. One must accept the judgment that one's own sins are evil, leave that path, and stand before the word of the Lord. This is not a demand that we first complete our conduct without blemish, but a call to cast away the heart that defended sin as right and to believe in the Savior.

"Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight" (Luke 3:4). This prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in John. To make His paths straight means to remove the stumbling blocks lying on the way by which the Lord comes and saves people from sin. By rebuking the pride and the evil hearts that would keep people from accepting the Savior even when He came, John caused people to come to the Lord. To a person who does not acknowledge sin, Jesus, who came to bear sin, is not urgently needed. Therefore, the word that exposes sin is not a word that means to leave us abandoned in despair, but a word that makes

us know that we are people who need the remission of sins and return to the Savior.

Now, the baptism John gave was of two kinds. The baptism he gave to the people was a sign that they had turned from the wrong path and were now returning to God, while the baptism John gave to Jesus was the passing of the sin of mankind on to Jesus. John, who was born into the priestly family descended from Aaron, gave baptism to Jesus as the representative of all mankind, and through that baptism Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. The sins of our whole lives, which we commit from the time we are born until we die, are also included in it, and it is not that the Lord left out the sins we do not remember just because we do not remember them. Since the Lord bore in this way the sins that a repentant person cannot deal with by himself, we must know the baptism of repentance John gave to the people and the baptism he gave to Jesus by distinguishing their meanings.

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29). John cried out to the people to know their sins and return, and after passing sin on to Jesus, he testified of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Because He bore that sin, Jesus received our judgment in our place on the Cross and shed His blood and died. The Lord, who rose again from death, is the living Savior who paid the price of sin; therefore, what we are to rely on is not how firm our heart is after we turn back, but this salvation the Lord has accomplished.

A person who hears the cry of John rightly does not stop at putting forward his own resolution, but accepts the Lord's salvation. Our turning does not produce the price of salvation, but neither can it be said that one truly relies on the Lord, who will remit sins, while refusing to turn. How can a person who

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regards himself as having no sin receive the remission of sins? Here lies the reason we must accept together the seriousness of sin that John awakens us to and the grace of salvation that Jesus bestows.

Stand before the Savior with no distinction of high or low

In the word that the valleys will be filled, the mountains brought low, and the crooked ways made straight, there is contained the picture of the way toward salvation being made smooth. People exalt or lower one another according to position and possessions, but such differences cannot determine one's qualification to come to Jesus Christ. The person who exalted himself must also return as a sinner, and the person who was regarded as lowly is not excluded from the call of salvation. Everyone becomes God's people by believing in the salvation accomplished by the same Savior.

"All flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6). The promise that all flesh will see the salvation makes clear that this is not news for one class only. Since the Lord bore the sins of all people, we, too, have no reason to think that we have been left out of salvation because of our circumstances. Conversely, neither must we think that we can stand before God without repentance for the reason that we have obtained a high position in the world. The Lord's salvation is spread widely, but He does not justify, without faith, even a heart that has refused that salvation.

When we preach the gospel to another person, too, we must not measure the possibility of his salvation by his circumstances. If we first exalt or lower someone by looking at his background,

we cannot fully preach the news of salvation that has been opened toward all flesh. Since we ourselves, too, were people who could not wash away our sins by ourselves and needed the grace of Jesus, we must calmly preach the same grace to those who need it. The work of making sin known as sin and the work of testifying of the Savior who bore that sin go together in this way.

The word that came in the wilderness makes us, too, today, examine our hearts to receive the Lord. If you are busy looking for something to put forward before God, or have a heart that tries to hide your own sins, you must hear the cry of John and turn from those thoughts. Before Jesus, who came to deliver us from sin, the world's high and low can be neither a boast nor a stumbling block. Following the word that rang out in the wilderness, return in faith to the Savior, who bore the sins of your whole life and gave you life. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Bear fruits worthy of repentance

< Luke 3:7–14 >

“Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father.” For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’ So the people asked him, saying, ‘What shall we do then?’ He answered and said to them, ‘He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.’ Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than what is appointed for you.’ Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, ‘And what shall we do?’ So he said to them, ‘Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.’”

Lay down the boast of being descendants of Abraham

To the people who came out to be baptized, John, before words of welcome, first preached a warning of judgment. This

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was because even if they stood in a place where they could be considered to have returned to God, what they were holding on to in their hearts had to be examined separately. That the multitudes, the tax collectors, and the soldiers asked one after another what they should do means that they had begun to hear that rebuke as a matter of their own lives. Through their questions and John's answers, we, too, will examine which places in our lives repentance changes.

"Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (Luke 3:8). The fleshly relationship of being descendants of Abraham cannot stop the judgment of sin. Since God can make descendants of Abraham even from stones, a person's lineage cannot limit His power or monopolize salvation. Before God, rather than putting forward the names of our ancestors, we must see whether our hearts have truly returned to Him.

John, calling the multitudes a brood of vipers, exposed first the root of sin that was inside them, not their outside. Because one man, Adam, sinned, all his descendants were born as sinners; so we, too, have the sin inherited from Adam and the sins we commit throughout our lives, and our own sins do not disappear by pointing out the evil of others. John's rebuke was not meant to teach us words that insult other people. It is a word that makes us lay down the heart that thought we were an exception before God, and acknowledge our own sins, which deserve judgment.

The warning that the ax is laid to the root of the trees awakens us to the fact that sin cannot be covered by a plausible outward appearance. A person who, without good fruit, persists in sin and does not believe in the Savior cannot escape judgment. Therefore, what a person who has heard that warning must do is

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not to defend his family or his religious life, but to examine before the word whether the path he is now walking is right. When the multitudes asked what they should do, John gave the answer in the place where they actually dealt with other people.

The fruit of a life that shares and does not rob

"He answered and said to them, 'He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise'" (Luke 3:11). John pointed to the clothing and the food people had. This was because one cannot say he has repented while leaving as it is the heart that wants only to have more for himself even when there is a person without clothing in the same place. The word that he who has more than he needs should share with him who has none shows that repentance does not stay only in the thoughts of the heart.

There is no need to make this word into a condition that only a person who has abandoned all his possessions is saved. The passage tells the person who has two tunics to share with him who has none, and teaches the same direction to the person who has food as well. A heart that returns to God moves from boasting of its own possessions toward looking after the needs of its neighbor. It is not trying to establish one's own righteousness by the amount of sharing, but turning from the thought that it is enough if one alone lives well.

When the tax collectors asked the same question, John told them clearly the sin they had to cast away in the midst of their work. *"And he said to them, 'Collect no more than what is appointed for you'" (Luke 3:13)*. This is a word to stop the act of collecting more than the appointed tax to fill one's own gain. Since being entrusted with the work of collecting taxes was not

a permission to treat the people according to one's own greed, they had to turn away from exploiting people under the pretext of the work entrusted to them.

We may rationalize gaining unjust profit for the reason that our own circumstances are hard. But the necessities of life do not give us the right to deceive or rob others. If, while saying we return to God, we keep regarding such greed as right, we end up using faith to maintain sin rather than relying on God. Even as we live seeking what we need, we must have a heart that does not justify the path of taking unjustly from others.

"Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, 'And what shall we do?' So he said to them, 'Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages'" (Luke 3:14). The soldiers were told not to oppress people by force and not to accuse them falsely. It means that one cannot treat the life and property of others as one pleases for the reason that one has been given power. The word to be content with the wages they receive also targets the desire to rob more by their power. Whether the position entrusted to us is high or low, before God it is revealed with what heart we use our power.

John did not tell these people first to correct the faults of others, but told them each to turn in his own place. The person who had clothing could share; the tax collector could stop collecting more unjustly; and the soldier had to cast away harming others by force. If we, too, as we hear the word, apply it only to other people, our own hearts remain as they are. The place to look for the fruit of repentance is the work now entrusted to us and our attitude in dealing with the people beside us.

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Fruit cannot take the place of the price of sin

Then, if we share clothing and work honestly, will even the sins we have already committed disappear? Even if one desires a right life and turns away from wrongdoing, the judgment for past sins cannot be replaced by such deeds. Even a person who hears John's rebuke and returns needs the Savior who will actually bear his sins. This is the reason the word that demands fruits worthy of repentance must not be changed into a word telling us to prepare the price of salvation by ourselves.

John was entrusted with the work of pointing out sins to people and making them turn, but he said that the work of removing those sins belonged to the One coming after him. The sins of the multitudes who were called a brood of vipers, the extortion of the tax collectors, and even the violence of the soldiers—all those sins were passed on to Jesus when John gave baptism to Jesus at the Jordan. By receiving baptism from John, the Lord had the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and the greed and lies and all the transgressions of our whole lives are also included in it without exception. Because He bore that sin, He was hung on the Cross and received judgment in our place and shed His blood and died, and He rose again from death and gave the remission of sins and new life to us who believe in that salvation.

"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). The wages of sin is not something reduced by our reflection, but death, and the life given in Christ is a gift that God bestows. The clearer the fact that the Lord paid the price of sin in our place, the less we need to hide our sins in order to make ourselves look clean. While acknowledging a wrong as a wrong, we can keep the ground of our salvation unchangingly in Jesus.

Believing in this grace is not a matter of obtaining the right to keep loving sin. The Lord gave up His life to deliver us, and we cannot hold on to plans to harm others using that love as an excuse. When we find ourselves falling because of weakness, we must not defend that sin, but rely on the word of the Savior who has already borne it and walk the right path again. Both the boast that one has become perfect and the thought that there is no need to cast away sin block repentance.

Let us now accept the questions of the multitudes, the tax collectors, and the soldiers as our own questions. We are not to ask with what we will pay the price of salvation, but must ask what we are to cast away and how we are to live before the Lord, who has remitted our sins. Look after the needs of your neighbors with what is in your hands, carry out honestly the work entrusted to you, and do not oppress the weak by your own power. Lay down the boast of putting forward the name of Abraham, believe in the grace of the Lord, and, each in your own place, bear *"fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8)*. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire?

< Luke 3:15–17 >

"Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, 'I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.'"

The question of the people who were waiting for the Christ

The people's expectation toward John was great. Seeing John, who rebuked sin and preached repentance, people reasoned in their hearts whether he might be the very Christ they had been waiting for. However, no matter how many people have expectations, that expectation cannot make a person the Savior. If we, too, are not to set a person who has helped our faith in the place of the Savior, we must hear how John testified of the One who would come after him.

"As the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not" (Luke

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3:15). The people had a longing for the Christ, but they needed to look at John and discern who he was. Even though a heart that longs for salvation is precious in itself, if the object toward which that heart is directed is wrong, it cannot reach salvation. John did not keep people's expectations fixed on himself, but made clear before everyone the difference between himself and the One who was to come.

The work of awakening people so that they turn from sin and the work of removing that sin and giving life are not the same. John faithfully did the work entrusted to him as a servant sent by God, but he was not the Christ who would pay the price of the people's sins. To respect his testimony is not to exalt him as if he were the Savior. Rather, only when we set our hearts on Jesus Christ, to whom he pointed, do we rightly accept John's work.

John said that One mightier than he was coming, and said that he was not worthy even to loose His sandal strap. The sandal strap refers to the lace of a sandal, and John did not put himself forward as one fit to perform even that small task of service. This was not a humble remark made to gain more praise from people, but a confession that made clear that the place of the holy Savior and the place of the servant who testifies of Him are different. Only when we know the power that belongs to Him alone does our faith, too, not remain on a person.

The One who washes away sins and gives the Holy Spirit

"John answered, saying to all, 'I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire'" (Luke 3:16). John spoke side by side of the baptism

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of water that he gave and the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire that the Christ would give. Those who came to John received baptism as a sign that they acknowledged their sins and returned to God. However, the fact that their bodies were immersed in water did not become the power to pay the price of sin or to give the Holy Spirit. The work of actually washing away sins and giving the Spirit of God belonged to the Christ.

We can misunderstand receiving the Holy Spirit as obtaining some intense feeling. There are times when the heart grows warm or tears come more often, but such changes do not in themselves become evidence of the remission of sins. Since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the holy God, He is not One who can be obtained through an experience a person desires while sin is left as it is. Knowing and believing how the Lord washed away our sins must first be made clear.

We must see where the power John spoke of comes from. John gave baptism with water and caused people to turn back, but Jesus, by receiving baptism from that very John, bore the sins of the whole world at one time. If the baptism John gave to the people was a sign of turning back, the baptism John gave to Jesus was the passing of the sin of mankind on to Jesus. Not only the sin handed down from Adam but also all the sins we commit throughout our lives in thought, word, and deed were passed on to Jesus at that time, and therefore the power to wash away sins and give the Holy Spirit lies not with John but with Him.

For this reason, the blood that Jesus shed on the Cross is directly related to our sins. Because the sinless Lord took our sins upon Himself, He suffered in our place the judgment we were to receive and shed His blood and died. Also, since He rose again from death and became the Lord of salvation, we believe in what the living Lord has accomplished. The gift of the Holy Spirit is not a result produced by our emotions, but the grace

given to the person who has received the remission of sins by believing in this Savior.

"Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38). In Peter's word, too, the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit are not separated from each other. Even so, this does not mean that the ceremony of baptism we receive has the power to remove sins. It is to the person who believes in the sins Jesus Christ bore through the baptism He received from John and in the judgment He received in our place on the Cross, and who returns to Him, that God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift. Because it is a gift the Lord has given, no one can boast of having obtained it by putting forward his own zeal.

Therefore, when we seek to obtain assurance, we must look at the word of the Savior rather than at the highs and lows of our emotions. The Lord's salvation does not change for the reason that yesterday our hearts were glad but today we are weary and heavy. If we believe and accept in our hearts the word that the Lord bore our sins once and for all, the Holy Spirit seals that heart, even without any special sensation, and makes us people of God. We must not try to make anew the ground of the remission of sins within ourselves, but must place it on Jesus, who has already accomplished salvation.

The Judge who will separate the wheat and the chaff

John did not say only that He would give the Holy Spirit, but also said that He would baptize with fire. If we read the word that follows, we can see that the fire here does not refer to the

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fervent emotion of a believer. *"His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire" (Luke 3:17)*. Since He gathers the wheat into the barn but burns the chaff with unquenchable fire, there are clearly two different outcomes here.

The Lord who saved us is also the Judge. To those who believe in the salvation Jesus has given, He gives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit and makes them children of God, but for those who reject that salvation to the end there is the judgment of fire. If we change the fact that He bore the sin of the world into meaning that everyone is automatically saved without faith, we end up erasing this warning that John preached. We must respond now to that voice which calls us to accept the love of the Savior.

Before the word that He will separate the wheat and the chaff, we must not think that we have gained the right to decide another person's destiny by his outward appearance. The One who cleans out the threshing floor is the Lord, and what we need to do is to make clear before Him the object of our own faith. The fact that one has gained a good reputation among people cannot take the place of faith in the Christ. Conversely, even if our shortcomings are many, if we believe in the Lord who has remitted all those sins, we can rely on grace.

We who have received the Holy Spirit as a gift live testifying of the Savior by that grace. Just as John did not make people's expectations his own glory, we too, as we preach the gospel, must not keep people bound to our own names. Since we have not borne other people's sins in their place, at the center of what we preach there must always be what Jesus has done. Helping people to believe in Him is the joy given to us and the place of a servant.

When the people looked at John wondering whether he was the Christ, John clearly revealed the Lord who would give the Holy Spirit and judge. Now let us, too, not place our expectation for salvation on human ability or our own experience. The Christ, who bore sin and gave up His life, is the One who will receive our faith, and He alone gives the gift of the Holy Spirit. Following John's testimony, I ask you to believe in Jesus as the Savior and entrust your hearts and lives to Him. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Sin does not disappear by silencing the mouth that rebukes

< Luke 3:18–20 >

“(With many other exhortations therefore preached he good tidings unto the people –ASV). But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.”

The good news preached to the people

When our hearts become uncomfortable after hearing a rebuke, there are times when we try to avoid the person who spoke rather than the words. It is because, instead of admitting our own fault, we feel as though the problem has disappeared if we make that voice no longer heard. The fact that Herod put John in prison shows how far into evil such a heart can go. When we look together at the good news John preached and the evil Herod added, the attitude that we, too, who hear the word of salvation, need is revealed.

“With many other exhortations therefore preached he good tidings unto the people” (Luke 3:18). John exhorted the people in many ways and preached the good news to them. Though

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earlier he had sternly warned of sin and judgment, the purpose of his work was not to keep people shut up in the fear of sin. By preaching the news that the Savior, mightier than he, was coming, he led the people to repent and believe in Him.

Words that point out sin, even if they are not comfortable to hear, open the way toward the Savior. If a person takes his own sin lightly, he takes salvation lightly too, and he may seek only the benefits of faith without knowing what he must be saved from. John shook and awakened such hearts, and neither did he hold on to the people as if he himself had the power of salvation. The rebuke that made sin known and the good news that made the Savior known were together in his preaching.

When we hear the word, too, we may want to pick out and receive only the parts that bring comfort. However, if we push away the word that declares sin to be sin, it is difficult to fully accept the love of the Lord who bore that sin. The good news is not praise that we are better people than we thought. Because it is the news that the Savior has come to people who cannot escape from sin and judgment by themselves, it becomes a truly joyful word to those who admit their own sin.

The rebuke that cannot be escaped even in the seat of a king

"Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done" (Luke 3:19). Herod was rebuked not only concerning Herodias, his brother's wife, but for all the evils he had done. Luke does not say that the position of a king turned that evil into something right. Whether one is of the people or a tetrarch, before God one must stand under the word that points

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out sin, and John did not apply a different standard even to those with power.

Rebuking the king was not a safe thing for John, nor did John point out the king's sin because he did not know this. Because he was an upright servant before God, he knew that he could not preach to the king, either, the word of returning to God while covering up his sin. We must understand that John did not expose evil deeds in order to stir up hatred in people's hearts. Because he was a servant who preached the good news, he called sin sin even before the king—the sin that was holding him back from coming to the Savior.

Even so, this does not mean that we must expose everyone's faults and publicly drive them into a corner. If, on the grounds of following John's example, we put forward our own anger as if it were the word of God, we lose the purpose of leading people to the Savior. We must clearly make sin and judgment known to those who want to hear the word, but we must cast off the desire to lower them in order to exalt ourselves. We must not forget the fact that we, too, were people who, holding sin, could not save ourselves.

Also, the more one is a person who preaches the word to others, the more he must apply that word to himself as well. If one speaks of sin clearly to others while excusing only his own actions with circumstances and situations, he is not standing honestly before the word. Admitting the craving and falsehood in our hearts is not a loss of face but a return to the place where we rely on the grace of the Savior. God knows our real hearts and deeds rather than the reputation we keep up.

Sin does not disappear by silencing the mouth that rebukes

The evil added by imprisoning John

"Also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison" (Luke 3:20). Instead of turning back when rebuked, Herod shut John up in prison. Luke does not record this as a case in which the king solved a problem, but as a case in which he added yet another evil to the evil he had already done. Silencing the mouth of the one who preached the word does not do away with the sin that word pointed out, and an action meant to cover up sin may rather add to the wrong.

Even though we do not have the power of a king like Herod, we can refuse words that expose our own sin. If we find only the shortcomings of the one who rebuked us or turn attention to another matter, we feel as though we have gained a reason not to have to listen to the word. However, the fact that another person has faults does not make our own wrong righteous. When we have heard the word, what we must look at first is not a way to avoid the person who spoke, but our own sin that we must admit before God.

Nor must we judge that John's testimony failed merely from the outcome that he was put in prison. Being treated well by people and working freely is not the only standard by which a servant of God is judged. John made sin known and testified of the Savior as he had been entrusted to do, and the truthfulness of his testimony did not disappear because Herod imprisoned him. Rather than changing the meaning of the gospel out of fear of people's reactions, we must remember our responsibility to preach that word honestly and wisely.

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Pass through the rebuke and return to the grace of the Savior

We may think that if we admit our sin, the only path left to us is judgment. So we try to hide our sin and avoid rebuke, but the good news John preached makes the Savior known to sinners. Even though the heart that admits sin does not in itself pay the price of sin, it lets go of the hand that held on to one's own righteousness and makes one believe in the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished. The Lord came to this earth to remove the sins that we cannot hide.

John could point out Herod's sin, but he could not remove that sin. The work of removing sin belonged to Jesus, to whom John gave baptism at the Jordan River. Jesus, by receiving baptism from John, had the sin of all mankind passed on to Him once and for all, and at that time He bore the sin of the king whom John rebuked and also all the sins that each of us commits throughout our lives. Because He bore those sins, He received our judgment in our place on the Cross and shed His blood and died, and He rose again from death. The person who believes in this Lord does not try to appear righteous by hiding his sin, but can accept the grace by which the Lord has remitted his sin.

"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). God's love is not a love that began only when we claimed to be without sin. Since the Lord died in our place while we were sinners, admitting our sin does not distance us from that love. Rather, we can return to God believing the salvation by which He bore that sin as our own salvation. Instead of clinging to the faults exposed by rebuke and despairing, we must believe in the price of sin that the Lord paid.

Since the grace by which the Lord has remitted our sins leads us back to the right path in this way, we must not think that, because we have received that grace, rebuke is no longer necessary. The ground of salvation lies with the Lord, but there is no reason for us to insist that a wrong is right in the rest of our lives. When we come to realize a wrong through the word, we must admit that wrong and turn back to the right path. It is not that salvation must be made anew each time; rather, it is choosing the life that pleases Him, relying on the Lord who has already saved us.

Herod imprisoned John in order to stop an uncomfortable voice, but by that action he could not remove his own sin. For us, a way is open to go forward before the grace of the Savior without pushing the word away. When you hear a rebuke that pierces your heart, I ask you not to try to silence that voice but to accept the will of the Lord, who wants to deliver us from sin. I ask you to turn from the path of adding evil in order to hide sin, and to believe in Jesus, who has remitted our sins, and to follow His word. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The reason He received baptism together with the people

< Luke 3:21–22 >

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

The sinless One came out to receive baptism

While many people were receiving baptism, Jesus also received baptism. Though He stood in the same place of baptism, Jesus was not One who had to acknowledge His own sins and turn back as the people did. Then why did the sinless Son of God receive baptism? In this scene, where heaven was opened and the voice of the Father was heard, we must know what work Jesus took upon Himself for us.

“When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened” (Luke 3:21). Luke records that heaven was opened while Jesus received baptism and prayed. Since what words the Lord prayed with is not recorded here, there is no need to fill in

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that content with our own thoughts. What matters is the fact that the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus, who had received baptism, and that a testimony concerning Him was heard from heaven.

The baptism the people received from John was a sign that they turned back from their wrong lives and returned to God. Because they were people who had to receive the washing of sins, they heard the rebuke of John and came out to receive baptism. But Jesus did not stand there as a sinner like the people who had to wash away their sins. Since the sinless Lord came to that place in order to take upon Himself the sins of sinners, the meaning of the baptism He received must be distinguished from the baptism the people received.

If the Lord had only looked at sinners from afar and spoken words of help, the problem of our sins would not have been resolved. This is because by human strength no one can bear the judgment of God and gain life again. Jesus came as a man in order to accomplish Himself the salvation we need, and by receiving baptism from John He began the work of bearing sin. We must examine in this word why our salvation depends on the place where He received baptism.

All the sins of the world that He bore through the baptism

The Gospel of Matthew records the word Jesus spoke to John in the same place of baptism. *"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him" (Matthew 3:15)*. All righteousness spoken of here is the right work of God, by which the Lord bears the sins of sinners and removes those sins completely. In the Old Testament, the person who offered a

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sacrifice laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed his sins on to it. *"Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:4)*. The baptism John gave to Jesus was the very same thing as this laying on of hands. John, who was born of the priestly family descended from Aaron, representing all mankind, gave baptism to Jesus, and by receiving that baptism Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him.

The fact that Jesus did not come to wash away His own sins becomes even clearer through this word. In order to bear in our place the judgment we were to receive, He first had to take our sins upon Himself. That is why Jesus bore the sins of all people once and for all by receiving baptism from John. Not only the sins revealed before our eyes now but also the lifelong sins of each person are included in that sin of the world, so even our weaknesses are not left outside the scope of this salvation.

Someone may think that even though He took upon Himself the sins already committed, the sins to be committed in the future still remain. But because the Lord, who knows our lives from beginning to end, received the sin of the world, we are not people who must look for a new savior each time a sin is revealed. While not hiding sin or taking it lightly, we can put our faith in the Lord, who has already borne it.

Jesus, who had sin passed on to Him in this way, bore that sin and went to the Cross. Because the Father had passed the sin of the world on to the Son, He could not but judge that Son on the Cross, and so the Lord cried out, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46)*. His shedding of blood and dying on the Cross was not a suffering unrelated to us, but a death in which He received in our place the judgment we were to receive. Because God did not pretend that sin did not

exist but saved us fairly in this way, we can believe in this salvation. Since the Lord paid the price of sin and rose again from death, His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection are the work of salvation that cannot be separated from one another. Faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is accepting this work the Lord did as our own salvation.

We want to feel in our hearts the love Jesus has bestowed, but we cannot confirm that love by our feelings alone. His taking sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John and giving up His life on the Cross clearly shows that love. Before striving to make ourselves worthy of being loved, we must look to the Lord, who did so for sinners. The more we know His work, the more we can believe in and give thanks for the will of God, who wants to give us life.

The testimony of the Father, who was well pleased with the Son

"And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased'" (Luke 3:22). That the Holy Spirit came in bodily form like a dove and the voice of the Father was heard reveals who the One who received baptism at the Jordan River is. It does not mean that Jesus became the Son of God for the first time after He received baptism. He, who is originally the Son of God, bore sin according to the will of the Father, and the Father testified that He loves that Son and is well pleased with Him.

Here the Son who received baptism, the Holy Spirit who came upon Him, and the Father who spoke from heaven appear together. Our salvation did not come from the earnest wish of

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any one person, but is the work that God wills and accomplishes. The Father plans salvation, the Son accomplishes that will, and the Holy Spirit testifies. Therefore, when we believe the word of salvation, its basis lies not in the evaluations of people but in what God Himself has done and testified.

The record that the Holy Spirit came upon Him must not be read as meaning that Jesus had been One unrelated to the Holy Spirit until then. The Gospel of Luke has already made known that Jesus is the holy One who would be conceived by the Holy Spirit. Now, in the place of baptism, the Holy Spirit testifies of the work of Him who had the sin of the world passed on to Him, and causes us to believe in the Savior, who bore sin.

The same Holy Spirit also comes upon the person who has received the remission of sins. When we know and believe the sins the Lord bore and the salvation He accomplished, God receives us as His children in the Son, and He is pleased with us with the same heart with which He was well pleased with His beloved Son. That is why the voice heard at the Jordan River does not end as a word concerning Jesus alone, but becomes a word that makes known the heart of the Father to all who have received the remission of sins by believing in Him.

"But 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). To those who receive Jesus, the Son of God, the right to become children of God is given. It does not mean that Jesus and we originally had the same status; it means that we, who have received the remission of sins through His salvation, become children of the Father by grace. The fact that the Father, who was well pleased with the Son, receives us in that Son becomes a firm comfort to our faith.

Let us not replace the heart of the Father with our own evaluation of ourselves each time our shortcomings are revealed.

We must acknowledge our wrongs and turn back, but we must not think that even the salvation the Lord accomplished is erased according to our own conduct. When we believe in the Son of whom the Father testified and stand in that grace, we can go to God and follow His word rather than hide in fear. A heart that is sure of salvation does not grow from our own perfection, but grows from believing the will of the Father, who sent the Son.

Jesus, who received baptism together with the people, stood in that place in order to take our sins upon Himself. The voice heard from heaven makes known that He is the beloved Son and the Savior with whom the Father is well pleased. Now, I hope that we, too, will not look for another way to entrust our sins, but believe in this Son, who received baptism from John. I hope that you will receive into your hearts the testimony God has given concerning our salvation, and live boldly in that love. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus, who came as a descendant of Adam, is God by nature

< Luke 3:23–38 >

"Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Janna, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Semei, the son of Joseph, the son of Judah, the son of Joannas, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmodam, the son of Er, the son of Jose, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim, the son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, the

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son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Cainan, the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God."

The Savior who came into the history of mankind

In the genealogy of Jesus there are familiar names, but names unfamiliar to us appear even more. Because the same words are repeated, we can easily pass over it, but through these names Luke shows Jesus, who came as a man, within the history of mankind. If we go back up that history, we pass David and Abraham and reach Adam, and at the end it speaks of God. We who read this genealogy must not stop at looking at a list of ancient people unrelated to ourselves, but must know the Savior, who came for the sake of us, the descendants of Adam.

"Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli" (Luke 3:23). The time when Jesus began to teach was when He was about thirty years old, and to people He was known as the son of Joseph. While Luke makes clear the relationship that people knew, he does not erase the birth of the Lord, conceived by the Holy Spirit, which he conveyed earlier. Though He was within the family and lineage that were visible to the eyes of people, who He is must be known through the word that God has made known.

The fact that Jesus came as a real man has an important meaning for our salvation. The Lord was not One who merely observed the lives of people from afar, but He Himself put on flesh and came in order to save us. This is because, in order to

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give life to people who had come to death because of sin, He had to bear that sin and give up His life. His entering into the history of mankind is connected with the Lord's preparation to pay the price of salvation Himself.

As the genealogy continues, Luke does not attach a separate meaning to the name of each person and explain it, so we, too, need not make up a hidden symbol for each name and speak of it as though it were a secret of salvation. It is enough to accept the fact that the history in which Jesus came continued through the real lives of people. Since not only well-known names but also little-known names are recorded, we must not measure the work of God only by the figures that are visible to our eyes.

The genealogy that reaches Adam and the sins of all people

In this genealogy David and Abraham appear, but it does not end there. While we read it side by side with the way the Gospel of Matthew introduces Jesus as the descendant of Abraham and David, we must not miss the fact that the Gospel of Luke goes up to Adam. By showing the beginning of mankind, which precedes the ancestors of Israel, it makes us think about the relationship between Jesus and all people. We must not narrow the Lord down to a Savior who belongs to only one nation.

"The son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God" (Luke 3:38). The end of the genealogy, which speaks of God above Adam, makes known that the origin of man lies in God. It is the fact that man did not begin by himself and become the master of his own life, but is a being whom God made. The reason we must live before God also lies here, so we cannot

regard a life lived only according to our own will as a natural right.

But the first man, who was made by God, sinned, and because of that sin all people came to be under sin. *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—" (Romans 5:12)*. The history of mankind that continued from Adam is a history in which life was passed down, and at the same time a history to which sin and death reached. Even if we regard ourselves as better than others, no one was born outside that history.

Therefore, boasting of having had excellent ancestors cannot remove sin before God. Even if we point out the faults of others and regard our own hearts as clean, we cannot deny the evil thoughts and deeds that come out from within us. Because everyone is born a sinner, lives as one, and commits sins, what we need is not the work of adorning our own history but the salvation that will deliver us from sin and death. When we read the genealogy of the Gospel of Luke all the way to Adam, we come to meet that problem as our own problem.

The word that Jesus came as a man among mankind becomes hope to us, who are like this. Though He put on a human body like ours, the Lord was not One bound under sin as we are. Because He is the sinless Son of God, He could take our sins upon Himself in our place, and because He is the Lord of life, He could bring us to life from death. Only when we believe together the fact that He came as a true man and the fact that He is God do we also come to know fully the meaning of salvation.

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The salvation accomplished with the life of the Creator

We must not try to explain that Jesus is God merely by the one last sentence of the genealogy alone. We must also accept the word in which God made clear the origin of the Lord. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1)*. Since He who existed as the Word put on flesh and came to us, we cannot regard Jesus as merely an excellent human being. The Lord, who made us, came to visit us in order to save us, who had fallen into sin. If Jesus were not God, we would have no hope of salvation.

Luke wrote that the time when Jesus began to teach was when He was about thirty years old, and before that teaching, Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River. The reason God came clothed in a human body is revealed here. By receiving baptism from John in that body, Jesus bore once and for all the sin of the world that originated from Adam and the sins that all people commit, and all the sins of our whole lifetime are also included in it. Because in order to save people who have life He had to pay the price of that life, the Creator Himself became a man and bore that sin in His body.

Because Jesus had taken that sin upon Himself, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and received our judgment in our place. Since He bore death, the wages of sin, by giving up His life, it was not that He ignored sin and declared us righteous only in words. Moreover, He rose again from death and became the living Savior. We receive the remission of sins by believing in this salvation because the Lord actually paid the price of sin and gave us new life.

"If by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift

of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17). Through the one man Adam death reigned, but the person who receives the grace and the gift of righteousness that the Lord bestows gains life through Jesus Christ. Even though what sin has done to mankind is great, it is not that the salvation of the Lord cannot deal with it. We must not step back, regarding the greatness of our sins as greater than the power of the Lord, but must accept by faith the righteousness He has accomplished.

This gift of grace does not stop at adding a few more pieces of knowledge about Jesus. When we believe that He is God, who made us, and the Savior, who has remitted sins, our heart toward His word also changes. Rather than picking and receiving only the words that suit our own will, we come to want to learn and follow the will of the Lord. To fear the Lord is not an attitude of hiding far away from Him, but a heart that knows His holiness and love, respects Him, and desires to obey Him.

A person who knows who it is to whom we should entrust our lives does not make only the recognition gained in the world the purpose of his life. Since the Lord has given life to us, who belonged to Adam and feared death, we have reason to devote the rest of our lives to what the Lord is pleased with. Even when our shortcomings are revealed, we can walk according to the word relying on the grace of salvation, without boasting of or hiding those shortcomings. The fact that the One who made us and saved us is alive becomes the strength of that walk.

The genealogy that passed among unfamiliar names and reached Adam is now no longer a distant story to us. We, too, were under sin and death as descendants of Adam, but God came as a man and delivered us. I hope that you will not regard Jesus merely as one man who appeared among mankind, but believe in Him as the Lord of our lives and the Savior who paid the price

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of sin. I hope that you will fear the Creator, who came to visit us as a man, and stand in the grace of life He has given. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Turn back from the heart that loves sin

< Luke 3:7–17 >

"Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.' So the people asked him, saying, 'What shall we do then?' He answered and said to them, 'He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.' Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, 'Teacher, what shall we do?' And he said to them, 'Collect no more than what is appointed for you.' Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, 'And what shall we do?' So he said to them, 'Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.' Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, 'I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the

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wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.'"

Saying that one wants salvation and the direction of the heart

We may want to escape the judgment for sin and yet not want to let go of the profit that sin gives. If we hope for salvation but there remains in us a heart that would accomplish its own will even by using other people, we must examine toward whom that hope is directed. John exposed exactly this problem to the people who came out to receive baptism. For the words that one will obtain salvation to truly become faith that returns to God, one must also turn back from the heart that has held on to sin as right.

"Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'" (Luke 3:7). John's warning points to the fact that people wanted to escape the wrath. Because it could not be known, merely from a heart that feared judgment, whether they had repented, John soon demanded fruits worthy of repentance. Even if they had taken on the outward form of coming to God, what they loved in their hearts had to be revealed.

A person, even while committing sin, easily makes excuses if that thing is to his benefit. He may deceive others for his own convenience and still say it was unavoidable, and he may turn away from another person's hardship in order to gain more profit. But if he leaves intact his intention to keep going on that way and asks God only to remove his sins, this is not returning to God but a heart that tries to use God for its own will. *"I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings"*

(Jeremiah 17:10). The Lord knows not only the religious words we say but also the intent hidden beneath those words.

Here we must know the reason John first preached repentance. Jesus came to save sinners, but a person who does not acknowledge that he is a sinner cannot receive that salvation as grace that he himself needs. Also, if a person says that he acknowledges his sin yet continues to plan that sin and defends it as right, it amounts to not agreeing with the word by which God has judged sin. True repentance begins with getting out of the calculation of merely trying to escape judgment and accepting God's judgment.

Distinguish between perfect conduct and honest turning back

"Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (Luke 3:8). The name of one's ancestor cannot take the place of the turning back of the heart, and for us, too, a long religious life or a familiar confession must not become something that takes the place of that turning back. God seeks the person who truly returns before the word. What matters is not what one boasted of in the past, but what one now acknowledges as right and in whom one believes.

Then must we first acquire conduct that has completely escaped from sin before we can come to Jesus? If we had to believe in the Savior only after correcting all our deeds, no one at all could come to the Lord. This is because our true state is that, though we want to live rightly, we often stumble in thought, word, and deed. The turning back that John demanded was not a

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word telling them to become perfect enough to save themselves, but a word telling them to abandon the direction in which they had insisted that evil was right.

We cannot regard a person who falls because of weakness and acknowledges that fault and a person who plans a way to harm others and yet asserts that this intention is right as having the same heart. Both of them need the remission of sins, but the person who keeps holding on to the intention that loves sin is rejecting the word that judges that sin. This is different from saying that salvation is given through the completion of deeds. It means that the fact that we cannot be saved by deeds does not mean that we need not acknowledge sin as evil.

The reason John spoke concretely of sharing, honesty, and a gentle attitude is also that the direction of the heart is not separated from actual life. If a person sees the need of someone without clothing and still holds on to the craving to have more only for himself, or keeps on with a plan to oppress others with the power entrusted to him, his heart is still directed that way. Returning to God is a matter of not presenting such desires before God as legitimate. Even though we fall short, we must come with a heart that wants to live according to the Lord's will and asks for help.

The remission of sins enters a prepared heart

If we turn our hearts in that way, does that determination remit our sins? Even if we abandon a wrong intention and want to live rightly, we have no power to remove the sins we have already committed, and so John did not say that salvation was completed by bringing people to repentance. *"John answered, saying to all, 'I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier*

than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire'" (Luke 3:16). The One who would give the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ, who comes after John.

Here is the place where we must put our faith. The baptism John gave to the people was a sign of turning back, but the baptism John gave to Jesus was what passed the sins of mankind on to Jesus. Because Jesus, through that baptism, had all the sins of the world—from the sin inherited from Adam to the sins that each one of us commits throughout our whole lives—passed on to Him once and for all, He left no sin for us to pay for separately. Yet, even after hearing this same gospel, some people believe and receive the remission of sins, while others say that they believe and yet that word does not enter their hearts. The difference lies in a prepared heart. This is because the person who does not acknowledge his own sins has no need of the Lord who bore sin, and while he holds on to the intention that loves sin, there is no room for that grace to enter his heart.

Because the Son received our sins, He also received the judgment for those sins on the Cross in our place. That Jesus shed His blood and died was the act of paying the price of sin Himself, and that He rose again from death reveals that He is the living Savior. To believe in this salvation is not to rely on one's own resolve, but to accept, with a heart that has turned back, this work that the Lord has done.

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). The One who gives righteousness to us, who became sinners because of Adam's disobedience, is Jesus Christ, who accomplished salvation through obedience. Therefore, even while acknowledging our own sins, we must not entrust the resolution of sin to our own deeds again. We must believe the

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fact that our sins are within the scope of what the Lord bore, and that the judgment the Lord received was for us. In the heart that has accepted that grace, there is gratitude toward God together with the remission of sins.

Even after we have received the remission of sins, shortcomings appear in our conduct. When those shortcomings appear, we must not go back to the heart that defends sin as right again. Giving thanks to the Lord who has already borne sin, we must clearly acknowledge our faults and choose the right way again according to the word. This is because the grace that has remitted our sins leads us to live according to the Lord's will.

From the calculation of escaping judgment to the heart that believes in the Lord

"His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire" (Luke 3:17). Since the One who will separate the wheat and the chaff is the Lord, we must not think that we can deceive Him merely by the fact that we have said we believe. For the person who holds on to sin as right while rejecting the Savior who took the sin of the world upon Himself, there is judgment. The Lord is not One who does not know our weakness, but neither is He One who does not know the stubbornness of our hearts.

As you hear that warning, please do not step back merely on the grounds that you fall short. The Lord did not come to give a reward to perfect people, but came to rescue sinners who cannot save themselves. You may come to Him without any need to hide your sins, but you must not put forward as right even the intention to keep loving and keeping those sins. The heart that

believes in the Lord who has remitted sins also accepts the Lord's judgment as right.

What we examined at the beginning was the heart that wants to escape judgment but does not want to let go of the profit of sin. Now let us not try to obtain only salvation while leaving those two hearts as they are. I hope that you will believe in the Savior who took all our sins upon Himself and gave up His life, and that you will want to live according to His will. So that the confession of your lips that you have returned to the Lord may go together with a true return of the heart, I ask you to abandon the intention that loved sin and entrust yourselves to the Lord who has given grace. ✉

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CHAPTER

4

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The three answers that overcame the temptation in the wilderness

< Luke 4:1–13 >

"Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.' But Jesus answered him, saying, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."' Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve."' Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: "He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you," and, "In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against

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a stone."' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It has been said, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God."' Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time."

The word that does not change even in the place of hunger

When what we need right now is lacking, it is easy to think that every problem would be solved if only we obtained that one thing. When the way to make a living is blocked, we regard it as all right to put off the word of God, and we even make up our minds to live by faith again after our circumstances have improved. However, if we push the word aside every time something is lacking, our circumstances end up becoming the master of our hearts. Jesus, who was tempted in the wilderness, shows what we must hold on to in that very place.

After Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River and bore the sin of mankind, He was in the wilderness, led by the Spirit. He was tempted by the devil before He began His public work, and the reason this event was left in the Scriptures is that we who are born again receive the same temptations all our lives. The devil tests whether we truly believe in and follow God, and whether we can follow the Lord to the end. Since He had eaten nothing for forty days and was hungry, the devil's temptation was aimed at real suffering of the body, and we must not think of Jesus' hunger as if it were only an outward appearance. The Lord truly put on a human body, and the devil, using that need, demanded that if He was the Son of God, He should turn stones into bread. It was not that the Lord, who created all things, lacked that power; rather, there was no reason

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for Him to prove His status as the Son according to the devil's demand.

"But Jesus answered him, saying, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God"'" (Luke 4:4). Jesus did not say that bread is not needed. The Gospel of Matthew conveys the same answer at greater length. *"But He answered and said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"'" (Matthew 4:4).* The devil spoke of bread alone, but the Lord answered that there must be bread and there must also be the word. We, too, work while seeking food and the things needed for living, but if we throw away the word of salvation in order to obtain them, we lose the foundation of life. The first temptation that comes to a born-again person is usually this as well. The question of whether one can make a living if one lives by faith makes us put off the word and the church. However, since hearing and believing the word and asking of God is not something to be added on after our circumstances have become comfortable, the harder the times are, the more we must find the way to go within the word of the Lord who gave us life. The devil put forward the fact of hunger, but that fact could not make the devil's demand right as well. That we have a pressing situation and that every way we take to resolve that situation is right are not the same thing. This is why we must refuse proposals that go against the word even while entrusting what we need to the Lord. Since the Lord, who knows what is urgent, also teaches us what is right, we can ask for help while believing that word.

Do not change the object of worship in order to gain glory

After the first temptation, the devil showed all the kingdoms of the world and promised to give authority and glory. Attached to that word, without fail, was the condition that He bow down to him, so within the offer to let Him enjoy more there was the intent to make Him leave God. The devil's method is the same even now. He says he will give if only we do this, but the devil says he will give and does not give. The moment we yield, the promise disappears and he demands a greater price. The Lord did not weigh how great a glory He could gain, but made clear whom one must worship. *"And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve"'" (Luke 4:8)*. Because the object of worship was fixed, however great the condition the devil put forward may have seemed, the Lord's answer did not change.

Our hearts, too, soon look for something else once the problem of food, clothing, and shelter is solved. When the craving to rise above others and be recognized arises, even the grace of salvation we have already received seems like a small thing. Therefore, it is not only lack that becomes an occasion for temptation; even in abundance we must look back at whom we are serving as we live. Thankfully enjoying what God has given and forsaking God in order to obtain it are entirely different in direction. Since the devil's promise is not a gift given out of love for us, we cannot hold on to that promise and entrust our souls to it.

To worship God does not mean acknowledging the Lord only when a gain right before our eyes arises. Regardless of whether God has given something or has not given it, it is to know the

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exaltedness and grace of the Lord, who made us and delivered us from sin, and to uphold His will. With a heart that draws near when there is something to gain and draws away when a loss comes into view, we cannot enjoy the joy of worship. When we settle in our hearts that we are people who belong to the Lord, we can discern the enticement that whispers that the glory of the world is more precious than the Lord.

Faith is not a matter of tempting God

The devil set Jesus on the pinnacle of the temple and told Him to throw Himself down. This time he even brought in the promise of protection written in the Scriptures, but the purpose of that demand was not to make Him trust God. It was to create danger and then check whether the Father would protect Him. Just because someone brings up the words of the Scriptures, not every claim becomes the will of God. If someone uses that word to demand proof from God, then even if their words sound like words of faith, they actually reveal a heart that puts God to the test.

"And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It has been said, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God"'" (Luke 4:12). Jesus did not throw Himself down from the temple in order to confirm the Father's faithfulness. When He fully knew that the Father is the good One who protects, what was there to test? We, too, must not set before God the condition that we will believe if what we want comes to pass and will not believe if it does not. Prayer that tells of our difficulties and asks for help is relying on the Lord, but the attitude of acknowledging Him as God only if He moves according to our own will is placing the Lord under our own judgment.

Then where must our faith stand firm? It must stand on what God has actually accomplished for us. Jesus, who was tempted in the wilderness, was the One who had received baptism from John at the Jordan River and had the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all—that is, the One who was already bearing our sins on His own body. Because He bore that sin, 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 and gave us the remission of sins and life. Since we believe in the Savior who accomplished this work, there is no reason to hold the fact of salvation in reserve until new evidence appears before our eyes.

Even when temptation comes again, stand by the word of the Savior

Look at the word written after the victory in the wilderness. *"Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13)*. The words that he departed for a while remind us that the whole battle is not over just because a temptation has passed once. Temptation does not end because we have passed through it once; it comes again with the same problem, and even if we once had the experience of enduring well by faith, we do not automatically stand firm in the face of the next difficulty. Every day we must examine what our hearts are relying on, and each time we must return to the three answers Jesus gave.

The devil did indeed come again. On the night when the Cross lay before Him, this is what the Lord did: *"He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, 'O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I*

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will, but as You will'" (Matthew 26:39). The desire to avoid that cup was the real suffering of the One who had put on a human body, but the Lord chose the Father's will. Because it was the Father's will that He bear our sins that had been passed on to Him through the baptism, die on the Cross, and live again, the Lord went that way to the end.

Even so, the way to come to the Lord is not blocked because of the fact that we wavered when we were tempted. The basis of our salvation is not a record of our having perfectly overcome every temptation, but the righteousness that Jesus accomplished. When we realize our own weakness, we must not hide it or make it an excuse, but must believe in the Lord who bore sin and stand before the word again. Even if we have fallen, we need only stand again by faith. The reason we hear the word together and share our faith in church is also not to boast of one another's willpower, but to awaken with the truth hearts that have been clouded by circumstances and to help one another rely on the Lord.

Jesus did not abandon the Father's will even in hunger, and He did not yield to the devil in order to gain glory. Nor did He tempt God in order to confirm His protection, and in the end He accomplished the work of remitting our sins. Let us not, on the grounds that what we need is lacking, listen to what our circumstances say more than to that Savior. I hope that even today, as you seek bread, you will live by the word, and that even on the day temptation comes again, you will stand by faith, recalling the three answers of the Lord who saved us. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Go beyond what you have heard about Jesus and believe His teaching

< Luke 4:14–15 >

"Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all."

Through the wilderness to Galilee

When someone's name becomes widely known, people first look at how many praise him. However, hearing the news of Jesus and believing the word of Jesus are not the same thing. This is because one can speak highly of the Lord's name and yet not actually know what work the Lord came to do. The two verses that convey how Jesus returned to Galilee lead our attention from the size of the news to the work of the Lord. What is written before the praise of the people is the power of the Spirit, and what He Himself did in that power was teaching.

"Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region"

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(Luke 4:14). This word follows right after He overcame the temptations of the devil in the wilderness. The devil put forward food and the glory of the world and enticed Him to tempt God, but Jesus repelled those demands with the written word. This order—that He began His work in the power of the Spirit after overcoming temptation by faith—is the same for us as well. The one who stands firm by faith even in the midst of temptation can be clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit and do the work of God with strength. Now the Lord's way back to Galilee was also the way of following the Father's will. In the wilderness He repelled the devil with the word, and in Galilee He taught the word to the people, so even though the place changed, the purpose toward which the Lord's work was directed was unchanging.

We must not think of the power of the Spirit as something like the applause of people. It is not that Jesus came to have power because people praised Him, nor did the Lord become the Savior by the strength of people's response. The text first testifies that Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit. If we reverse the order of the name known to people and the work that God accomplishes, we come to regard even the truth as having no power when popularity is low. Before we reckon how far the news has spread, we must know who it is that does that work.

The visit of the Savior who bore the sin of the world

Jesus, who returned to Galilee, is the very One who received baptism at the Jordan River. If we think of the Lord's teaching only as good lessons for living, we miss its starting point. This is because He did not come to let people hear fine words

irrespective of their problem of sin, but came to bear that sin Himself and accomplish salvation. The Gospel of Matthew conveys the light that came upon Galilee as follows. *"The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned" (Matthew 4:16)*. The coming of Jesus was the shining of the light of salvation upon those who were in sin and death.

We must see by what way this Savior came to find us. Jesus, the Son of God, came in a human body and received baptism from John at the Jordan River, and with that baptism He bore the sin of the world once and for all. The sins of each one of us are also within that sin of the world. Therefore, Jesus, going about Galilee, was not One who looked at the burdens of sinners from afar and gave advice; rather, as the Savior who had already had our sins passed on to Him, He preached the news of the remission of sins.

The Lord went to the Cross bearing that sin, and He received the judgment for sin in our place, shedding His blood and dying. Since Jesus, who rose again from death, completed salvation, what we believe in is not a name exalted by the praise of men, but the living Savior who remitted our sins. If we separate the baptism and the Cross from each other, why the Lord died—that is, the relationship between that death and our sins—becomes blurred. When we believe the fact that He was judged because He had taken sin upon Himself, and that He rose again and gave us life, the light that shone on Galilee is received in our hearts, too, as the news of salvation.

A person sitting in darkness cannot produce light by his own strength. Likewise, sin does not disappear just because a sinner makes his own resolve bright. Since Jesus, who is the Light, came to find us first, we must return to Him. If one thinks that he can meet the Savior after completely correcting his own life,

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he is still waiting on his own ability. The reason we can acknowledge our sin as it is and still believe in Jesus, who bore that sin, is that the work of salvation began from the Lord before it began from us.

Hear the word He Himself taught

"And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all" (Luke 4:15). Jesus did not wait for people to come to understand on their own through the news alone. The statement that He Himself taught in their synagogues shows that there was a word the people had to hear. Even if people came near after hearing the news that He was One who performed mighty works, if they did not accept the truth of salvation, they could not be said to know the Lord rightly. This is why we must not stop at knowing the name of Jesus, but must hear and believe the work He accomplished and His word.

The word that says He works in the power of the Spirit and the word that says He teaches are not separate from each other. When we hear of power, we tend to think only of conspicuous works, but the text clearly conveys that the Lord taught the word. Causing people to hear the truth so that they know their sins and rely on the Savior is by no means a small work. What a person who does not know the way to wash away sin needs is not more vague expressions of admiration, but an explanation of how Jesus bore and remitted sin.

Today, when we preach the gospel, we, too, must not cut down its content in order to win the listener's favorable response first. If we leave out His having received baptism from John and having had our sins passed on to Him, and speak movingly only of the suffering of the Cross, we have not preached the Lord's

salvation in full. We must explain so that the listener can know and believe the relationship between his own sins and the work of Jesus. Since the skill of the speaker cannot take the place of the power of salvation, we must clearly set forth the Savior whom the Scriptures testify of.

We who hear the teaching also need the same heart. We must not let the word of salvation pass by our ears on the grounds that it is already familiar content, but must examine what our hearts are relying on right now. This is because the memory of having heard it for a long time cannot take the place of today's faith. When we truly believe the word that the Lord bore all our sins even in the face of our present sins, we come to hold on to it not as familiar words but as the living fact of salvation.

Go forward from praise to faith

The people of Galilee praised Jesus, but we must not make that response itself the condition of salvation. Praise may be a response to having heard a good word, but faith is entrusting one's soul to the Savior whom that word testifies of. In the parallel passage, Jesus calls His hearers to a clear response. *"And saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:15)*. Before the word that tells us to believe in the gospel, we must turn from the place where we evaluated the Savior as someone else's story.

If we marvel at Jesus and yet seek the basis of the remission of sins in our own good deeds, then in the very work of salvation we are not relying on the Lord. The Savior did not wash away our sins in return for how zealously we praised Him. We must turn away from the thought of washing again with our own hands the sins He has already borne and been judged for, and accept in

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our hearts the salvation the Lord accomplished. That faith fills the words that exalt the Lord with real substance.

If you have heard the news of Jesus, now listen closely to the teaching of Jesus. The Lord, who came through the wilderness to Galilee, did not do the work of gathering people's favorable opinions, but shone the light of life on sinners. So that the praise on our lips does not remain only an evaluation we heard from others, let us believe in Jesus, who saved us with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, as our own Savior. When we accept that word He Himself teaches, we come to know clearly whose name it is that we exalt. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The acceptable year that gives liberty to the captives of sin

< Luke 4:16–30 >

"So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.' Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.' So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, 'Is this not Joseph's son?' He said to them, 'You will surely say this proverb to Me, "Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country."' Then He said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in

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the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.' So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way."

The fulfillment of the prophecy proclaimed in the synagogue

We think that if a promise we had long been waiting for were fulfilled right before our eyes, we would gladly accept it. However, merely knowing the promise does not make us believe in the One who came to fulfill that promise. The people of the synagogue at Nazareth heard the writing of Isaiah, and they also knew Jesus, who read that word. Yet since the meeting of that day did not end in welcome, we must look at what lay between words of waiting and the faith that actually accepts.

This is what Jesus, who overcame the temptation in the wilderness and began His work in the power of the Spirit, did in His hometown. The Lord, who was born in Bethlehem and grew up in Nazareth, went into the synagogue on the Sabbath, and when He stood up to read the Scriptures, He was handed the writing of Isaiah. The Lord found and read the place that tells of the work of the Savior, and at the center of this word is the One

who was anointed with the Spirit and sent. It is not a statement that the captives and the oppressed obtain liberty by their own strength, but a promise that the One whom God sent preaches the gospel and proclaims liberty to them.

When Jesus closed the book, all the people of the synagogue fixed their eyes on Him, and at that moment the Lord did not merely say that someone would come in the distant future. *"And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing'" (Luke 4:21)*. This is a declaration that the One whom Isaiah prophesied is the Lord Himself, and that He has come to this earth and does this work together with the Holy Spirit. Before the people who had been waiting for the grace of the Lord, the Savior who bestows grace was now standing. Therefore, what they had to do was not to stop at marveling at the beautiful promise of the Scriptures, but to accept Jesus, who fulfills that promise.

The liberty given to the captives of sin

"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). When we think of the liberty the Lord proclaimed, we must first see what we are bound by. What the Lord spoke of here is entirely a spiritual matter. It is precious also for the hardships of life to be resolved and for us to escape from the oppression of other people, but such changes alone do not make sin before God disappear. Even if our circumstances improve, if we must be judged because of sin, the soul is still not free. Because our Lord knows that deep bondage, He came to

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save those who have become captives of sin, captives of the devil. The Lord bestows the grace by which a person who was spiritually blind and could not see God has the sin of his heart washed away, comes to know the truth of salvation, and escapes from the oppression of the devil.

This liberty is not obtained by striving to forget sin or by persuading ourselves that we have no sin; it comes from the fact that Jesus actually dealt with our sins. Its starting point is that the Lord, when He received baptism from John, bore all the sins of the world once and for all upon His own body. Not only the sins we have already committed but also the sins we will commit in the future are included in that sin of the world. Because the Savior took upon Himself the burden of sin that we could not cut off by ourselves, a sinner must not boast of his own strength but must rely on Him.

Jesus, who had the sins passed on to Him through the baptism, received the judgment for those sins on the Cross in our place, shed His blood and died, and rose again from death, thereby fully accomplishing salvation. The Savior paid the price in order to set us, who are bound by sin, free. A heart that believes in the remission of sins is not a heart that takes sin lightly, but a heart that truly accepts the work of Jesus, who bore that judgment. The Lord said, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32)*. On the basis of this truth that the Lord was judged on the Cross for the sins He took upon Himself through the baptism, we lay down the burden of sin.

The One who proclaimed liberty in the Scriptures is the same Savior for us today as well. If, every time we recall our past faults, we try to erase them by our own resolve, we become unable to look to the Lord who promised salvation. We must honestly admit our faults, but we must place our faith in Jesus, who bore even those faults. The liberty the Lord gives is not a

peace that hides our wrongs, but the peace of believing that the Savior has ended the judgment for all the sins that have been exposed. When we know that grace, our hearts do not avoid the Lord but rather draw near to Him.

If we know Him only as the son of Joseph, we cannot believe in salvation

The people of the synagogue marveled at the gracious words, but soon they recalled the family they knew. *"So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, 'Is this not Joseph's son?'" (Luke 4:22)*. They knew Jesus only as the son of Joseph, that is, only as a human being, and thought of Him only as a human being. The fact that Jesus actually grew up as a man is true, but the problem was that they considered that they knew everything about Jesus by that fact. To put it precisely, Jesus is the Son of God the Father, that is, God who created all things in the universe. If we confine the Savior who came in a human body within the limits of an ordinary man, we cannot believe in the salvation God accomplishes through Him either.

The Lord knew that the people of His hometown would demand that He do here as well what He had done in Capernaum. *"Then He said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country'" (Luke 4:24)*. Then, citing the widow of Zarephath in the days of Elijah and Naaman the Syrian in the days of Elisha, He said that even in those days the people who heard the word of God, obeyed it, and received grace were extremely few. The reason they received grace lay not in their lineage but in their having accepted the word of God. We must apply to ourselves the fact that being near Jesus cannot take the

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place of faith. Even if we have long heard the Scriptures and are accustomed to the environment of faith, unless we know and believe the Savior as God, that familiarity cannot give us salvation.

The way of salvation that was not thwarted even at the cliff

The people of the synagogue became angry when they heard the word that exposed their unbelief. They tried to thrust Jesus out of the city, lead Him to the cliff, and throw Him down. The people who had marveled at the gracious words tried to kill the One who had preached that word. Since the feeling of admiration is not itself faith, unless we lay down our own thoughts, we may rather reject the Savior when faced with a word that goes against our hearts.

But their anger could not end the work of Jesus. *"Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way" (Luke 4:30)*. The Lord did not flee; He passed through the midst of them. Since Jesus is true man and at the same time God who created the universe, the power of people cannot determine the time and the way of salvation. The text does not explain with what motion Jesus passed through, but it clearly conveys the fact that the people's murderous intent was not carried out. Rather than adding scenes that are not recorded, we must see the divinity of the Lord revealed in the midst of it.

That the Lord, who passed through them in this way, was later crucified was not because He lacked the power to escape. Because He had borne our sins, He went to receive that judgment, and as the Savior who overcomes even death, He gave us life. Since there is no one but God who can save us, who have sinned

against God and must be judged, we must believe together both the fact that Jesus is God and the fact that He sacrificed Himself in our place. If we think of Him merely as a good man, we do not know His power to save us completely; and if we think only of His power and leave out the atonement, we do not know how a sinner is saved. Because He who is God came in a human body, had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism, was judged on the Cross, and rose again, that salvation is complete.

The promise that had been awaited in the synagogue at Nazareth had already come before them in Jesus on that day. Let us also not push away the Savior who has already come on the grounds that we are waiting for a better time and other evidence. I hope that you will believe that Jesus, who came to give liberty to the captives of sin, has remitted all our sins, and that you will accept the Lord of that promise right where you have heard of the fulfillment of the promise. The acceptable year of the Lord began in Nazareth on that day and has reached even us today. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The authority of the word that cast out the demon

< Luke 4:31–37 >

“Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!’ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet, and come out of him!’ And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, ‘What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.’ And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region.”

The authority revealed in His teaching

When we listen to the words of someone who speaks well, our hearts are moved for a while. However, merely having been moved does not solve the problem that holds us. A soul bound by sin and fear needs, beyond a good explanation, the One who will actually save it. The people of the synagogue at Capernaum

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were astonished at the teaching of Jesus, and right there they came to see, in an event before their eyes, what kind of authority the word of the Lord had. The reason we read this word, too, lies not in wanting to watch an amazing thing but in wanting to believe in the One to whom that authority belongs.

Jesus went down to Capernaum in Galilee and taught the people on the Sabbath. *"And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority" (Luke 4:32)*. In the word of the Lord there was an authority that did not depend on the response of the listeners. In Nazareth the people rejected Jesus, but that rejection did not make the word of the Lord cease to be the truth. Nor did the astonishment of Capernaum create a new authority for the Lord. Even if people's evaluations change, the Lord is the same One, and the word that comes from Him has the authority that belongs to God.

When we hear the word, we may first weigh how familiar it is to us and how good a feeling arises in our hearts. But if we place the standard for judging the word of salvation in our own feelings, on days when our hearts are dark we come to doubt even the power of the Savior. The authority of the word that the people of Capernaum heard did not come from their mood. Here is the reason we must know who Jesus is and accept His word. The more our hearts waver, the more we must listen not to the wavering heart itself but to the Lord who will save that heart.

The command that silenced the voice of the demon

In that synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon, and the demon cried out loudly at Jesus. *"Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"*

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(Luke 4:34). The demon knew who Jesus was and asked whether He had come to destroy them. The mere fact that he was inside the synagogue did not mean that the man was free from his torment. Even in the place where people gathered to hear the word, that man was in a state in which the Savior Himself had to deliver him. The Lord was not dragged along by that cry, nor did He require a procedure of contending in strength with the demon; He commanded.

"But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!' And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him" (Luke 4:35). Jesus told the demon to be quiet and to come out of the man. In this command we must distinguish between the demon the Lord dealt with and the man He would save. He rebuked the unclean demon, but He did not abandon the man; He delivered him from the demon. Even though the demon threw him down in the midst of the crowd, the man was not hurt; so what decided the end of the event was not the commotion of the demon but the word of Jesus.

Do not pass over the fact that the Gospel of Luke records that the man was not hurt. If we cling only to the scene of a loud cry and a man falling down, fear fills our hearts, but the text shows us the Lord who preserved the man even in the midst of it. Only when we see together the fact that the demon had to leave and the fact that the man was not hurt do we come to know that this authority is an authority for salvation. The Lord did not do this to startle people with a threat; He actually set free a man bound by an evil spirit, and through that He revealed the power of the word.

Today, as we read this event, we too must not judge suffering people carelessly. Just because a demon-possessed man appears in the text, we must not conclude that every illness or difficulty of the heart is demon possession. As we look at the condition of

the one man recorded here, the center we must hold on to is the fact that Jesus is greater than the demon and delivered that man. We must not let our eyes be captured by a frightening phenomenon, but must rely on the Savior who controlled that phenomenon. The word of the Lord is not a word given to bind people in even greater fear.

The remission of sins accomplished by the authority of the Creator

The reason the demon could not defy the command of Jesus is that Jesus is not merely one man of outstanding power but God who made all things. The Gospel of John testifies of the Lord as follows: *"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3)*. Jesus is not a mighty being among created beings but the Creator through whom all things were made. The reason the demon called Jesus the Holy One of God is also that this name is the name of the Creator God. Therefore, when we entrust our souls as well, we must not think of Him as one among many helps. The Lord who made us came Himself to save us, who are bound by sin.

Jesus, who showed His authority in the synagogue at Capernaum, had already received baptism from John in the Jordan River and had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. The authority with which He rebuked the demon was the authority of the Savior who had taken upon Himself the sin of the world. That He bore sins does not mean that Jesus Himself did evil. Since the sinless Savior took upon Himself the burden of sinners, His holiness and His bearing of our sins do not contradict each other.

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Because He bore our sins, Jesus was crucified and judged in our place. There He shed His blood and died, and He rose again from death and completed the remission of sins; thus the authority to save us appeared as the actual work of atonement. The Lord who commanded the demon and cast it out did not leave the judgment for sin behind for us to pay instead either. To believe the word of the Lord is to accept in our hearts the salvation He accomplished for us in this way. We must turn away from a heart that strives to prove its own innocence and rely on Jesus, who took upon Himself all our sins and was judged.

We must not remain outside looking at the work of salvation with only the knowledge that Jesus is a powerful One. The demon also knew who the Lord was, but it did not come forward in the faith that loves the Lord and receives salvation. We must admit our own sin and inability and accept the grace the Savior has bestowed. More important than whether we can say the name "the Holy One" precisely is whether we believe that the Holy One is the Savior who has remitted our sins. The Scriptures lead us from the boasting of knowledge to the place of relying on the Savior.

Do not stay in amazement, but hold on to the word

The people in the synagogue, seeing what had happened, spoke among themselves. *"Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, 'What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out'" (Luke 4:36)*. They saw together the event of the demon going out and the word of Jesus, and the report spread into every place in the surrounding region. What we must preach, too, is not only the strange phenomenon but the authority and

salvation of the Lord who did that work. However widely stories about phenomena spread, if people do not know who the Savior is, they only seek the next, greater amazement.

That authority is the same for us today. The Scriptures say, *"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7)*. The devil flees when we resist him, and does not flee when we do not resist him. Even a thought that rises in our hearts, if it does not accord with the will of God, must be driven away in the name of Jesus Christ. The demon fell silent before that name because Jesus Christ is God, and that fact does not change according to whether our faith is strong or weak.

The faith that holds on to the word makes what the Lord has done the standard of one's own heart. Even when we condemn ourselves because of the memory of having sinned, we must look again in the Scriptures at when and how the Lord bore those sins. This is because the atonement the Savior accomplished is clearer than our memory. Even on days when our feelings do not immediately brighten, we can believe the fact of the remission of sins, and with that faith we can live asking the Lord for help. It is not that we can rely on the Savior only after we have become strong enough to overcome fear.

The loud cry of the demon that rang out in the synagogue at Capernaum ended, but the authority of Jesus did not end. The Lord has filled our souls' need with the remission of sins, a need that could not be filled by being briefly moved upon hearing good words. Let us entrust our hearts to that Savior who delivered the man without hurting him. The word of Jesus is not a word that will pass by as an amazing story, but the word of salvation that we, who are in sin and fear, are to believe and rely on. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Simon's mother-in-law, who rose from her fever and served the Lord

< Luke 4:38–39 >

"Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them."

Supplication for a person who has no strength to rise

Even if we have the heart to serve the Lord, when the body is sick it is hard to do even the things we usually do. Thinking that we cannot contribute anything, we may even come to feel sorry about receiving the care of others. However, what happened in Simon's house tells us what the Lord sees first. In that house there were not only people who were ready to work for the Lord; there was also a person held by a high fever who needed help. The grace of Jesus did not begin after that person had first shown Him her labor.

"Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and

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they made request of Him concerning her" (Luke 4:38). Jesus came out of the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Since the authority by which He had cast out the demon in the synagogue was not an authority that appeared only before many people, the same Lord came also to a person who was lying sick inside a house. The people made request of Jesus for Simon's mother-in-law, which means that, looking at the suffering person, they did not stop at worrying among themselves but told the matter to the One who would help.

The Scriptures do not explain what merit that woman had first built up; they only convey the fact that she was held by a high fever and the fact that people made request for her. From this short record we learn the place of asking for help. If we think that a weak person can come to the Lord only after proving his usefulness, then at the very time when help is most needed we will rather avoid the Savior. The less we are able to do, the more we must ask for the Lord's power, and those who are with us must also not regard that weakness merely as a burden but tell it before the Lord.

To ask on behalf of another person is not a declaration that we can solve all of that person's problems, but faith that acknowledges that the Lord can do what is not in our hands. The people in Simon's house could not produce by themselves the ability to remove the fever, but they could ask Jesus. We, too, can hear the pain of the person beside us, pray together, and share the care that is needed. Not turning away for the reason that we cannot solve it ourselves, but entrusting it to the Savior, is the way of embracing a weak person together.

Even so, we must not think that we move the Lord by the size of our supplication or by the number of people who prayed. In the text, the One who rebuked and healed the sickness is Jesus, and people's supplication does not take the place of the Lord's

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power. Since prayer is acknowledging who the Master of power is and relying on Him, we must look to the Lord who hears that prayer rather than to our own zeal in having prayed. Simon's house, to which the Lord came near, was not a place where a person proves himself, but a place where weakness was revealed and grace was sought.

The power of the Lord, who rebuked the fever

"So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them" (Luke 4:39). Jesus stood near her and rebuked the fever, and the sickness left that woman. Luke does not write that the sickness became a little lighter so that she could get up later, but records that the woman immediately arose and served. The result that she was able to rise and take care of the people shows that the Lord really healed her completely. Through this event we come to know that Jesus is not One who gives only words of comfort to a heart that hopes for help, but the Lord of authority who controls even sickness.

We must not conclude, because of the words that He rebuked the fever, that the fever was the same kind of thing as the demon that appeared earlier. The text conveys separately the event of a demon going out of one person and the event of sickness leaving another person, and what clearly runs through the two events is the authority of Jesus, not a word that explains the cause of all suffering as one thing. While believing in the power the Lord showed, we must not look at a sick person, guess at that person's wrongdoing, and condemn him. Since Jesus went to the sick woman and stood near her, we, too, must not push weak people far away.

Conveying the same work of healing, the Gospel of Matthew cites the word of Isaiah to explain the Lord's work. *"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses'" (Matthew 8:17)*. The Lord is not One who does not know our weakness. Not only did He possess the power to save from sin, but He also stretched out His hand to the suffering of people who live in the flesh. The reason we can ask for help in sickness is also that He knows us and has the power to help. Before the Lord there is no need to hide the pain of the body as if it were a matter that has nothing to do with faith.

However, reading the record that this woman was healed immediately, we must not judge that all saints must be healed in the same way at the time they want. Even after receiving the remission of sins, we live in weak bodies and go through suffering. If we conclude that a person has no grace of salvation for the reason that his body has not yet been healed, that amounts to changing the basis of the remission of sins from the atonement of Jesus to present health. We must believe in the power of the Lord who healed the sickness and ask earnestly, but we must not blame saints who are in pain; rather, we must rely on the Lord together with them.

A life of rising by grace and serving

In the fact that this woman served, there is a clear order. It was not that the sickness was healed because she served; rather, because the Lord healed her, she rose and served. We must not reverse that order in the work of our salvation either. When we had no strength to wash away our sins, the Savior came first, and after bearing those sins He caused us to believe in that grace.

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The testimony of John the Baptist clearly points to the One on whom we are to rely. *"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29)*. It is not that we bear our sins and go to resolve them by ourselves; rather, the Lamb of God took away the sin of the world.

Jesus bore the sin of the whole world once and for all by receiving baptism from John. Since even the faults in which we fell short in serving as we lived are included in it, the Lord did not leave that sin in our hands. The Lord bore the burden of that sin, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving judgment in our place, and completed salvation by rising again from death. Just as the woman held by the fever was not healed after first rising and serving, so we, too, did not obtain the remission of sins by serving first; rather, we accepted the grace of what the Savior had done first. The service we offer later does not fill in what is lacking in the atonement.

Therefore, the heart that serves the Lord does not come from the anxiety that we must pay the price of sin, but from gratitude that believes the Savior has paid the price in full. That gratitude makes us give our hearts to the Lord's will. The scene in which Simon's mother-in-law rose and served shows how the grace received leads to actual life. The text does not record at length what work that person did or how much, but the fact is clear that with her healed body she served those who were with the Lord. We, too, can take care of other people according to the grace we have received, in the place where we are able.

Some saints may add their strength and work, and some saints may be weak in body and have to receive care. Let us not make such differences the standard by which a person's worth is measured before God. We were not saved because we were of much use, and even on the days when we can serve the Lord we

must not forget that grace. On the days when we receive help, we need only rely on the Lord, and on the days when we have gained the strength to stand up, we need only serve our neighbors with that strength. When we know the Lord who gives grace first, the reason to boast of our own labor and the reason to despise a weak person both disappear.

Think again of the Lord who was in Simon's house at the beginning. The woman held by a high fever was not healed after first showing herself to be a useful person; rather, because the Savior stood near and healed her, she was able to rise and serve. Let us, too, not avoid the Lord in the place where we feel we can do nothing, but rely on that grace. I hope you will believe in the love of the Savior who first gave us life, and live serving gratefully with the strength the Lord has given. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus healed the sick one by one

< Luke 4:40–41 >

“When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of God!’ And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ.”

One by one, even among many people

In a place where many people have gathered, there are times when it feels as though our own pain will be buried under the circumstances of other people. Since there are many who are more desperate and there are problems that are hard to bring out and speak of, we may think that our turn will not come. However, the sight of the people who came to Jesus when the sun was setting shows us a different scene. The Lord did not treat the sick people merely as a great crowd. Luke records together the people who brought those sick with various diseases and Jesus, who laid His hands on each and every one of those sick people.

“When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them” (Luke 4:40). The

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kinds of sickness differed from one another, but the One to whom the people came was the same Jesus. Someone brought the sick person beside him, and the Lord laid His hands on them one by one and healed them. Because He was not One whose power to bestow on another person diminished when He healed one person, the needs of many people could not exhaust the Lord's power. Through the concrete action of the Lord, who laid His hands on them, the text shows the grace with which He took care of each person's pain.

Since we, too, can reveal our weakness before the Lord, there is no need to hesitate to come to the Lord for the reason that another person's problem looks greater. Nor is there any need to forget the person beside us, regarding only our own problem as great. The Lord, who laid His hands on each person, knows not only our circumstances but also the circumstances of others. Therefore, while asking the Lord for help, we can also turn our hearts to the difficulties of our neighbors, and we can come to Him together with them so that they may know the Lord.

The record that people brought the sick also shows the place where their hands and feet were used. Because there was the work of actually looking after the sick and helping them come to the Lord, they gathered in one place. Even though we have no power to remove sickness, we can refrain from turning away from those who suffer, and if we know the grace of the Savior, we can preach that grace. We must not keep the people who receive help bound to ourselves, but serve them so that they turn their hearts toward Jesus, who will truly help them.

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The baptism through which the sins of each person were borne without leaving any out

When we look at the event in which Jesus healed each person, we come to think that His salvation, too, is not a salvation that vaguely puts forward only the name of mankind and leaves the sins of individuals behind. Even while hearing the word that He bore the sin of the world, we may feel that our own old faults alone remain separately. However, there is no basis for separating our own sins from the sin of the world that Jesus bore. Since we, too, are people who were born into the world and committed sins, all our sins are included in that sin that the Savior took upon Himself.

Look in the Scriptures at the reason Jesus received baptism from John. *"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him" (Matthew 3:15)*. By receiving baptism from John, the Lord had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all and fulfilled the righteousness of God. Just as on the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament the high priest laid his hands on the sacrificial offering and passed the sins of the people on to it, Jesus had the sin of mankind passed on to His own flesh. In it are the sins that each one of us commits throughout our whole lives, so neither the faults we could not tell others nor the sins we ourselves cannot fully remember are left out. Our memory does not determine the extent of salvation, nor does the number of sins we have confessed limit the number of sins the Lord bore.

Jesus, who bore that sin, shed His blood and died on the Cross and received in our place the judgment we were to receive. Because it was the judgment for the sin He had taken upon Himself through the baptism, the death on the Cross is an

atonement directly related to our sins. Also, He rose again from death and gave us the remission of sins and life. Since the Lord, who laid His hands on each one of the sick, bore our sins, too, one by one without leaving any out, there is no need to bear our own sins again, worrying whether only other people were saved and we ourselves were left out. We need only accept in our own hearts, just as it is, the fact that the Lord bore them.

This faith does not mean that all people already enjoy the grace of salvation whether they believe or do not believe. What the Savior accomplished is directed toward the whole world, but we must hear that fact and accept Jesus as our own Savior. To think that one's own sins are too great to be included in the Lord's atonement, and to think that one's own sins are so small that no Savior is needed, both run contrary to the word. We must lay down comparing the size of sins by our own standard and place our faith in Jesus, who took all sins upon Himself.

Words spoken from knowledge and a heart that believes in the Savior

While He was healing the sick, demons came out of many people. *"And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, 'You are the Christ, the Son of God!' And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ" (Luke 4:41)*. The demons knew that Jesus was the Son of God and also knew that He was the Christ, but the Lord did not allow them to speak. The demons knew that He was not only the Son of God but also God who created the universe. We learn here that we must not follow a speaker merely because of the fact that he says right things about the name of Jesus. What a

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demon knows and shouts is different from a sinner believing in the Savior and receiving grace.

The text conveys the fact that the Lord did not allow the demons' words, and adds that they knew the Christ. The Lord had no intention of making Himself known by borrowing the mouths of demons who knew the Christ. What is clear is the fact that Jesus did not entrust the place of testimony to the demons, and that He had the authority to send them out. We must not rely on the loud voices of demons to know who the Lord is; rather, we must know and believe in Him through His word and work as conveyed in the Scriptures.

Our confession, too, must have content. If we call Jesus the Son of God and yet think that we will obtain the remission of sins by our own efforts, we are not relying for salvation on the One we exalt with our mouths. The fact that the Son of God came as a man and saved us with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection must be accepted in our hearts. Then we do not stop at knowing only His name, but come to thank and rely on the Savior who delivered us. The Lord clearly makes known to us the fact of salvation that we must believe, rather than a voice that repeats the confession others make.

Also, we must not accept everything just because it looks like a spiritual matter. Rather than how intensely a word sounds, we must examine whether that word agrees with the salvation Jesus accomplished. In the text the cry of the demons was loud, but the One who stopped that cry was Jesus. Our faith, too, must stand on the word of the Lord without leaning on the loudness of a voice, and we must not let fear or astonishment take the place of the assurance of salvation. The work of the Savior, who bore the sin of the world and received judgment, does not change even when such feelings change.

Entrust your weakness to the Lord

The Gospel of Matthew also conveys what happened that evening. *"When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick" (Matthew 8:16)*. The reason the sick were healed and the demons were cast out is that Jesus Himself worked there. The authority of the Lord was greater than the various pains of those who came to the Lord, and that authority appeared as grace that helped suffering people. Because we believe in that Lord as the Savior who is alive today as well, we can tell Him our weakness and pray.

There is no need to confuse the heart that asks for sickness to be healed with the heart that is assured of the remission of sins. Even a saint who is sick in body can be assured of the remission of sins by believing in the atonement Jesus accomplished, and in that assurance can entrust the pain of the body to the Lord. Since the Lord, who laid His hands on each and every person, takes care in that way even of a person whose pain still remains, we, too, must pray together at his side. This is because our salvation is proved not by the condition of our body today, but by the righteousness Jesus accomplished.

When you feel that your pain will be forgotten among many people, remember Jesus, who laid His hands on people one by one that day. He is the Savior who bore our sins, too, without leaving them out among the sins of other people. Let us tell the Lord our weakness and ask for help, and together entrust to Him also the person who is in pain beside us. The place of coming to the Lord is a place where we learn that we are not forgotten people, but each one a person who needs the grace of the Savior. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Preach the gospel of the kingdom of God to the other cities also

< Luke 4:42–44 >

“Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them; but He said to them, ‘I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.’ And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.”

The crowd that tried to hold on to the Lord

When we receive great help, we want the person who gave that help to stay by our side for a long time. That feeling is natural, but there are times when the joy of having received grace turns into a heart that wants to enjoy it only for ourselves. In Capernaum, too, where there were people who had been healed by Jesus, an attempt to hold on to the Lord took place. But Jesus said that He had to go to the other cities. Let us look through the text at whether loving the grace of the Lord means making the Lord stay as we wish, or whether it means joining in upholding His will.

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"Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them" (Luke 4:42). At sunset on the previous day, people had brought many who were sick, and Jesus had healed them. When it was day, the Lord went out to a deserted place, and the crowd went about searching and found the Lord. They tried to keep Jesus near them, but that wish showed itself in the action of trying to keep the Lord from going to another place. Since the text records together the fact that the people sought the Lord and the fact that they tried to hold on to the Lord, it lets us see that having zeal to seek Him does not mean rightly knowing His will as well.

It is not that the heart of the crowd was evil. Having seen the power and grace that Jesus had bestowed, they may have wished that He would not leave. Only, the fact that they tried to hold on to Him and the fact that the Lord said He had to go to the other cities are clear. We must look at the difference between those two so that we, too, while saying that we love the Lord, do not confine the Lord's will within our own needs. That we who have received help come to think of the people who have not yet heard is the important turning point of today's word.

We, too, have problems that we wish He would keep on solving for us, and we have a heart that does not want to lose the peace we are enjoying now. It is only natural to tell such needs to the Lord, but we must not try to decide all the Lord's work by those needs alone. The Lord, who has cared for us, wants the gospel to be preached to other people as well. When the heart that seeks grace grows wider, we do not stop at entrusting our own problems to Him, but also come to look after the problems of the people who do not yet know the Savior. What is needed is not a hand that holds on to the Lord, but the faith that upholds the will of the Lord as He goes.

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The purpose of His being sent is the spread of the gospel

In the face of the crowd's demand, Jesus did not decide where He should go by people's response. *"But He said to them, 'I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent'" (Luke 4:43)*. The Lord said that He must preach the gospel of the kingdom of God in the other cities also, and made clear that this was the purpose for which He had been sent. It was not that He left because the thanks of the people who had been healed were not precious, but because the will of the Father who sent the Lord did not stay only with the needs of one city.

Since in the other cities there were still people who needed to hear the gospel of the Lord, Jesus said that He had to preach the gospel there as well. This necessity did not come from how many or how few requests people made, but from the will of the One who sent Him. Therefore, when we serve the gospel, we, too, must not set our hearts only on the places where there is a good response, but must think of the needs of the souls that have not yet heard.

The gospel of the kingdom of God is not merely news that one's living conditions get better. It is the news of salvation, that a person who could not stand before God because of sin believes in the Savior, receives the remission of sins, and becomes one of God's people. Even if the sickness of the body is healed, if the problem of the judgment for sin remains, the soul still needs salvation. Here we can know the reason the Lord continued the work of preaching the gospel even after healing many sick people. If we think of the Lord's power only as help beneficial to our own lives, we miss His purpose of giving us eternal life.

Even while saying that we serve the Lord, we easily leave only the work of meeting immediate needs. Caring for one another and sharing in hardships is precious, but it cannot take the place of preaching the gospel so that sinners may believe in the Savior. The Lord said, *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. If we first seek the work of preaching the gospel so that the people of God may increase, God supplies our needs. Since the Lord made clear what He was sent to do, the church, too, must make clear what it is to do according to that word.

The same salvation needed in the other cities as well

Earlier in this chapter, Jesus had already proclaimed the work for which He was sent. *"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)*. Giving liberty to the captives of sin was not something needed only by the people of Capernaum. Whatever city a person may live in, he cannot wash away his own sins by himself, and he needs the liberty that the Savior gives. The word that the Lord was going to the other cities means that He would preach the same grace of salvation there as well. Even though the place is different, the truth that gives life to people does not change.

We must see how that liberty was given to us. By receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, Jesus took the sin of the whole world upon His own body once and for all. Since that sin of the world does not contain only the sins of the people of one

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city, no one needs to think that he cannot come to the Savior because of his origin or circumstances. Though the form of each person's transgressions is different, there is but one Savior who bore sin.

Jesus bore the sin that had been passed on to Him through the baptism, and shed His blood and died on the Cross. He received in our place the judgment that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and completed salvation. Therefore, the news we are to preach is not a demand that each person provide the price of his own sins, but the gospel that says to believe in the righteousness the Savior has accomplished. We who have believed in this grace and received the remission of sins do not worry as though our own share decreases the more we share it with others. Because the one Savior bore the sin of the whole world, we can preach the same truth to anyone.

That the scope of the gospel is wide does not mean that the object of faith becomes blurred. Anyone must believe in the salvation that Jesus has carried out, and it is not that a different way of salvation is needed just because it is a different city. Though we may explain it to suit the circumstances of the hearer, we must not change the relationship between the baptism He received from John, the Cross on which He received the judgment for that sin, and the resurrection. When we faithfully preach the news that the Lord has caused us to preach, people do not stop at relying on us, but come to believe in Jesus, who has remitted their sins.

Preach the grace you have received to other people as well

After speaking of the reason He had to go, Jesus actually preached the gospel. *"And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee" (Luke 4:44)*. The record that He preached in the many synagogues shows that the will by which He was sent did not remain in words alone but continued in the steps He took. Though there was the crowd's attempt to keep Him, the Lord headed for those who still needed to hear. We, too, must not stop at thinking well of the Lord's will, but must give our hearts and toil, in the place given to each of us, so that other souls may hear the gospel.

That does not mean, however, that everyone must go off to faraway places in the same way. One can explain the salvation of the Bible to the people nearby, and one can also pray for those who preach the gospel and serve together with them. What is important is to get out of the heart that is satisfied with confirming grace only among ourselves, and to think of the people who have not yet heard. Just as the Lord caused us to hear the gospel for the first time, we must hope that other people, too, will hear and believe and cast off the burden of sin. That hope is not a matter of ignoring our own needs, but a matter of learning the meaning of the grace we have received.

We can understand the heart of the people of Capernaum, who wished that the Lord would stay by their side. But Jesus spoke of the wider will of His being sent, rather than staying by their side. If we are thankful to the Savior who came to us, let us serve, hoping that the same joy will be conveyed to the souls of the other cities as well. I hope that you will lay down the heart that tries to keep the Lord for us alone, and become people who join in the will of the Lord, who goes to preach the gospel. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

Lay down the judgment that says, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

< Luke 4:22–30 >

"So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, 'Is this not Joseph's son?' He said to them, 'You will surely say this proverb to Me, "Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country."' Then He said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.' So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way."

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Those who hear the word must also lay down their judgment

When we hear the word, the parts that comfort us are welcome, but the parts that reveal that we are wrong can be uncomfortable. At such times, if we immediately turn the feeling of discomfort into a fault of the word, our hearts lose the chance to change. When we look at how the reaction of the people in the synagogue at Nazareth changed, it is revealed how different the pleasure of hearing gracious words is from the faith that accepts God's judgment. At first they marveled, but in the end they became angry. It was not that the content of the word had turned into falsehood, but that they did not lay down their own thoughts before that word.

"So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, 'Is this not Joseph's son?'" (Luke 4:22). Though the people knew that the word of Jesus was gracious, they measured the Lord by their own knowledge that He was Joseph's son. They were saying, "We know His father and also know His brothers, so what great thing could there be in Him?" The problem was not that they recalled a fact they had known; the problem was that they considered that by that fact they had already judged all about who Jesus is. Just because they had seen Him grow up as a man, they could not confine within their own knowledge even the identity of the Savior who came from God the Father. A person who sees Jesus only as a human being and judges Him only in human terms does not receive grace. Rather, the people of other cities, who did not know Jesus' origin, could believe better when they saw the works the Lord did. In order actually to believe the gracious word, they had to entrust themselves to the One who was speaking that word.

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We, too, sometimes think that there is no need to hear any more because we have known it for a long time. Even while saying that we already know the words baptism, the Cross, and resurrection, we can still look for another basis of salvation in the face of our own sins. This is because the ability to speak the word familiarly and the faith that relies on that word are not the same. When the Lord says that He bore all our sins, if we put our own thoughts first and leave some sins behind, or say that we will be at ease only if we add our own good deeds, we are exalting our own judgment above the judgment of the Savior.

Jesus spoke knowing even what the people of His hometown were going to demand. *"He said to them, 'You will surely say this proverb to Me, "Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country"'" (Luke 4:23)*. They were going to demand that He do in His hometown as well the miracles they had heard of. It was as if to say, "Do it once, and then we will believe." Instead of believing and seeking grace, since they had heard the word, it was an attitude of demanding that He prove His power in the place they themselves had set. With such a heart, even if people see an amazing work, they do not lay down the seat from which they pass judgment. Faith is not an acknowledgment granted after examining God and declaring that He has passed the test, but accepting as right what the true Lord has said.

Grace is not a portion that those who are close can demand

After the word that no prophet is accepted in his own country, Jesus cited the events of the days of Elijah and Elisha. In the famine there were many widows in Israel, but the place to which

Elijah was sent was Zarephath in Sidon. *"But to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow" (Luke 4:26)*. Also, Naaman, who was cleansed among many sick people, was a Syrian. The widow, who heard the word to first make bread with the last of her flour and bring it, and Naaman, who obeyed the word to dip himself seven times in the Jordan River, did not demand grace by putting forward a relationship such as being from the same hometown, but received grace by accepting the word of God. Though there were many widows and sick people in Israel, the widow to whom Elijah was sent and the sick person who was cleansed were only those two—this the Lord said without hiding it.

This passage is not a word that establishes a claim that some nation is superior. It is a warning that a person who considers himself to be in a position to receive grace close at hand may rather reject the word. The people of the synagogue may have thought that they were people who knew the words of the prophets and were waiting for the promise of salvation, but before the Lord who had now come, they did not accept Him. Even the events of the Old Testament that they knew did not of themselves make them people who believe. When the familiar history revealed the unbelief of their own hearts now, they became angry rather than turning back.

We, too, must not make the fact that we have heard the word in the church for a long time into a special privilege. The toil of long service is precious, but it is not that, because of that toil, the Lord must always approve of our judgment. The more grace we have received, the more humbly we must hear the word of the One who bestowed that grace. If, before a word that rebukes us, we push it away as content that applies only to other people, the time we have been in close contact with grace rather becomes a

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reason for pride. What the Lord needs is not a demand that He recognize our record, but a response of faith that He is right.

Give the initiative in salvation to the Savior

In the place of accepting the word of God, we also come to see our own sins rightly. If we consider that, since only a little sin remains, we can settle it ourselves, or on the contrary think that, since our sins are so many, even the Lord would not be able to resolve them, we must lay down that judgment. The two thoughts seem opposite to each other, but both come from trusting our own judgment more than the word of the Savior. True faith is to hear from the Scriptures how Jesus has saved us and to accept that fact.

God is not One who merely looked on so that we would accomplish salvation. Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father, Himself came in a human body and, by receiving baptism from John, had the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all. Since that sin, which the Lord took upon Himself, includes all the sins we commit throughout our whole lives, neither old transgressions nor sins not yet revealed remain separately outside salvation. This is not a matter of His having taken away only the sins we acknowledged, but the righteousness that God accomplished in order to save mankind.

Jesus, who took our sins upon Himself through the baptism, received in our place the judgment for those sins on the Cross and shed His blood and died. And He rose again from death and completed the work of delivering us from sin. Therefore, what remains for us is not to propose new conditions for salvation, but to believe in that salvation. *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who*

believe in His name" (John 1:12). The right to become children of God is not a right that one obtains by evaluating the Lord oneself, but the grace that He gives to the person who believes in the name of the Lord.

To receive Him here does not mean to welcome the Savior only as One who helps our own plans. It is to accept that Jesus is God and the Savior who accomplished the work of the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection in our place. In a heart that demands only help without believing who the Lord is, assurance of salvation does not arise. But when we believe that the Creator bore our sins and received the judgment, we come to rely on the Lord's perfect redemption rather than on our own shortcomings. We do not draw near to salvation by exalting ourselves, but receive that grace by exalting the Savior.

Do not push it away with anger, but receive it with faith

The people of the synagogue became angry when they heard the word directed at themselves. *"So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff" (Luke 4:28–29)*. They understood that the word was a word spoken about them. They tried to do away with the One who had revealed their unbelief, but Jesus passed through the midst of them. The truth of the Lord did not disappear because they did not accept it, and their anger did not put an end to the work the Savior would accomplish. What they gained by rejecting the Lord was not proof that they were right, but the responsibility of having rejected grace.

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Before this word, we must not only call to account the fault of the people of Nazareth, but must look at our own hearing hearts. Let us examine whether we are avoiding the facts the Bible reveals merely because our feelings have been hurt. That does not mean, however, that we should unconditionally accept every word and criticism of people as if it were the word of God. What we are to obey is the truth of God, and we must also examine whether the words people preach agree with the salvation the Bible testifies of. Only, if the meaning of the Bible is clear and yet we reject it in order to save face, then we must not alter the word, but turn our own hearts around.

A gracious word is not a word that always suits our feelings. At times it reveals wrong faith and self-righteousness and turns us back to the Savior, so we must receive even that rebuke as grace. Let us not become people who, before a word that was pleasant to hear at first, end up getting angry. I hope that you will lay down the judgment that says, “Is this not Joseph’s son?” and acknowledge that the Lord, who has remitted all our sins, is God and is right, and that you will receive that word in your hearts. ✉

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CHAPTER

5

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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

From the sinner who said, “Depart from me,” to a worker who catches men

< Luke 5:1–11 >

“So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, ‘Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.’ But Simon answered and said to Him, ‘Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.’ And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!’ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.’

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So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him."

The Lord, who came to the one with an empty net

What is left to a fisherman if he has let down his net all night and caught nothing? Simon was washing his empty net, and Jesus got into that very man's boat and taught the multitude. The time when the Lord comes to us is also like this. It is not when everything is going as we wish, but when we have used all the strength we have and yet have nothing left in our hands and are disheartened, that the Lord comes and speaks. When we have done our best and yet achieved nothing, we judge even our future by that result; but when Jesus comes and speaks, we must look first to the One who is speaking rather than to the results so far.

After teaching the multitude, Jesus told Simon to launch out into the deep and let down the net. Since fish usually gather near the shore, the word to go into the deep did not agree with a fisherman's common sense. Even so, Simon did not hide the fact that he had toiled all night, yet neither did he make his own experience his final judgment. *"But Simon answered and said to Him, 'Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net'" (Luke 5:5)*. The ground for letting down the net again did not lie in his having found fish that had not been visible until a moment ago, but in the fact that the Lord had spoken. Faith is not an attitude of waiting until good results are seen and then acknowledging the word, but entrusting oneself to the word spoken by Jesus, who knows us.

When he let down the net, so many fish were caught that the net was tearing, and even the partners in the other boat came and

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filled both boats with fish. The man who had caught nothing even though he had labored all night now caught so many fish that he could not handle them alone, so the net was full. But if our hearts stay only on the amount of fish, we miss the very One whom Simon came to recognize. Because what could not be explained by Simon's toil and experience had come to pass according to the word, Simon recognized that this One was not an ordinary teacher but the One sent by God, and he could not treat Jesus before his eyes as he had before.

For us, too, hearing the word is something deeper than obtaining a way to change our circumstances right away. The Lord, who made man, knows what we have failed to obtain, and He knows even the sins we ourselves did not know. Therefore, we cannot pick out and listen only to the parts of the word that help our own plans. If we set up our own thinking as right and try to fit the word to it, we cannot receive that grace even when the Lord reveals Himself; but if, like Simon, we turn our hearts relying on the word, we come to learn of the Lord, who is greater than our own judgment.

When we stand before the Lord, hidden sins are revealed

Simon, who had caught many fish, did not boast of his own skill before Jesus. *"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!'" (Luke 5:8)*. When he recognized who Jesus was, he saw his own sins before Him, and that is why he fell down at His knees. Even we, who seemed holy and honest among people, have even the sins we have hidden fully revealed when we stand before the Lord, and we can conceal nothing. Before the One

who knows even our thoughts and hearts, we cannot claim to be righteous by putting forward how hard we have tried to live.

However, it is not that Jesus came to know Simon's sins for the first time then, just because Simon came to know his own sins. The Lord got into his boat and spoke, knowing fully what kind of man Simon was. So there is no reason to withdraw by ourselves from the Lord's grace because of the fact that our sins have been revealed. For the Lord reveals sin so that we do not turn away from the Savior while holding on to our own righteousness. If we stop at acknowledging sin, we only ask Him in fear to depart; but Jesus, who came to sinners, is the Savior who resolves that sin.

The ground on which Jesus can draw near to sinners is not that He regards sin lightly, but that He Himself bore that sin. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and the sins that you and I will commit throughout our whole lives are also included in that sin of the world. Bearing the sins He had thus taken upon Himself, He 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 and became our Savior. That is why two changes take place in a person who has met the Lord. One is realizing that he is a great sinner before God, and the other is discovering that the Lord has removed all that sin with His baptism and the blood of the Cross.

Here is the reason we can believe that we are righteous before God even while seeing sin revealed within ourselves. It is not because we assess ourselves as people who do not sin, but because we believe in Jesus, who bore our sins without exception and paid their price. When the faults of the flesh are revealed, acknowledge those faults, but do not deny the salvation the Lord has accomplished. If we look only at ourselves, we

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want to step back from the Lord; but if we know how the Lord dealt with our sins, we can draw near with thanksgiving. The authority to make sinners righteous does not lie in ourselves but in Jesus.

He made him a worker who catches men

The Lord gave Simon, who had fallen down, a word to overcome his fear. *"And so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men'" (Luke 5:10)*. To the man who had asked Him to depart, Jesus instead spoke of the work He would entrust to him from then on. It means that He would establish Simon, who had been catching fish, as a worker of righteousness who preaches salvation to people. The Lord, who had resolved his problem of sin, did not leave Simon's past to determine his future, but made him an instrument of righteousness.

The grace that has made us righteous also extends this far. A person who had no ability to wash away his own sins is now able to preach the remission of sins to others. It is not that we remove someone's sins by our experience or character, but that we preach through the word the salvation Jesus has already accomplished. Therefore, do not look at your own insufficiency and conclude that you cannot be used by the Lord. Since the Lord is not One who entrusted us with work without knowing our sins, but One who, knowing all our sins and having remitted them, called us to do righteous work, a person who knows this grace can receive with thanksgiving even the small work entrusted to him.

Verse 11 shows the steps of those who heard that calling. *"So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him" (Luke 5:11)*. Though they had caught many fish, their hearts turned not to the fish but to Jesus, who had given them the fish. It was because they knew that the Lord who was calling them was more precious than what they had held on to and lived by until then. For us who have been saved, too, the One who sets the purpose of our lives is Jesus. Do not put first only the fulfilling of your own cravings, but give your heart and time for the souls the Lord holds precious. The grace of salvation we have already received makes that service possible.

At first, the empty net seemed to tell of Simon's day, but after he met the Lord, His calling opened Simon's future. We, too, must not forget what the Lord has given us while counting only what we have not obtained. Since we have received the remission of sins and come to stand before God, and have even come to take part in the work of preaching the word of life to others, the salvation the Lord has given is that great and deep. Rely on Jesus, who took the sinner who had asked Him to depart in the face of an empty net and made him a worker who catches men. Walking according to the word of Him who knew all about us and yet saved us is the way now opened to us. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Testify of the fact that you have been made clean

< Luke 5:12–16 >

“And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately the leprosy left him. And He charged him to tell no one, ‘But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded.’ However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.”

The man who came out seeking to be made clean

When a person has a problem he cannot resolve by his own strength, he easily hesitates even while seeking help. It is because he thinks that if he comes forward as he is now, he might be rejected. The man in the passage had leprosy over his whole

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body, yet he did not stay far away hiding his body. He fell down before Jesus and asked to be made clean, confessing that the Lord had the power that he himself did not have. When we come to the Lord with the problem of sin, too, whose power we rely on must be just as clear.

"And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean'" (Luke 5:12). This man did not say that he could heal his own disease. He said that if Jesus was willing, He could make him clean, and in that plea was the faith that the power to heal belonged to Jesus. Since Jesus' power does not become smaller just because the disease showing over his whole body was severe, he could ask the Lord even while looking at his own condition.

We, too, when we realize our sins, must not think that we can come to the Lord only after first making ourselves clean. If, even though we have come to the One who remits sins, we think that the Lord will accept us only when we have washed away our sins to some degree, our hearts are still relying on our own strength. Acknowledging our wrongs without hiding them is necessary, but since that acknowledgment itself is not the power that removes sin, what a person who has realized his sins needs is to hear and believe how the Savior bore his sins.

Since the passage does not say that this man became sick because he committed some sin, we should not read it treating the sick body as the same thing as sin. What we should look at is the fact that a man who could not become clean by his own strength came forward relying on the power of Jesus. Following the direction of that faith, we, too, must seek the will of the Lord, who remits sins, and accept the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

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Cleanness was brought about by the will and word of the Lord

"Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' Immediately the leprosy left him" (Luke 5:13). Jesus heard the man's plea, put out His hand, and touched his body. And when He told him to be cleansed, the disease immediately departed. It was not that the man was healed after promising how fine a work he would do in the future; rather, his body was made clean just as the Lord willed and spoke. Therefore, the one who has been healed cannot but boast of the grace Jesus bestowed rather than of his own resolution.

If a person does not know the Lord's will, he comes to judge salvation according to his own condition. When his heart is fervent, it seems that the Lord has accepted him, but when his faults are revealed, he again regards himself as having been cast away. But our feelings cannot wash away sin, and what the Lord has accomplished does not change just because our feelings have changed. As long as we look for the ground of cleanness in ourselves, worry does not end; but when we know and believe the Lord's salvation, what we must rely on becomes clear.

Think of what Jesus did to make us clean. The Lord, who put out His hand and touched the sick body, did not merely speak from afar about our sins either; rather, by receiving baptism from John, He had the sin of the world passed on to His own body once and for all and bore it. Included in it are not only the sins we have already committed but all the sins we commit as we live our whole lives. Bearing that sin, Jesus went to the Cross, shed His blood and died, thereby receiving in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and became the living Savior. Because His taking the sin upon Himself and His receiving the punishment for that sin are joined

together as one, we believe in the Lord's baptism and the Cross together.

The faith that believes in this gospel is different from merely cherishing a wish to become clean. It is accepting in our hearts what Jesus actually did to make us clean. If we think that some of our own sins remain that have not yet been passed on to the Lord and try to wash away those sins by our own efforts, we are in effect setting our own sins apart from the sin of the world that the Lord bore. We can believe in the remission of sins not because we regard our faults lightly, but because Jesus has already received the judgment for those sins.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, when a wrong is revealed, we must acknowledge it and turn back. But we must not, every time we discover our own insufficiency, treat even the Lord's salvation as something incomplete. A person who believes in the grace that has remitted sins has no need to hide his wrongs and pretend to be righteous; rather, he can examine himself honestly before the Lord and live according to the word. The strength to fight against sin, too, does not arise from building up our own righteousness, but comes from relying on the Lord, who has saved us completely.

First be made clean, and then testify

"And He charged him to tell no one, 'But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded'" (Luke 5:14). Jesus told the man who had been healed to show himself to the priest and to make the offering Moses commanded. Here we must look carefully at the order. He did not say that one becomes clean only when the offering is made; rather, He commanded

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him to testify of that fact because he had already been made clean. If we reverse this order of first receiving what the Lord has done and then acting according to that grace, we come to regard even what should be offered in thanksgiving as a condition for obtaining salvation.

In our life of faith, too, this order is important. Service and devotion are not paying a price so that the Lord will remit our sins. Because we believe that the Lord remitted sin with His baptism and the Cross and opened the way to live with His resurrection, we give thanks for that salvation and preach it to others as well. If we try to prove our cleanness by the size of what we have done, on days when we have done little we doubt our salvation, and on days when we have done much we exalt ourselves. The evidence of faith does not lie in putting forward our own toil as the ground of salvation, but in acknowledging what Jesus has accomplished.

As the report spread, great multitudes gathered. *"Great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities" (Luke 5:15)*. The Scriptures convey this about Jesus at that time. *"He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed" (Luke 5:16)*. The passage shows, side by side with the great interest of the people, the Lord praying in a deserted place. We, too, must not neglect hearing the Lord's word while chasing only visible responses. Rightly knowing the Lord, who has made us clean, and testifying of that grace comes before becoming widely known to people.

At first, this man fell down with his sick body and asked the Lord to make him clean. Now he could go with the body the Lord had made clean and testify of that fact. What lay between was not the man's resolution, but what was accomplished by the will and word of Jesus. Let us, too, not keep looking only at ourselves who were tormented by sin, but believe that Jesus,

who took all sins upon Himself, was judged, and rose again, has already made us clean. And like that man, let us live testifying of the fact that we have been made clean, just as we received it. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The Son of Man has authority on earth to remit sins

< Luke 5:17–26 >

“Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them. Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. When He saw their faith, He said to him, ‘Man, your sins are forgiven you.’ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, ‘Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, ‘Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, “Your sins are forgiven you,” or to say, “Rise up and walk”? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the man who was paralyzed, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, ‘We have seen strange things today!’”

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The word first given to the man carried in on a bed

People carried a bed to Jesus, but they could not get inside because of the crowd. So they went up onto the roof. *"They went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus" (Luke 5:19)*. The man lying on the bed was a paralytic, and the pressing problem before his eyes must have been his body that could not move. Yet when this man was let down before Jesus, the first word he heard was not a word about the sickness of his body. The Lord first declared the remission of sins to him.

"When He saw their faith, He said to him, 'Man, your sins are forgiven you'" (Luke 5:20). Jesus did not see only the bed that had come down through the roof; He saw their faith. The toil of bringing the sick man reveals a faith that sought to come to Jesus by breaking through difficulty. However, the act of striving hard enough to tear open the roof did not become the price for remitting sins. Because Jesus, to whom they looked, had the authority to remit sins, this man received a grace that he could not have obtained by his own strength.

Here we must distinguish between what a person can do and what he cannot do. We can help others, endure hardship, and do good deeds, but we cannot remove the sins we have already committed by doing so. Nor does the problem of sin that remains before God disappear by itself just because we realize our wrongs and regret them. Only when we admit the fact that we cannot wash away our sins ourselves do we come to seek the remission of sins that the Savior bestows, instead of putting forward our own merit.

This does not mean, however, that the toil of those people was useless. They carried out the task of bringing the sick man to Jesus, and Jesus remitted sins and healed the sickness. Our

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place in preaching the gospel is like this too: we can preach the word to a person who is suffering because of sin and help him come to know the Lord. Only, we must not forget the fact that we do not become that person's savior, but help him meet Jesus, who remits sins.

Who has the authority to declare the remission of sins

The scribes and the Pharisees who heard the word of the remission of sins could not accept Jesus' authority. *"And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, 'Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?'" (Luke 5:21)*. The statement itself that no one but God can remit sins is right. The problem lay in whom they took Jesus, who was before their eyes, to be. If one thinks of Jesus merely as someone with special abilities among men, one is amazed at the healing of sickness and yet becomes unable to believe the word that He remits sins.

Jesus is the Son of God who came in the body of a man, and He is God who made us. Therefore, the Lord not only can see our circumstances and comfort us, but also has the authority to resolve the problem of sin that stands before God. Covering sin over by human judgment and God remitting sin are not the same. The remission of sins is not a phrase that dresses up sin as if it had never happened, but the grace of God that saves the sinner from judgment.

Jesus, who knew their hearts, asked which was easier, the word that one's sins had been remitted or the word to rise up and walk. This question must not be read merely as a matter of choosing the sentence that is easier to say. The Lord Himself

made clear what He intended to make known through the action that followed. *"'But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins'—He said to the man who was paralyzed, 'I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house'" (Luke 5:24)*. Raising the sick man was a work meant to make them know the fact that Jesus has the authority to remit sins.

Therefore, we must not stop at the amazing scene of the sick man becoming able to walk, but must listen to the word of the One who did that work. The healing of sickness, which can be confirmed with the eyes, supports the word of the remission of sins, which cannot be seen with the eyes. If we rejoice in Jesus' power to heal and yet doubt the word that He remits sins, we miss the intention that the Lord meant to make known through this work. The Lord also hears our petitions concerning our bodies, but He first makes us believe that He is the Savior who delivers us from the judgment of sin.

Behind the word that Jesus remits sins lies the work of salvation that the Lord Himself carried out. The Lord did not speak of the remission of sins while taking sin lightly or disregarding judgment. When Jesus met the paralytic, He had already received baptism from John in the Jordan River, and with that baptism He had all the sins of the world passed on to His body once and for all. Since the Lord took upon Himself the sins that belonged to us, the sins we commit throughout our lives are also included in the sin of the world that was passed on to the Lord. So the One who declared the remission of sins to this man was the very One who was already bearing that man's sins on His own body.

And the Lord, bearing the sin of the world that He had taken upon Himself, went to the Cross, shed His blood, and died. The reason Jesus, who is without sin, died is that, having taken our

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sins upon Himself, He received in our place the judgment that we were to receive. The Lord, who afterward rose again from death, is the living Savior who overcame sin and death. Because the authority of the remission of sins is in this way the authority of the One who took sins upon Himself and paid the price in full, we hear that word and receive the remission of sins by faith.

To believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit is not to wait vaguely for Jesus to remit our sins someday. It is to accept as one's own salvation the baptism by which He had our sins passed on to Him, the Cross on which He bore the punishment for those sins, and the resurrection by which He overcame death. If the basis for believing the Lord's word that He has remitted our sins lay in the perfection of our conduct, we could not be at ease for even a moment. But because that basis lies in the salvation that Jesus accomplished, we can be sure of the remission of sins even while knowing our own shortcomings.

Nor is it confidence that our faith is strong that removes sins. What matters is that the One on whom faith relies has the authority to remit sins and that He has actually accomplished salvation. Therefore, when we discover our weakness, we must not try to find another way to save ourselves, but must return to the Lord, who took our sins wholly upon Himself and dealt with them. As we hear the Lord's word again and rely on His grace, we can turn from our wrongs and learn to live righteously.

The way he went back, glorifying God

"Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God" (Luke 5:25). The man who had been carried in on a bed now went back home taking what he had been lying on. At the center

of that change was the word of Jesus, and he gave glory to God. The Scriptures convey that the people who were there were also amazed and gave glory to God. We who read this scene must likewise not stop at marveling at that man's recovery, but must believe in the authority of Jesus, who spoke to him.

For us who have received the remission of sins, too, a way has opened to live giving thanks to the Lord. Rather than merely repeating the things we once did in our struggle to wash away our sins, we must rely on the grace the Lord has bestowed, follow the word, and preach the news of salvation to others. When we preach this grace, what we have to put forward is not a boast of how strong a person we have become, but making known how Jesus remitted the sins that we could not resolve by ourselves.

On the bed that the people first carried in lay a man who could not raise himself, but Jesus declared the remission of sins to him and made him rise and go back. That bed now became the evidence he took with him. Let us, too, not remain in discouragement in the face of what we cannot do, but believe the word of the Son of Man, who *"has power on earth to forgive sins" (Luke 5:24)*, that is, Jesus, who took our sins upon Himself with His baptism and resolved those sins with the Cross and the resurrection. Just as that man did, let us also walk the way of going back, glorifying God, holding the remission of sins we have received. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The new joy given to the guests sitting with the bridegroom

< Luke 5:27–39 >

“After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he left all, rose up, and followed Him. Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, ‘Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’ Then they said to Him, ‘Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?’ And He said to them, ‘Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days.’ Then He spoke a parable to them: ‘No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will

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burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, "The old is better."'"

Levi, who rose from the tax office and held a feast

At Levi's house people had gathered and were sharing a meal. At that feast, where Jesus and His disciples were present, many tax collectors and others were also sitting, and the Pharisees and the scribes, seeing that place, complained about the disciples. Though they were looking at the same feast, the joy of Levi, who had met Jesus, and the judgment of those watching from outside differed in this way. The passage begins with the question of whom one eats with, and teaches what joy was given to the one who met the Savior and where that joy must be put.

Before that feast, there was a call that came to Levi. *"After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me'" (Luke 5:27)*. A tax collector was a man who collected taxes from his own people for Rome and filled his own belly, and so he was hated by the people as one worse than a sinner. Jesus saw such a Levi where he sat at the tax office and called him, and Levi *"left all, rose up" (Luke 5:28)* and followed the Lord. Because he knew that the Lord had called him even while knowing all about him, he valued Jesus, who was calling him, more than the work that had been at the center of his life.

That joy led to a feast. *"Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them" (Luke 5:29)*. Levi's holding a great feast for Jesus shows that following the Lord was not a

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duty forced upon him but a joy. Yet because those who complained did not know why Jesus sat with these people, the Lord made the reason clear with the word that only those who are sick have need of a physician. Only one who knew that he was a sick person in need of a physician could sit in that place and eat together.

Just as Levi rose up and followed the Lord, our hearts, too, must turn toward the Lord from the place where we relied on ourselves. If we think that we cannot meet Jesus because we are sinners, we have understood the purpose for which the Savior came the other way around. The Lord is the One who calls those who cannot resolve their sins by themselves, gives them the remission of sins, and sits together with them in their house.

Learn the joy of being with the bridegroom

Next, the people said that the disciples of John and those of the Pharisees fast often, whereas Jesus' disciples eat and drink. If one compares visible behavior, the side that fasts may look more devout. But Jesus did not immediately agree with that comparison; instead, He likened Himself, who was with His disciples, to the bridegroom of a wedding house. *"And He said to them, 'Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them?'" (Luke 5:34)*. To think about what the guests at a feast ought to do, one must first see the fact that the bridegroom is with them.

This word does not set fasting itself as something that is always wrong. The Lord said, *"But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days" (Luke 5:35)*. What we should note in the passage is that, because they judged the disciples by the standard of

conduct they themselves had set, they failed to see Jesus, who was with the disciples. When the Savior has come and is bestowing grace, one must know how to receive that grace and rejoice, but if one regards only what is familiar to oneself as right, one becomes unable to accept even the work that the Lord is doing.

This joy that the guests enjoy together with the bridegroom comes from what Jesus did. By receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, Jesus had the sins of the whole world passed on to His body once and for all, and in those sins that the bridegroom took upon Himself were included the sins of the guests sitting with Him. Jesus, who was nailed to the Cross bearing those sins, received in our place the judgment for our sins by shedding His blood and dying, and He rose again from death and became the living Lord who has saved us. Because the bridegroom gave His own body for the guests in this way, a new joy that had never existed before came to those guests.

Therefore, for the one who believes in this gospel, the remission of sins is not a reward given according to how long one has displayed one's own anguish, but a gift received by believing in the grace of the Lord, who had sins passed on to Him and was judged. Because the toil of tormenting ourselves cannot take the place of the Lord's baptism and the Cross, we do not boast of that toil but rejoice in the salvation that the Savior has completed. The joy of being with the Lord is not the light pleasure of one who does not know sin, but the thanksgiving of one who knows the grace that has remitted sins.

Believing in grace does not mean that nothing sad ever happens in life, and so when the body grows weak or problems arise in daily living, saints too grieve and petition the Lord. Only, even at such times there is no need to bind ourselves under sin again in order to obtain salvation. For we can rely on Jesus, who

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has remitted our sins, and seek His help. Even when our circumstances change, the salvation that the Lord accomplished does not change, and so that grace holds our hearts fast even in the midst of difficulty.

New joy must be put into new wineskins

Speaking of the new garment and the old garment, Jesus said that if one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old one, one not only ruins the new garment, but the piece also does not match the old garment. Also, if one puts new wine into old wineskins, the wineskins burst and even the wine is spilled. So the Lord said, *"But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved" (Luke 5:38)*. It means that if one claims to have received the new and yet insists on the old ways that do not fit it, one cannot rightly keep what one has received.

The saved person is the new garment and the new thing. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17)*. Because the salvation that the Lord has given is not a decoration added on to adorn one's former life a little, the one who has received the remission of sins must live by a faith that fits that salvation. If one believes that Jesus has remitted all sins and yet thinks that one must wash away sins little by little through one's own deeds, the heart that believes in the Lord's salvation and the heart that relies on one's own strength cannot but stand against each other within one person. That is like putting a piece of a new garment on an old garment; they do not match each other.

Just as new wine is put into new wineskins, the new joy of the saved saints is preserved within the church, where saints who

believe in the same gospel and have been born again believe the word and serve the gospel together. If we remain only in enjoying by ourselves the grace we have received from the Lord, that joy does not last long; but when we are of one heart with those who have received the same salvation, even if we each have shortcomings, we help one another while remembering the grace of the Lord who saved us, and together we carry out the work of preaching that salvation to those who do not yet know the gospel. The reality of the new life lies in the change of life's purpose from pursuing only self-satisfaction to serving the Lord's will.

In the last verse Jesus said, *"And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better'" (Luke 5:39)*. One who has never tasted new wine says that the old is good and does not seek the new. It is like this when a person who has not been born again does not know the new joy that the Lord gives and regards the religious life familiar to him as good just as it is. But because one who has tasted the new joy cannot go back to the old, even after being saved we must renew that joy by hearing the word and lay down old thoughts and old habits.

Let us think again about the feast held at Levi's house. Those who complained took issue with the sight of sitting together with tax collectors, but sitting together in that place was the bridegroom who would give His own body for the guests. As those who have received that call, we can live rejoicing together with the Savior. Let us not put the new joy that the Lord has given into old wineskins and spill it, but renew our hearts and lives to fit that grace. Like Levi, who rose from the tax office and held a feast, let us go forward on the way of serving the Lord with the joy of the guests sitting with the bridegroom. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Should we stop at the confession that we are sinners?

< Luke 5:27–32 >

“After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he left all, rose up, and followed Him. Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, ‘Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’”

One’s own sins, which cannot be seen by comparing oneself with others

A person who acknowledges his own sins looks humble. However, saying many times that one is a sinner and believing in the Lord who saves sinners are not the same thing. We must get out of the fault of exalting ourselves, but we may also keep repeating only words that lower ourselves while not accepting

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the salvation the Lord has accomplished. When we know the purpose for which Jesus called sinners, it becomes clear how we should acknowledge our own sins and how we should believe in the Lord's grace.

When a feast was held at Levi's house, the Pharisees and the scribes complained against the disciples. *"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)*. They took issue with the fact that the people eating together were sinners. The Pharisees were people who, outwardly, did not even tell lies and lived their religious lives well, so they would have thought that if Jesus, who drew near to tax collectors and sinners, were a true prophet, He could not fail to know what sort of people they were. However, Jesus did not draw near to sinners without knowing them; rather, because He knew that they were sinners and people who needed salvation, He sat down with them and bestowed grace on them.

The more clearly we see the faults of other people, the easier it is for us to forget to look back on ourselves. This is because we compare the sins others have committed with the sins we ourselves have committed and think that we are not that evil. However, in the human heart there is by nature a heart that steals, and it is only that we have not committed that sin because we did not sit, like a tax collector, in a place to collect what belongs to others; if only the circumstances are provided, anyone can commit that sin. The Lord spoke of what comes out from within a person as follows: *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21–22)*. Even if there is a difference in the actions that are revealed, when we acknowledge that what comes out from within us is like this, the

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fact that we ourselves need a Savior becomes more urgent than the leisure to look on at the faults of other people.

Jesus answered the words of complaint as follows: *"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick'" (Luke 5:31)*. It is not strange for a sick person to seek a physician, and for a physician to be near sick people is also doing his own work. Therefore, when we see the Lord being with sinners, what we must ask is not how bad those people are, but what Jesus, who met the sinners, intends to do for them. And we must also know that we, too, are sick people who need that grace.

Saying that one knows oneself to be a sinner does not mean that one should deliberately do more evil deeds in order to create the qualification to be saved. It means to acknowledge the fact that we have already sinned before God and cannot wash away those sins by ourselves. While we think that we can stand by our own righteousness if we fix a few small faults, it is hard to rely fully on the Savior. A person who considers himself a little bit of a sinner seeks only a little help, but a person who honestly knows that he is a complete sinner does not put forward a righteousness he has kept hidden, but comes to rely fully on the salvation the Lord bestows.

Repentance is turning back to the Lord who has remitted sins

"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:32). If we hear only the part about calling sinners, detached from this word, we may think that we must keep holding on to the state of being a sinner in order to remain close to the Lord. However, the Lord clearly said that He came

to call sinners to repentance. The purpose of the calling is to have sinners acknowledge their sins, turn back to the Lord, and receive the remission of sins. Just as a physician does not finish his work merely by the fact that he has met a sick person, the Lord did not call sinners in order to leave them as sinners, but called complete sinners in order to make them completely righteous people.

Therefore, a person who knows his own sins must hear how the Lord remitted those sins. If one clearly believes the fact that one has sinned, yet keeps doubting the gospel that He has remitted those sins, one is accepting the words about oneself while not accepting the work the Savior has done. Because the word that made us acknowledge our sins at the same time testifies of the Lord who has saved us, we must not let the knowledge of our own sinfulness push out the word of salvation.

Jesus knew the fact that we have no ability to remove our sins, and He Himself carried out the work of salvation. The Lord's receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River was in order to have the sin of the world passed on to His own body once and for all and to bear it, and the sins that were passed on to Jesus include all the sins of our whole lives that we commit from the time we are born and as we live. Jesus, who thus took sins upon Himself, shed His blood and died on the Cross in order to pay the price of those sins, and thereby received in our place the judgment that we were to receive; and He rose again from death and became the Savior who gives eternal salvation to sinners. He bore all our sins at the Jordan River and bore them all on the Cross.

If the Lord took sins upon Himself with His baptism and even received the judgment for them on the Cross, we cannot regard our own sins as something greater than the Lord's salvation. If there are sins we have left in our hearts, as though

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Jesus had remitted only a few sins, we must hear again how far the sin of the world that the Lord bore extends. Before God there are only complete sinners and completely righteous people, and there is no such thing as a little bit of a sinner or a little bit of a righteous person. What makes us righteous is not the act itself of confessing that we have sinned, but the faith that believes in the salvation of Jesus, who has remitted all sins.

Saying that we are righteous by this faith is not boasting that our conduct has become perfect. Since there is still weakness in the flesh and faults that depart from the word are also revealed, we must examine ourselves and turn back every day. Nevertheless, the reason we can say that we are righteous before God is that the Lord has remitted all sins. The confession that we were complete sinners in the flesh and the faith that we have become completely righteous by believing in the Lord's salvation in our hearts do not contradict each other. Rather, the more we throw away our own merit, the more we come to rely only on the righteousness the Lord has given.

This distinction is also needed when we acknowledge our faults. Making excuses for our own faults or shifting them onto other people is not the attitude of one who believes in grace. We must honestly acknowledge and set right what we have done wrong, but we must not think that we will wash away our sins before God again by that toil. Because we rely on the Savior who has already remitted our sins, we do not hide our faults in order to save face, but can humble ourselves before the word and learn the right way.

How a person made righteous by grace sees his neighbor

Jesus, who called Levi, was not unaware of what sort of person he was. Levi heard that calling and rose up from the tax office. *"So he left all, rose up, and followed Him" (Luke 5:28).* If we think that we were called because there was some admirable quality hidden within us, then when we deal with other people, too, we will first assess how many admirable qualities that person has. However, when we believe that we, who were sinners, have been made righteous by grace, we also become thankful for the salvation the Lord bestows on other people.

We, too, may repeat the judgment of those who complained outside Levi's feast when we see the weakness of a saint. That is, we explain our own shortcomings as something that arose because there were circumstances, while we make the shortcomings of others the grounds for judging that whole person. Even though we have clearly received the remission of sins, if we do not admit that we were complete sinners, our own righteousness remains and makes us see the other person that way. At such times we must look back on what we were saved by. When we remember that we were not chosen because we were righteous and good, but were saved by believing in the grace of the Lord who remits sins, then even in the face of another person's faults we come to praise the Lord who saved a person like that.

This does not mean, however, that we should call wrong right or leave evil deeds alone. It means that we must set faults right according to the word, but must not treat people with a heart that despises them. Because we know the fact that we ourselves cannot stand without grace, when we help a weak brother we

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come to hope that he will rely on the Lord and stand upright again, rather than trying to confirm our own superiority. A heart that believes in the remission of sins gives us the assurance of salvation and gives us the strength to convey grace to our neighbors.

At the beginning we asked how far we should go with the confession that we are sinners. That confession must make us lay down the heart that exalted itself, and without stopping there, it must lead us to the Lord who has remitted our sins. To keep remaining like a person who has not received salvation while acknowledging sin is not humility, but is receiving only half of the will of the Lord who came to call *"sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:32)*. Let us believe in the Lord, who has made us who were complete sinners into completely righteous people. Holding together the honesty of knowing ourselves and the assurance of believing in the Savior, let us live conveying that grace to other people as well, like Levi, who rose up from the tax office. ✉

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CHAPTER

6

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath

< Luke 6:1–5 >

“Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands. And some of the Pharisees said to them, ‘Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?’ But Jesus answering them said, ‘Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?’ And He said to them, ‘The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.’”

The accusation against the hungry disciples

Even when one sees a hungry person rubbing heads of grain and eating them, one can look for a fault before looking at that hunger. Some of the Pharisees who appear in the Gospel of Luke looked at the disciples of Jesus in that way. To them, finding out something forbidden on the Sabbath was what mattered, but Jesus revealed the will of God that was missing from that judgment. We who read this word must also examine whether we are missing the Lord, who gives rest, while weighing only what we have kept.

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"Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands" (Luke 6:1). The disciples rubbed the heads of grain in their hands in order to eat them. But some of the Pharisees took issue with them. *"And some of the Pharisees said to them, 'Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?'" (Luke 6:2)*. Even while looking at the same action, rather than considering the disciples' need, they judged that a regulation had been broken. Now the dispute begins from the act of eating the heads of grain and moves on to the question of who rightly knows the will of God in giving rest.

A heart that holds the word of God precious is necessary. However, a person who puts the word forward does not always understand even the will of God rightly. This is because, while condemning others on the basis of the regulations he himself keeps, he may turn away from the heart of God, who has compassion on that person. Therefore, we must not regard our own faith as right merely on the grounds that we have judged strictly. We must first ask whether that judgment agrees with the will of the Lord, who gave the word.

The reason He made them read again what David did

Jesus answered their question by citing what David did when he was hungry. *"But Jesus answering them said, 'Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him'" (Luke 6:3)*. We must consider the point that He asked back, to people who already read the Scriptures, whether they had not read it. It was not because they

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did not read the Scriptures, but because they failed to apply the word they knew rightly to judging what the disciples were doing now. Jesus made them go back to the word they acknowledged and examine their own judgment.

David went into the house of God, ate the showbread that no one but the priests could eat, and also gave it to those who were with him. In the passage where the Lord spoke of this matter, the hunger of David and his company appears together with it. If we remember only the regulation concerning the bread and fail to see that food was given to hungry people, we can miss the mercy of God even after reading the word. Jesus did not hide what David did or make an excuse from outside the Scriptures; He presented the recorded fact as it was.

Even so, this must not be broadened to mean that if one is hungry, one may break the word of God as one pleases. If each person makes his own circumstances the final standard, it only ends in replacing the judgment of the Pharisees with the judgment of yet another person. After speaking of what David did, Jesus made clear who the Lord of the Sabbath is, and thereby made known that the authority for that judgment lay with Himself. Therefore, those who judged the disciples, too, had to lay down their own judgment before the authority of Jesus.

We, too, easily hold on only to the parts of the word that suit our own thinking. The Pharisees in the grainfields also remembered the Sabbath regulations in detail, yet they read and passed over the mercy of God by which the showbread was given to the hungry David and his company. But the law is not a tool for setting oneself up as righteous by comparison with others. When we hold ourselves up to the holy word of God, the fact is revealed that we, too, are people who must receive the remission of sins. When we acknowledge that fact, we also come to see the grace that other people need.

The Lord of the Sabbath, who lifts the burden of sin from us

Jesus, who had spoken of what David did, declared His own authority as follows. *"And He said to them, 'The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath'" (Luke 6:5)*. The Son of Man refers to Jesus, who came to this earth in a human body. He does not remain one person who adds an opinion about what may be done on the Sabbath. As the Lord of the Sabbath, He makes clear the meaning of the rest that God has given, and He gives true rest to the person who has lost rest because of sin. Hearing this declaration, we must move the center of our judgment from our own deeds to the Lord.

A person may stop working outwardly, but he cannot by himself take off the burden of sin that remains in his heart. This is because, even if he tries not to recall his wrongs or resolves to do better in the future, the judgment for the sins he has already committed does not disappear by that. If he tries to obtain rest by piling up more deeds, he becomes afraid again every time he discovers his own lack. The One we need is not a person who merely urges us to rest, but Jesus Christ, who actually bore sin and its judgment and saves us.

When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, He had all the sin of mankind passed on to Him once and for all. The sins of our whole lives, which we commit from the time we are born until we die, are also included in that sin of the world. The Lord bore that sin and went to the Cross, and by shedding His blood and dying He received in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. In the rest the Lord gives, there is this work of salvation by which He resolved sin. Therefore, the object of the faith that obtains rest is also not our resolve, but the Lord's

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salvation, which He accomplished with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

If we believe this salvation that the Lord of the Sabbath accomplished, we come to accept the fact that the Lord did not leave even one of our sins behind. It is not that salvation is complete only on days when our hearts are at peace, and becomes insufficient on days when we discover our weakness. All our sins are included in the scope of the sins the Lord bore, and because the Lord has already received the judgment for those sins, we can rest by faith. A person who believes this does not try to feel safe by hiding his wrongs; while acknowledging his wrongs, he finds the basis of salvation in the Lord.

This grace does not make us take sin lightly. When we believe the fact that the Lord shed His blood and died because of our sins, how could we boast of those sins? Rather, because we know that we cannot become righteous by our own merit, we come to learn the word of the Lord, turn back from wrong paths, and treat people with the love we have received. Rest is not a permission to live any way we please, but the grace that frees us from the fear of trying to obtain salvation and enables us to serve the Lord with thanksgiving.

In the action of David that Jesus recalled, there was also sharing with those who were with him. *"How he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?" (Luke 6:4)*. Before this word, we must look back on the attitude of having set our hearts only on finding out who had broken a regulation. A person who lives by grace cannot exalt his own piety while turning away from the needs of others. To look after the hungry, and to make known the salvation the Lord accomplished to those who are in anguish because of sin, is a life that befits the rest we have received.

The question that began in the grainfields led in the end to the question of from whom we obtain rest. Some of the Pharisees examined the disciples' hands, but the Lord declared that the Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath. We, too, must believe in Jesus, who bore all sins and the judgment, rather than trying to produce peace of heart by counting up our deeds every day. When we rest in the salvation He has bestowed and look after our neighbors, the thanksgiving of a person who has met the Lord of the Sabbath will appear in our lives as well. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Why were they enraged even after seeing the restored hand?

< Luke 6:6–11 >

"Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered. So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him. But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Arise and stand here.' And he arose and stood. Then Jesus said to them, 'I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?' And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus."

The man who stood in the middle of the synagogue

One person being healed is something to rejoice over together. However, on the day the man with the withered hand was restored by the word of Jesus, some people were enraged

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rather than rejoicing. This was because their interest was not in the recovery of the sick man. This passage shows the power of Jesus and, at the same time, reveals how stubborn a heart that sees that grace and yet does not accept it can be. We, too, must look back, before this word, on the heart with which we treat the work of the Lord.

When Jesus was teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath, a man whose right hand was withered was there. But Luke says, *"So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him" (Luke 6:7)*. Thus, the place where the man with the withered hand needed help was, for them, an opportunity to obtain grounds to accuse Jesus. Looking to the Lord in expectation of being healed and watching the Lord in order to catch a fault may look similar on the outside, but the hearts are entirely different.

Even though Jesus knew their thoughts, He did not push the sick man back. *"But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Arise and stand here.' And he arose and stood" (Luke 6:8)*. The Lord raised that man up and made him stand in the middle of the synagogue. Now the people, even while speaking about the Sabbath, could no longer turn away from the man standing before their eyes. Jesus brought into the open, for all to see, the need of one person that had been hidden in the dispute surrounding the regulations.

That man did not come forward after first restoring his hand and proving his own strength; he heard the word of the Lord and stood up while still having a withered hand. This is because the restoration was not a power that came from that man, but the grace bestowed by Jesus, who called him. We, too, must not think that we can come to the Lord only after we have removed all our weaknesses. The reason we need a Savior is that we have

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no ability to escape from sin by ourselves, and the Lord came precisely to save us who are like that.

What is the good that is for life?

With the man standing in the middle before them, Jesus asked them a question. *"Then Jesus said to them, 'I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?'" (Luke 6:9)*. This question goes deeper than the calculation of what work must not be done on the Sabbath. It asks what good and evil are before God, and how we will accept the will of God, who saves life. If one tries to block that recovery before the One who has the authority to heal the sick, then even if one puts forward strictness, it cannot be following the good will of God.

The scribes and the Pharisees thought that the problem lay with Jesus, but the Lord's question shed light on their own hearts. If accusing Jesus is more important than a sick man being healed, how could that heart be called good? What they said about serving God and what they actually wanted were different from each other. We, too, must not believe that all our thoughts are right on the grounds that we know many words of faith. If we dislike what the Lord delights in, then what must be corrected at that time is not the word of the Lord but our hearts.

The word of God reveals that we are sinners and makes us rely on the Savior. But if, as the scribes and the Pharisees did, we examine only the faults of others with that word, we end up becoming people who judge others while hiding our own sins. We must acknowledge the fact that, just as the man with the withered hand needed help, our souls, too, must be saved. A sickness of the body is not evidence that that person has more

sins. What we need in this scene is not an attitude of looking down on the sick man, but the confession that we, too, cannot live without the grace of the Lord.

Jesus is not One who stands far off, waiting for people to become righteous by their own strength. The Lord came to this earth to save mankind, which is under sin, and by receiving baptism from John the Baptist He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. Even the sins we commit as we live our whole lives were passed on to the Lord at that time. Jesus, who bore those sins with His baptism, shed His blood and died on the Cross and received the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and gave complete salvation to us who believe.

Like the man who heard the word of the Lord and stood up while still having a withered hand, we, too, believe this salvation just as we are, in our weakness, and receive the remission of sins. The problem of sin is not resolved by hiding our lack to make ourselves look respectable. But when we believe the fact that the Lord took all sins upon Himself and finished even the judgment for them, we obtain from Jesus the righteousness that we do not have in ourselves. Because salvation was accomplished by the Lord's work, we do not try to buy grace by proving our own piety, but accept with thanksgiving the salvation He has already bestowed.

Once we know this salvation, we also come to rejoice when another person receives the remission of sins. This is because our share does not decrease just because grace is bestowed on a person who seemed more lacking than we are. Rather, we realize again that we, too, are living by the love we received freely. Therefore, the church must not become a place where we compete over one another's qualifications; we must set our hearts together on preaching the Lord's salvation and looking

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after the weak. That befits the will of the Lord, who holds life precious.

The restored hand and the heart that did not accept

Jesus looked around at them and spoke to the man with the withered hand. *"And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other" (Luke 6:10)*. When that man stretched out his hand as the Lord said, his hand was restored; thus the power of Jesus, who spoke, actually appeared. It was not that the act of stretching out the hand itself had the power to heal the sickness; because the Lord spoke and accomplished it, he received a restoration that he did not have in himself. In this way, faith does not begin with confirming our own possibilities, but with accepting the word that the Lord speaks.

The assurance of the remission of sins must also be thought of in the same direction. The fact of salvation does not become any clearer by our endlessly examining whether we have become good enough. We must know and believe, through the word, how the Lord bore our sins and how He received the judgment for them. His baptism and the blood of the Cross are the actual work by which He resolved our sins, and the risen Lord is our Savior even now. For us to believe that grace is to accept as true what the Lord has accomplished.

However, the reactions of the people who were in the synagogue were not all the same. *"But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus" (Luke 6:11)*. Even in the face of the fact that the hand had been

Why were they enraged even after seeing the restored hand?

restored, the hearts of the scribes and the Pharisees did not open toward the Lord. Because they did not abandon their initial thought of looking for an opportunity to accuse Him, they became filled with rage even after seeing the man who had been healed. This reaction shows the fact that merely seeing the Lord's good work with one's eyes does not make the stubbornness of the heart disappear of itself. The discussion of that day grew into a plot to kill the Lord, and this threat of death always accompanied the Lord's three years of work. But even in the face of that threat, the Lord did not stop the work of saving life, and as the following word says, He went up to the mountain, prayed all night, and then appointed the twelve apostles.

We, too, can refuse the word in order to protect the thoughts we have set up. If we do not accept the Lord's salvation because we are unwilling to lay down the ways we have long known or our own pride, we cannot enjoy that grace even though it is near. Therefore, when we hear the word, we must not apply it only to other people, but must examine what place in our judgment must be corrected before the Lord. A person who acknowledges that he needs a Savior does not regard the Lord's grace as uncomfortable but receives it with thanks.

The man who was standing in the middle of the synagogue obtained a restored hand, but those who were looking for an opportunity to accuse held on to their rage to the end. Today, with which of these two hearts are we treating the Lord? We must believe in Jesus, who bore all sins and accomplished salvation, and rejoice that this salvation is preached to others as well. What befits us who have received the Lord's grace is not looking for a chance to condemn people, but preaching His word that gives life and caring for our weak neighbors. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

He chose the twelve after praying all night

< Luke 6:12–19 >

"Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor. And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all."

The disciples He called after praying all night

Just before this, the scribes and the Pharisees had discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus. At the time when that threat was growing, Jesus did not gather people or build up a force, but went up to the mountain and prayed to God. When

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many people gather and the work to be done increases, we are easily drawn immediately to appointing people and dividing up the work, but before the scene in which Jesus chose the twelve apostles, the night on which He prayed to God is recorded. When we read this order, we come to think about what is needed first for a person who takes up the Lord's work. Rather than going ahead merely with the zeal to do the work well, we must rely on the will of the Lord, who calls us, and on the power that comes from Him.

"Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12). Luke clearly records that the purpose for which Jesus went to the mountain was prayer. The Lord prayed to God all night long, and when it was day, He called His disciples. The Lord, who came in a human body, carried out the work of saving mankind from sin while praying to the Father. The appointing of the apostles was not something that happened suddenly according to the popularity of the people gathered that day, but was placed within the work of the Lord, who prayed to God. As we look at this scene, we must look back on the heart that tries to accomplish the work of God only by human judgment and ability.

Prayer does not stop at informing God of the plans we have already decided on. Because we rely on God, we lay our own thoughts before the word and ask for the strength and wisdom to follow His will. If we think that the ability to handle the work is sufficient within ourselves, self-confidence comes before prayer. Conversely, if we know that we are people who live by the grace of the Lord, we come to ask God for help, whether the work entrusted to us is small or great. We must get out of the contradiction of saying that we do the Lord's work while not relying on the Lord.

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Of course, we must not read this word as meaning that we become good workers only by filling up the hours of praying all night. Rather than presenting a timetable that we must fill, the passage shows the fact that Jesus, who called His disciples, prayed to God. Therefore, our interest also must not be placed on boasting about the time we have prayed, but on the faith that actually seeks God's will and entrusts things to Him. If we still insist only on our own will even after praying, it would be hard to say that we are relying on the Lord.

The place He entrusted to twelve men

When it was day, Jesus called His disciples and chose twelve from among them. *"And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles" (Luke 6:13)*. An apostle is a person who has been sent. That Jesus chose them and gave them that name lets us know that their work does not lie in revealing themselves, but in conveying the will of the Lord who sends them. They were not called to boast of their own authority over many people, but were appointed to follow Jesus and carry out the work that He entrusts to them.

The passage records the names of those twelve men one by one. The people, including Simon, who received the name Peter, his brother Andrew, James, and John, were not a vague group but real people whom the Lord had called. Each person had a different name, but the One who appointed them all was Jesus alone. Therefore, the place of a disciple cannot be grounds for exalting one's own name in comparison with others. Their authority does not come from a reputation they built up by

themselves, but lies in following and preaching the word that Jesus, who called them, entrusted to them.

At the end of that list there is also a record that must be read gravely. *"Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor" (Luke 6:16)*. While recording the names of the apostles, Luke does not hide the fact that Judas Iscariot later became the one who betrayed Jesus. This is a record showing that the fact that he had been near Jesus and that his name was on the list of the apostles could not take the place of a heart that believes in the Lord. We must not feel at ease merely because of the office entrusted to us or the career we have gone through, but must examine whom we are believing in and following now.

This fact does not mean that we should be afraid of serving the Lord and avoid it. It means that we should not be satisfied with a position obtained outwardly, but should actually believe in and serve the Lord who saved us. If we set our hearts on being recognized by people, we are easily shaken by praise and disappointment, but if we know the grace of salvation and rely on the Lord, the word that we must preach becomes more important than our own names. The reason the title of apostle is precious is also not that there is saving power in the name itself, but that the Lord sent them.

Today, after we have received the remission of sins, we too take part in the work of preaching the Lord's salvation as people who have been sent, like the apostles. At that time, rather than how important a work we have been entrusted with, we must think about who comes to know and believe in Jesus through that work. There are those who preach the word directly, and there are also those who pray together and help so that the gospel may be spread. Though the work entrusted to us differs, the purpose of serving the Lord who saves people is the same. Rather than finding satisfaction in people recognizing the labor of each of us,

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we must rejoice together that the gospel is spread and that they come to know and believe in the Lord.

The source of the power that healed everyone

After choosing the twelve men, Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place. There were many disciples and people who had come from various regions. They came to hear the word of Jesus and to be healed of their diseases, and the passage records this: *"As well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed" (Luke 6:18)*. The scene of appointing the apostles leads directly to the work of the Lord, who meets people. In the midst of that work, the disciples now come to see and learn what the Lord who called them is like.

The source of the power that appeared in that place is clear. *"And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all" (Luke 6:19)*. The multitude tried to touch Jesus, and the power that healed the people went out from Jesus. The fact that the names of the apostles are recorded before this does not mean that they became the source of the power in place of the Lord. Those who serve the Lord must not forget this distinction. Even if we are used as a channel to help people, the One who gives grace and salvation is always Jesus.

Jesus had compassion on those who suffered from diseases of the body, and He came to this earth to save mankind from sin and judgment. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, He had all the sin of mankind passed on to Him once and for all. The sins that each one of us commits throughout our whole lives are also included in all those sins of the world. The Lord bore that sin, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and thereby

received in our place the judgment that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and became the Savior of those who believe.

Therefore, the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we preach is not a word telling people to look up to the one who preaches it, but the news that sin was passed on through the baptism of Jesus, that its judgment was carried out on the Cross, and that the Lord, who rose again, has saved us completely. Those who hear this news do not obtain the remission of sins by relying on the ability of the one who preaches, but are saved by believing in Jesus, of whom that word testifies. Here also lies the reason a worker must not put himself forward. It is because the One whom people must hold on to is the Lord.

When we look back on the work entrusted to us, our shortcomings may be what we see first. But there is no need to retreat, reckoning only our own weakness, or, conversely, to go forward with self-confidence alone. We must believe that the power of salvation lies with the Lord, preach His word rightly, and ask God for the help we need. Since we do not become saviors in place of the Lord but make known the Lord who has already accomplished salvation, we can carry out the work entrusted to us while praying and learning with one another.

Jesus, who prayed all night at a time when discussions about killing Him were going back and forth, chose twelve men and came down with them into the midst of suffering people. What the disciples who had been called had to look to was not their own names being exalted, but the Lord's word being heard and His grace being conveyed. We too must engrave this order in our hearts and serve the gospel while relying on God. When we give thanks for the salvation we have received from the Lord and seek His will, we can get out of the place of boasting of people and set our hearts on testifying of the Savior. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Those who have already received their consolation and those who will receive the kingdom of God

< Luke 6:20–26 >

"Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: 'Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full, For you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, For you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.'"

The kingdom promised to the poor disciples

When we are well off now and recognized by people, it is easy to think that we have been blessed. Conversely, when our

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circumstances are hard and tears are many, we sometimes feel as if God were far away. But Jesus, looking at His disciples, spoke of blessing to the poor and warned of woe to the rich. It is because the Lord's judgment does not end with the circumstances before our eyes. Through this word, we must look back on what we hope for as we live, rather than on how much we have at present.

"Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: 'Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God'" (Luke 6:20). This word was spoken at the time when the religious leaders were discussing what they might do to Jesus, as He looked at the disciples He had appointed after praying all night. The Lord told the poor disciples that the kingdom of God was theirs, and it was not that He did not know their hardships or that He soothed them with empty words. Because the One who has the authority to give the kingdom of God promised it Himself, the disciples could hold on to that kingdom, which was not yet visible, as their own hope. Even if what they have in hand now is little, people who belong to the Lord are not people who have been abandoned to be poor forever, and because there is the kingdom that the Lord gives, their present lack does not determine their final condition.

Matthew conveys the same word as *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)*, but Luke records it as a word spoken before people who actually had nothing and were oppressed. Even so, lack of material things in itself does not wash away sin or make a person righteous. A person who has little can still look only to riches in his heart, and a person who has something can also realize his own sins and seek the Lord's salvation. The poor whom the Lord called blessed are those who are poor in both spirit and body, who cannot set their hope on this earth and set their hope on the

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kingdom of God. Therefore, a heart that cannot be satisfied with the things of the world must turn toward the grace that the Lord gives.

"Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh" (Luke 6:21). The Lord said that those who hunger and weep now are blessed, and that being filled and laughing are what they will obtain in the future; in this way He let us know that beyond this world there is the next world. The kingdom of God is not a kingdom of this world, and when it is fully revealed in the age to come, the Lord will give His people true satisfaction and joy. Therefore, above all, we must hunger for our own souls and weep for our own souls. It is because even if the storehouse is full of food, if sin remains in the heart there is no satisfaction, and sorrow remains behind the laughter. Even for those who hope for the Lord's kingdom, the sufferings of this earth actually hurt, but those sufferings cannot take away the blessing received from God.

Believing this promise does not mean that we may turn away from the needs of hungry people. If we speak of the kingdom of God while making light of the pain of one who weeps beside us, we would not be conveying the Lord's comfort rightly. The reason we look after one another in the same hope and share the help that is needed is that a brother in hard circumstances is also precious to the Lord. The heart that believes in the kingdom He will give in the future must appear together with the love that cares for our neighbors today.

The hatred received for the Son of Man's sake

Among the blessings Jesus spoke of, there is also the place of being hated by people. *"Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake" (Luke 6:22)*. What we must examine here is the reason given: for the Son of Man's sake. Being criticized can happen to anyone, but not every criticism is persecution for the Lord's sake. If we are rebuked for our own fault, we must admit it and correct it. The Lord, who made the reason clear, declared blessing so that the disciples who were rejected on the way of believing in and following Jesus would not be ashamed of that faith.

When we are shunned because of our faith, we may be shaken, wondering whether we are going the wrong way. The desire to be recognized by people is natural, but if that desire becomes the standard of faith, we end up abandoning the truth merely because many people dislike it. Jesus said that the prophets before them had also received the same hatred, and thereby let them know that the way of the disciples could not be judged by people's evaluation alone. What they had to hold on to was the Lord's promise rather than a changing reputation.

That is why the Lord said to rejoice in that day and leap for joy, and said that their reward is great in heaven. It is not a word saying that suffering is pleasant, but a word telling them to look to what God will give even in the midst of that suffering. The labor that the Lord remembers does not become vain because of people's mockery. When our hearts are wounded while we preach the gospel, we too must look again to the Lord who saved us and to His promise, rather than spending our strength on hating the other person.

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The content of the faith we must keep is not a vague religious zeal. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sin of mankind passed on to Him once and for all. Even the sins we commit throughout our whole lives were included in that sin of the world and passed on to the Lord. The Lord bore that sin, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and thereby received in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and became our eternal Savior. The person who has believed in this salvation and received the remission of sins is none other than the poor one who has received the promise that *"yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20)*.

The fact that the Lord has saved us from sin and judgment is not overturned by people's evaluation. Because the One who made us righteous is Jesus, the ground of salvation does not disappear just because someone dislikes that faith. Therefore, we cannot reduce or change the work of the Lord's baptism and the Cross in order to win praise. Preaching the salvation of the Lord, who bore all sins and was judged, just as it is, is also the love needed by those who hear the gospel through us.

The heart that considers it has received all its consolation

Jesus, who spoke of blessing to the poor and the hated, warned the rich. *"But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation" (Luke 6:24)*. That there is woe means that there is judgment. Being rich in itself is not a sin, but the person who does not set his heart on God and tries to receive all his consolation from material things has heard the sentence that, having already received his consolation, he has nothing more to receive. If that consolation ends in this world, with what

will he protect his soul when he stands before God? Even great wealth cannot bear the judgment for sin in his place.

Woe is also proclaimed to those who are full now and those who laugh now. This is not to be read as meaning that eating and laughing in themselves are sins; rather, we must examine the heart that is trapped in the satisfaction it enjoys now and does not think about what is to come. If we consider our present circumstances sufficient even without the Lord, we fail to see the poverty of our own souls. So this warning is not a word meant to drive us to despair, but a solemn call not to mistake a consolation that will vanish for eternal salvation.

We too, while saying that we live by faith, can before we know it come to regard comfortable circumstances as the greatest blessing. The evidence of this is that when things go well we forget the need to hear the word, and when hardship comes we doubt the Lord's love first of all. But the salvation we have received did not come about because our circumstances improved, nor does it disappear because they have become hard. Only when we place the standard of blessing again on the salvation Jesus accomplished and on the promise of the kingdom of God can we give thanks and share when we have plenty, and keep our hope even when we lack.

The same warning continues with regard to people's praise. *"Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26)*. The fact that the false prophets were praised shows that public recognition cannot be evidence of the truth. Because a false prophet works in order to receive praise, he does not say words that would bring persecution, however right they may be. If we preach only the words that people want to hear, we may win praise, but we do not help them to receive the remission of sins. We must examine from whom we seek recognition when we speak the word, and

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rightly make known the salvation their souls need rather than words that please people.

Even so, there is no reason to deliberately incur hatred or to treat people with harsh words. What we need is to preach the Lord's truth gently while not changing its content in order to win praise. Those who believe in the blessing the Lord gives can receive people's goodwill with thanks, but do not place the ground of their faith there. It is because they know that even if the evaluation of them changes, the word of salvation does not change.

If we judge life only by present riches and laughter, we cannot understand the blessings and woes the Lord spoke of. The Lord spoke of woe to those who have already received their consolation and of blessing to the poor who will receive the kingdom of God, and thereby made them look beyond the present. We too must not give our whole hearts to consolation or praise that we enjoy for a moment, but must hope for the Lord, who has remitted all sins, and for His kingdom. When with that hope we care for one another's tears and serve the gospel, we can live as those who have been blessed by the Lord even on hard days. ✉

Those who have already received their consolation
and those who will receive the kingdom of God

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

With the mercy of the Father, do good even to your enemies

< Luke 6:27–38 >

“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”

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Beyond the heart that wants to pay back as it has received

It is not hard to remember how people have treated us. We also take it for granted to answer kindness with kindness and to counter an insult with sharp words. But Jesus spoke to His disciples of a love that goes beyond what is taken for granted. This is because, with a heart that will do good only if the other person first becomes a good person, we cannot reveal the grace the Lord has given. The Lord makes us treat people according to the mercy of the Father, who loved us.

"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27). This word does not mean that we should seek out only those who are worthy of love. Because it is a command to do good even to those who hate us, we feel resistance in our hearts the moment we hear it. We look for reasons why we cannot love, explaining the other person's faults, but the Lord makes us think about what good we will do to that person rather than what we will pay back to him. It means that we must not leave the other person's evil to rule even our words and actions.

The Lord also said, *"Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you" (Luke 6:28)*. This is not a word telling us to acknowledge that person's sin as right, but a word telling us to treat him with a heart that hopes he will turn from his evil way and receive the Lord's salvation. Even when it seems our hearts will be relieved only when we see the other person ruined, we must look back on what kind of love we ourselves were saved by. When we remember the grace we have received, the way opens for us to lay down before the Lord the heart hardened with hatred and to pray for that person.

The words about the one who strikes the cheek, the one who takes away the cloak, and the one who asks and takes also show the same direction. The Lord shakes our way of thinking, which feels at ease only when we avoid even the slightest loss and get it back without fail. This is because when the heart that will protect what is ours becomes the standard of all our actions, it is hard to look after the needs of our neighbors, and we try to retaliate even for a small loss. The Lord's disciple must learn the love of the Savior, who gave everything for him, and must break free from a grasping heart and know how to share.

The standard for practicing that love is clear. *"Just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise" (Luke 6:31)*. This word tells us to show to that person the treatment we want, before questioning whether the other person has first done so to us. If we want our circumstances to be understood, we must also lend an ear to the circumstances of others, and if we hope for a chance to set things right when we have done wrong, we must also give others such a chance. This goes beyond a calculation of exchanging benefits with one another; it is the way of treating others as precious, just as we treat ourselves.

The grace He showed even to the unthankful

We are easily satisfied with ourselves merely by loving those who love us. But the Lord said that even sinners love those who love them and do good to those who do good to them. It is the same with lending while expecting to receive back. The Lord's word makes us look back on ourselves, asking where the mercy we received from the Father would appear if such relationships were all there is. The love the Lord teaches is not bound to the possibility that the other person will repay.

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"But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil" (Luke 6:35). In this word there are together a command to love our enemies, do good, and expect nothing in return, and an explanation of what kind of God He is. God is kind even to the unthankful and the evil. Since we, too, are people who have lived by that kindness, we must show grace as befits the children of the Father. It is not that we produce for ourselves the qualification of being children of God by practicing love; rather, the character of the Father appears in those who have become His children by grace.

When we think of the salvation that has been given to us, this word becomes even clearer. Jesus did not wait for us to first become worthy people and then save us. He came for mankind, who were under sin, and by receiving baptism from John the Baptist He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. The Lord bore even the sins we commit throughout our whole lives, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive. Moreover, He rose again from death and saved us who believe from sin and judgment.

Since the Father, who is kind even to the unthankful and the evil, saved us in this way, the remission of sins we received is not something we obtained because we had the ability to repay God. Because we accepted by faith the salvation the Lord first gave, we became righteous and became children of God. Therefore, if, whenever we deal with others, we insist that we will love only when we are sure to be repaid, we are forgetting the grace we ourselves have received. The love of the Lord, who saved us even though we had no merit, must be the reason we now show grace.

Yet this does not mean that anger and hatred vanish from our hearts in an instant so that we always love easily. We must acknowledge the weakness that is revealed when we deal with enemies and seek the Lord's help. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in us who believe in the gospel, brings the word to our remembrance and causes us to see that the other person, too, is someone who must be saved. When we pray and do good following that guidance, we can practice, relying on the Lord, the love that we could not practice by the strength of our character alone.

A life that shows mercy rather than condemning people

The love that follows the Father's mercy must also appear in our attitude of judging people. *"Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven" (Luke 6:37)*. The heart that finds another's fault, regards that whole person as worthless, and pushes him away does not fit with the grace we have received. This is because we, too, had to be saved from sin, and the Lord remitted all our sins. The Lord's word turns the eyes that delighted in counting others' faults toward ourselves, and makes us remember that we are people who cannot live without grace.

We must not take this word as meaning that we should not discern right from wrong at all. Wrongs must be set right in the light of the word, but we must not condemn with a heart that says that we ourselves are righteous and only the other person is bad. Speaking of a wrong in order to help a brother is different from pressing him down to confirm one's own superiority. We must examine before the Lord whether what we are about to say

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is meant to give life to that person and set him up rightly, or to pour out the hatred piled up in our hearts.

The Lord also gave a rich promise about a life of giving. *"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38)*. The word that good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into our bosom shows that God is not unaware of a life that shows grace. The Lord is encouraging us so that we will not be closed up, thinking of giving only as a loss. However, if we use this promise as a means of obtaining a greater benefit, we miss the preceding word that tells us to give while hoping for nothing.

When we have the faith that God knows our needs and our toil, there is less reason to live demanding repayment from every person. We do not complain that we were not praised even though we gave help, nor do we remember for a long time what we did for someone and force on him a feeling of indebtedness. It is the same when we preach the salvation the Lord has given freely. If we rejoice that the other person believes in Jesus and receives the remission of sins rather than that he exalts us, we are keeping the purpose of serving with the love we have received.

The heart that wants to pay back as it has received reveals its own limits in the face of the love of enemies. That is why the Lord leads us again to the mercy of the Father. We must believe in the grace of Jesus, who bore all sins and judgment in our place, and following that grace we must pray for those who hate us and do good to the weak. When we rely on the Lord, who loved us first, we can break free from a life that looked only at the other person's reaction and live a life that reveals the mercy of the Father. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Look at your own heart before examining your brother's eye

< Luke 6:39–45 >

"And He spoke a parable to them: 'Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye," when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye. For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.'"

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A person who learns from the Lord before leading others

There are times when the faults of others are easily seen, but the fault in our own judgment is hardly seen at all. Even if we have the heart to help the other person, if we do not know which way is right, we can go down the wrong way together. Jesus made His disciples examine from whom they were learning and what they knew before they taught people. This is because the mere fact of standing in front does not make a person one who knows the right way.

"And He spoke a parable to them: 'Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?'" (Luke 6:39). The problem in this parable lies in the fact that the person leading in front cannot see the way. The one who follows walks on trusting the guide, but the size of that trust cannot change a wrong way into a safe way. Therefore, we must not accept what a teacher says merely by looking at his confidence or at the response of many people. We must examine by the word where his words lead people and whether they convey the truth of the Lord, who saved sinners.

Jesus went on to say that a disciple is not above his teacher, and that one who has been fully trained is like his teacher. A disciple is not a person who puts his own thoughts first and corrects the Lord's word, but a person who learns from the Lord and follows that word. Since the direction of our thinking and judging also changes according to what we have learned for a long time, the fact that we have long listened to a wrong teaching cannot be made the basis of faith. To know the way of salvation clearly, we must first learn who Jesus, who saved us, is and what He has accomplished.

If, while not knowing the way out of sin ourselves, we only urge another person to live more diligently, we lead that person into the same worry as our own. This is because we cannot stand before God by correcting only a few aspects of our lives while the problem of sin remains unresolved. Therefore, a person who wants to help his brother must first stand in the place of learning before the Lord. Rather than the pride that he can lead people, the acknowledgment that without the Lord's word he, too, cannot know the way must come first.

Our own eyes that we must examine first in order to help a brother

Following the parable of the blind guide, Jesus spoke of the speck in a brother's eye and the plank in one's own eye. It does not mean that the brother has no problem; rather, He exposed the attitude of looking at another's small fault while not perceiving the big problem within oneself. If we decide that we are right and try to correct only the other person, even when we hear the same word we only find material for rebuking others. With such a heart it is hard to see a brother's situation rightly and help him.

"Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye" (Luke 6:42). The Lord did not tell us to leave the brother's speck as it is, but told us first to remove the plank from our own eye. The reason acknowledging our own problem is the beginning of helping a brother is that only then can we see clearly and help. For words that correct others to be justified, we ourselves must also stand

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together before that word. Pressuring a brother with a standard we do not apply to ourselves is not the help the Lord spoke of.

For instance, we can turn away from the truth to protect our own interests while making much of only a brother's small mistake. If we think that only the other person must change while we treat people according to our own cravings, then while speaking of the brother's speck we are leaving the plank in our own eye as it is. What is needed at this time does not stop at softening the expression of rebuke; it is acknowledging what our hearts are holding on to. If we have realized that we have set our own reputation and interests above the word, we must not excuse that as right but accept the Lord's judgment.

A person who acknowledges his own faults is not a person who takes his brother's faults lightly. Because he knows how heavy sin is and that he, too, is a person living by the Lord's grace, he does not handle that problem for the fun of putting his brother down. Even while clearly pointing out wrong words or actions, he can help that person know the truth and return to the right way. When we do not forget the fact that we ourselves must also receive the teaching of the word and the admonition of our brothers, we guard against words meant to help one another turning into one-sided condemnation.

The fruit that comes from the grace received in the heart

After speaking the word about the eye, the Lord spoke of the tree and its fruit. *"A good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit" (Luke 6:43)*. Just as fruit does not come into being apart from the tree, a person's words and life, too, are related to the root of his heart. Just as the kind of tree

does not change by hanging good fruit on the outside, the root of a sinner does not change by furnishing religious expressions or a few good deeds. If we want good fruit, we must first examine what kind of tree we are.

As people who inherited sin from Adam, we cannot remove by ourselves the sin that comes out of our hearts. Even if we find conduct better than others' and call ourselves good people, sin does not disappear before God. This is why the salvation the Lord gives is needed, and the word to become a good tree is, in the end, the word to be born again. The Lord said, *"Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3)*. Therefore, instead of making the resolution to become a good person the basis of salvation, we must know the work of the Lord, who justified sinners.

When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, He had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lives, passed on to Him at one time. By bearing those sins and being hung on the Cross, shedding His blood and dying, He bore the judgment for sins that we were to receive, and He rose again from death. Even a person who tried to prove his own righteousness by the achievements he displayed before people receives the remission of sins only by believing in the righteousness the Lord accomplished in this way. Since it is also because we believed in the salvation the Lord accomplished that we received the Holy Spirit and became people who belong to God, we cannot turn good fruit into a boast of our own works.

Therefore, on hearing the word to bear good fruit, we must not try to buy salvation by piling up good deeds. We must first believe the gospel that the Lord has saved us from sin, and receive that grace into our hearts. When the grace we have received becomes clear, we come to want others, too, to know this salvation, and serving the gospel that gives life comes to be

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regarded as more precious than exalting our own names. Even when we teach others, we break free from the place where we put forward only our own standards, and come to speak words that make them look together to the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45). Examining the words that come out of our mouths is connected with examining what we are storing up in our hearts. If every day we dwell only on our own merits and others' flaws, boasting and blame easily come out of our mouths as well. Conversely, if we dwell on the grace we have received through the word, we come to want to make known even to a weak brother what salvation the Lord has accomplished and to help his faith. Because what God has done is regarded as precious in our hearts, we come to speak of that work and serve it.

This does not mean that a person who has received the remission of sins has no weakness or wrong words at all. When we realize a wrong, we must not cover it up using grace as an excuse, but acknowledge and correct it, and we must also tell our own fault to the brother we have hurt and set the relationship right. That is not an effort to obtain salvation again, but following the word so as to live worthily of the grace we have already received. Good fruit comes from the person who sees the plank in his own eye before examining his brother's eye, and who stores up in his heart this gospel learned from the Lord. Let us reveal in this way the grace of the Lord, who has made us good trees. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

To become a good tree

< Luke 6:43–45 >

“For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

A word spoken about people, not about trees

Luke 6:43 through 45 is a passage of only three verses. Looking at verse 43, He said, *“For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit” (Luke 6:43)*. In a word, this word means that there are good trees and there are bad trees. That a good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit—this is the core of this word.

Then, is the Scripture really speaking about trees? Seeing that it says “a bad tree,” it is personifying the tree, speaking of it as if it were a person. In conclusion, it is a word spoken about people. We can say that among people there are bad people and there are good people. Then, is there anyone who is a good person from birth? No, there is not. At first we are all bad trees. However hard a bad tree tries to bear good fruit, good fruit is not borne.

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We were born as sinners. This means that because our parents are descendants of Adam and we were born from them, we inherited not only the body biologically but also the heart, the thoughts, and the sins—all of them. In terms of people, this means that we were born as a brood of evildoers, with the raw material for doing evil, with sin, and so bearing good fruit is out of the question. That is why people, against their own will, fail to bear good fruit.

Only when the fruit appears does one know what tree one is

But people are mistaken. Dear fellow believers, whether a tree or a wild herb, all plants are alike when they first come up as seedlings. When new shoots come up, they are fresh green, novel, pretty, and cute. At first, vegetables are like that too. But when they grow up a little more, a tree grows taller and puts out branches, while a vegetable, once it has grown to a certain extent, simply remains a vegetable.

People, too, do not know what they are like when they are young. Although they were born with sin, when they are young they have a pure heart, resolving to live a life without a speck of shame toward heaven, and they move forward in that direction. They come to think that they were born as very good people. Why is that? It is because the fruit has not yet appeared and they are still in the process of growing, and so they do not know. But when they reach puberty and become fifteen or sixteen years old, from then on something begins to stir inside them. When they become seventeen, eighteen, or twenty, they want to rebel against their parents and rebel against society. When they get older and their eyes are opened to the opposite sex, they want to

do the things that bear fruit there too. They never thought they would do such things, but before they know it they are swept into the current of society and, following their friends, do bad things and good things as well.

Even so, they do not know themselves well. They make excuses, saying that they are not originally like that, but their friends led them this way, or that that person made them this way. When they get a little older, that begins to harden. They come to feel that doing bad things is fun and pleasurable, and that the rice cake eaten in secret tastes good. Even so, they do not know themselves well. They make excuses, saying, "I am not originally this kind of person; society made me this way; the country and my friends made me this way; my parents did not support me, and so they made me into a delinquent boy or a delinquent girl." They think that they were born as good trees.

Then later, after seeing their own fruit, as they do bad things one after another and see themselves naturally bearing fruit in that direction, they come to think, "Ah, so this is the kind of person I am. I should not live like this; is there no way to go back to the old days?" Then, when their circumstances get worse, depression comes, and life becomes too empty, only then do they seek a god. They come to seek God. While seeking God, if they meet the right person, they come to meet Jesus, come to know who Jesus is, come to know that Jesus came to this earth to save sinners, and come to know the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is then that they come to know that they must believe in Him and be saved, that they must become new people, that they must be born again.

That is why the Lord said, *"A good tree does not bear bad fruit" (Luke 6:43)*. Because people were born as bad trees, as sinners, from birth, they can never bear good fruit. It means that only in their thoughts do they try to become good people, while

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in their actions they turn out to be bad. So what the Lord is saying in this word is that we must become good trees, that we must be born again. That is why the Lord said, *"For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush" (Luke 6:44)*. It means that a tree is known by its fruit.

When a young tree comes up, no one knows whether it is a cherry tree or a jujube tree. When you go to buy a tree seedling, there are little trees that have grown just a bit, are there not? You buy one, being told it is a cherry tree, and plant it, and after a year or two it grows, blossoms, and bears fruit—but it bears a different fruit. You are indignant, thinking that person deceived you, but it is already of no use. It is by its fruit that a tree is known.

Acknowledge that you are a bad tree

That is why the Lord tells us to become new people. Then what must we do before God to become new people? We must acknowledge ourselves. If Jesus Christ, who is God, says, "You were born as a brood of evildoers from birth, and you are one who was born with the destiny of going to hell," then that is right. If He said, *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*, then that is right. If the Lord said so, it is right, and He has clearly stated our true identity. We must acknowledge it in this way. To say, "But I am not like that; I am not originally this kind of person," is all nonsense, and that is what is bad.

We must know how to fear God. This means that we must know how to respect Him, fear Him, love Him, and submit to Him. Believing in God starts from here. Above all, we must know how to fear God, how to respect and fear Him. God is not

a God who only acts favorably toward people. He is the One who blesses those who believe as He has said, and does to those who do not believe what is fitting for them. It means that He is a righteous God. We must acknowledge that. The first start of faith comes from acknowledging God, and second from fearing God, and third, we can be changed through faith.

So if we are to become good trees, we must be born again. To be born again, first we must acknowledge our own true selves before God. "You were born a sinner. You are a person who must be saved. You are a person who will go to hell. You are a worthless person. Compared with any evil person in this world, you are the same kind of person; it is only that it has not yet been revealed. If you put everything in your heart into action, you would be no different from that person. Therefore you are a person going to hell. So only if you obtain salvation can you go to the kingdom of heaven and become a child of God." The reason the Lord speaks of this fact is that we must therefore become good trees, that we must become born-again people.

Only by believing the word of God does one become a good tree

And to become a born-again person, we must believe. Dear fellow believers, in the life of faith, however hard a person tries, he does not change. A person's flesh does not change even in its habits, and a bad tree, however much it tries not to bear bad fruit, cannot bear good fruit. It starts out like good fruit but in the end ends up bearing bad fruit. That is how people are. In human relationships, too, at first they get along well with someone and then become enemies. So a person who has not received the remission of sins starts out by becoming an enemy of everyone.

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They get along well, then deceive each other, and later it reaches the point where they become enemies, hate each other, and even kill. That is why forming factions, forming cliques, is a very bad thing. That is a work of the flesh. Forming a faction is doing something by putting others in front, for fear that one's own sin would be revealed if one did it alone, and the Lord hates that.

Therefore we must acknowledge that we are sinners, that we are people going to hell, that we are people with such a destiny. If we acknowledge it, we come to accept the word of God. In the word that says, *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*, death refers to dying, and this means that if one has sin, the price for it is hell. Spiritually speaking, that is what this word means. Accepting that is also faith. It is not enough to believe only the gospel; we must believe the word of God. Only if we believe does God work, and only if we believe will He tell us the next story, will He not?

So if we believe, second, we must know the word that says, "I love you. I was born on this earth clothed in human flesh to save you. My name is Jesus Christ. I am your Creator, your Savior, your God, and your King," and we must accept what He says. The words of people are trivial words, but what the Majestic One has spoken is the word, and the word itself is command, life, and truth. Truth does not change, and if we believe, we obtain life.

So when we believe, following Him, we come into contact with the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. In order to make you and me, who were bad trees, into good trees, the Lord came to this earth, loved us, bore our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was crucified and died on the Cross, rose again from death, and saved us. By believing in that Jesus Christ, our God, our Savior, by believing in what He has done, we can become good trees.

A good tree grows in the forest

And we must strive to become good trees. Once we have become good trees and then live within the church, we gradually change. The things that were bad in the past also change, and good fruit begins to be borne. But it does not go well from the start. We must be mixed together within the church with the saints who have gone before and the saints who follow after, and be led within that order. Otherwise, even though one has become a good tree, one can never grow alone. If it grows alone, something else comes and eats it up. A beast comes, sweeps around it once with its tongue, eats it up, and even the roots get pulled out. A good tree must grow in a gap in the forest. Only then is it protected. From then on it grows and comes to bear good fruit.

Those who have gone before do the work of serving the gospel, and at first we do not even know what it is, but when they say, "Do this," we do it, and before we know it we too have become members of that work. Then, when the work is accomplished, we feel a sense of achievement and also feel in our hearts that the Holy Spirit is pleased. "The Lord is pleased. Why is my heart so joyful? My body is so weary, yet why is my heart so joyful?" It is because we have become good trees.

So first of all we must want to become good trees, and for that we must acknowledge that we were bad trees, and we must begin to believe the word of Jesus Christ, the word of God. It is not that we see alone and believe alone; rather, we must note down whether the word being preached to us is so or not, and hold on to this word. If we hold on to the word, that word comes into us, takes hold of our hearts, and works. If we believe, our hearts are changed according to our belief. Then we become good trees and bear good fruit. This is how the life of faith goes

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rightly. The Lord tells us to become such people. We thought He was speaking about trees, but He is speaking not about trees but about us.

My past days, when I was a bad tree

I was a bad tree in the old days. Since I had already roamed all over the country from the time I was a child, you may think I was a very bad person, but that is not so. At home I was a very devoted son. But I was born in a bad place. It was a village where a crowd of idol worshipers lived together, and even at a young age I knew that the atmosphere of that place did not suit me. Thinking that I should not stay there, and that, young as I was, I should look around a bit, I went around all the big cities. But that does not mean at all that I lived like a delinquent boy. Did I not say I was a devoted son? In our village they gave an award to children who served their parents well, and I was a candidate for it. But I did not receive that award. It was because my temper was very nasty.

In the old days the elders did a lot of communal work. When they cleared the ditches, all the villagers went out and cleared them together, and when they swept the yards, everyone came out and swept. But my mother could not come out because she had a headache and sent me out in her place, and the village elders kept saying, “Why does your mother not come out?” Even though I told them that my mother had a headache and I had come out in her place, they kept saying, “Still, tell your mother to come out again.” Even when I said, “I told you she is sick and cannot come out. Have I not come out in her place? Can I not do the work as well as my mother? I will do it all,” they still told me to have her come out. At a young age, anger surged up in me.

Even when I was a child, if anyone touched my mother, I did not leave him alone, whoever he was. So I threw stones and injured the elders. After that, they said, "That family's son is a devoted son, all right, but he is fierce, so he does not qualify," and that is why I did not receive the award. It was a good thing I did not receive the award. If I had received that award, even now I might be saying, "I am someone who received the award for devoted sons," and might not have believed in Jesus.

Since it was not something I had done well, I also got a thorough scolding from my parents. "You rascal, how can you do that to the elders? This evening, go around to every house, kneel before the elders, apologize for what you did wrong, and come back." So that evening, with a bandage around my head, I went around to every house, bowing and saying, "Sir, I am sorry for being rude in the daytime. I did wrong." I was that kind of person, the kind the whole village knew. Living like that, when I got a little older I came to know for certain that I was a bad tree.

But then I fell ill. I came down with tuberculosis. This is how I found out: as I was walking, something thick and warm welled up in my throat, and when I spat it out, blood fell. All the strength drained from my body, and I fell to my knees. I went to the hospital, and they said it was tuberculosis. They said it was a contagious disease. So in that moment I settled it in my heart: "It is over. I have caught a contagious disease that harms others. I am finished. Let me not live any longer a life that only spreads disease to this society and to my family. Let me end it quietly." And I went to a church. I thought, "They say Jesus removes sins; before I die, let me settle just this one matter and go." I did not even know how to pray, so I went into the church and said, "They say You remove people's sins, do they not? I, too, have committed many sins. Remove my sins as well. And I am going to go. If You only say that You will remove them, I will settle it

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cleanly. I will not harm people." Then I came out. I went to the church two or three times at night and did that alone inside the sanctuary and came out, and by some power my heart grew mild, and a heart arose that was the opposite of what I had been going to settle. A desire to live arose, and strength came. So I prayed again: "Since a desire to live like this is rising in me, then heal my disease. If You heal the disease of my body, I will proclaim You."

In the end I was cured. I took tuberculosis medicine for several months, and after about three months my body was healed as if by a miracle. The head of the thoracic surgery department took an X-ray once a month, looked at it, and said, "Young man, what do you believe in?" When I said I believed in God, he said that something had happened that simply could not happen. He said that one lung had been so white that it was as if it had been eaten away entirely, so how had it become this clean—the germs had all gathered to one side and the medicine had sealed them off tight; it was over; it would be fine for me to go out and even do hard labor. In fact, from that time on, as I attended church, I got a Bible and read it, and though no one taught me, I liked reading the Bible and soon read the whole of the Old and New Testaments. I liked the word that says, *"With the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13)*, so much that I remember it even now. So I believed, prayed, and received treatment, and the disease was healed. It was over in three months, but I stayed in the hospital for nine months receiving treatment, and during that time I spent all the remaining time, apart from taking medicine and eating meals, reading the Bible, praying, and reading books.

Thinking about it now, it was by catching tuberculosis that I surrendered my life before the Lord. I was a person with much

of my own righteousness, but thinking that I might harm others and so should now settle things, I prayed to the Lord a prayer that was hardly a prayer, and the Lord gave me new strength so that I came to believe in Jesus, and ten years later I was born again through the word of the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. And today I am working together with you. When I think about it, before I was born again I was a bad tree, and at that time, however much I tried to do many good deeds, I could not. After I was born again, as I looked at the Lord's word, followed the word, believed it, held on to it, and followed it, the Lord led me and caused me to do what is right and to serve. It means that He caused me to bear good fruit. Because the Lord causes me to bear good fruit, I bear it even when I do not want to. Now I do the work of God not because someone makes me do it; rather, I always do it even when I do not want to.

It is not only I who bear that good fruit. Our family members, the men and women servants of God, and all the people who have become good trees—all bear good fruit within the church. Even if they do not want to bear it, they bear it. This is the evidence that they have become good trees. What I want to say is that we must become good trees while being within the church. At root, we are bad trees. We must acknowledge that, we must be born again by believing in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and after becoming good trees we must remain attached within the church. Then we come to bear good fruit. For that, first we must acknowledge that we are bad trees. The Lord never makes us into good trees without our going through this process.

We must acknowledge that we are bad trees. We must acknowledge before God that we are people going to hell, people who deserve punishment. We must also acknowledge that we are people who will perish because of our sins, and that we are people who can do many bad things to others, and that even if

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we have not done everything we thought of, if we live on like this we can do many bad things. At that time we come to say, "Lord, help me. Save me," and at that time the Lord helps us. The Lord does not save unconditionally. "Do you need My help? Do you need My love? Do you need the salvation by which I save you?" "Yes, I need it. I need it." When we say that, the Lord meets us. And He gives us the grace we need, and the first grace He gives is the grace of salvation.

So we must not disregard this process. There is no such thing as being born as a human being and immediately becoming a good tree. We must acknowledge that we are bad trees and acknowledge that we can only go to hell. People are not always well. One may live as I did and then one day come down with pulmonary tuberculosis and collapse, or one may suddenly die while riding in a car. We must be prepared at all times. We must prepare for the world to come and prepare to be born again. We must settle before God what must be settled and acknowledge what must be acknowledged. At that time our Lord meets us, grants us salvation, makes us workers of righteousness and uses us, causes us to bear the fruit of blessing, and in the end takes us to the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven. This is the life of faith.

"Out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good"

In verse 45 He said, *"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45)*. A good tree continually thinks good things in its heart and stores them up.

Thoughts such as "I must preach the gospel; I must unite with others and do this work; if we do it this way and that, it will work" pile up in the heart. Because they pile up in the heart, they come out of the mouth as well, and we pray, seek, knock, and open, and do the work that pleases the Lord. At that time our hearts become full of the Holy Spirit and we feel good.

A person who believes in God feels good when he does the work that pleases God, and feels bad when he thinks thoughts and does things that do not please God. His heart becomes heavy and depressed. After being born again, if we do God's right work, the work of serving, we feel good, and if we do not, we become depressed. We come to do the work that pleases God naturally.

I believe that knowing much of the word of God is important, too, but doing the word is important. So the main point of my daily living is that, just as you work, I too find my work and do it. There is no one who tells me, "You do this," but I never idle. I teach young people, look after the work being done, go to the place where books are made and do design, and preach the word. For a year, for several years, I do so of my own accord. It is not that someone forces me to do it. Did not the Lord also say, *"My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:17)*? Within me, too, the Lord dwells and the Holy Spirit dwells, and I do the work that He wants. So is it not good? When I live like that and sleep at night, my heart is at peace. At times I am troubled, and when I am anxious, thinking that I must accomplish this work, I pray, and when I feel stifled, I pray. The world is hard, but the Lord still gives us much work to do. All the churches together want to do the work that pleases God. God has opened that way, so let us do it by faith. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

The foundation of faith that is not shaken even when a muddy torrent beats against it

< Luke 6:46–49 >

"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."

The mouth that calls on the Lord and the heart that follows His word

We cannot judge that the foundation of a house is firm merely from the fact that the house is standing. This is because the difference that was not revealed in calm times appears when

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the flood beats against it. Jesus showed those who heard the word two people building houses, and taught how the word they had heard and their actual lives must be connected. We too, who know the name of the Lord and are familiar with His word, must examine the foundation of our faith in the light of this teaching.

"Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). This is the word in which He pointed out that there is a discrepancy between the lips that call on the Lord and exalt Him and the life that does not accept His word. If Jesus is our Lord, we must follow His word even in the place where we decide what is right and what is wrong. But if we ask for the help we need while deciding the direction of our lives only according to our own thoughts, we ourselves are making light of the meaning of calling Him "Lord."

What word does the Lord tell us to do? Earlier, the Lord taught us to love our enemies and show mercy, and to remove the plank from our own eye before correcting a brother. If we hear such words and yet apply them only to other people, the fact that we have heard much does not in itself mean a life of following the Lord. We must follow the word we have heard in the place where we recall the love of enemies when we have suffered loss, and examine our own craving before we criticize a brother. The confession that we respect the word must lead to accepting that word so that it corrects our thoughts.

That said, we must not turn this teaching into a demand that we obtain salvation by perfect conduct. If a person who has sin could remove his sin by adding his own deeds, there would have been no need for the Lord to come to save sinners. What we must know first is the salvation the Lord accomplished, and a life of doing comes from the faith that believes in that salvation. If we confuse the ground on which we receive the remission of sins with how we must live after receiving the remission of sins, we

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end up losing even the ground of salvation every time we see our own shortcomings.

The foundation laid on the salvation the Lord accomplished

Before explaining the person who hears the word and does it, Jesus spoke of coming to Him. *"Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like" (Luke 6:47)*. A life of faith is not an activity of choosing good things and practicing them apart from the Lord. It is a life of coming to the Lord who saved us, hearing His word, and following the word because we trust Him. If we speak of doing but leave out the Lord who gave the word, and the salvation, what remains for us is only an obligation that we must bear by our own strength.

Therefore, we must first make clear what our faith stands on. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and thereby had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lives, passed on to Him at one time. Bearing those sins, He was hung on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and thus bore the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death and saved us. Only when we lay the foundation of our faith on this salvation, of which the Scripture testifies, saying, *"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ –ASV" (1 John 5:6)*, can we return to the Lord who granted us the remission of sins even when our own condition wavers. This is because what the Lord has already accomplished does not change according to today's mood or people's evaluation.

If we make our own deeds the foundation, on the days we have done well we easily exalt ourselves, and on the days we

have done wrong we easily think that we have been abandoned by God. Because we have placed the foundation within ourselves, all our judgments are also shaken every time our own condition changes. On the other hand, a person who believes in the salvation the Lord accomplished through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection knows where to return even when he sees his shortcomings. He must acknowledge his wrongs and correct them, but the ground of the remission of sins still lies with the Lord who saved him.

"He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock" (Luke 6:48). This house did not stand because the flood did not come. The flood beat against it, but because the foundation had been laid on the rock, it was not shaken. We, too, must not think that if we believe the word of the Lord we will come to avoid all difficulties. What holds us in the midst of difficulties is not the expectation that our circumstances will surely turn out as we wish, but the unchanging Lord and the word He has spoken.

Digging deep and laying the foundation is different from hurriedly raising up the house that is visible to the eye. Digging deep is also a matter of deeply acknowledging that we were bad trees and sinners who could not but go to hell, and if we forget this fact even after having believed for a long time, the foundation becomes shallow. In faith, too, if we try to put on only the appearance that others recognize, we may neglect the very matter of examining what we believe. Acknowledging the wrongs of our own thoughts as we hear the word, and clearly knowing and believing what the Lord has accomplished, must come first. Only then does the assurance of the remission of sins

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not become vague optimism, nor does the word that leads our lives remain mere advice that we pick only when we need it.

A life that turns the word we have heard into today's steps

Even after receiving the remission of sins, we must continue to hear the word and live by faith. This is because, just as a life that has been born goes on living, the saved person also has a life of following the Lord. It is important to believe what we know, and it is important to do what we believe. The Holy Spirit teaches us through the word and causes us to realize the things that please the Lord. Therefore, closing our ears to the Lord's teaching on the grounds of the fact that we have already been saved is going against the will of the grace that gave us new life.

Doing according to the word is not a task entrusted only to people in a special position. A person who used to pretend not to know a brother's difficulty even though he knew of it can help him, remembering the mercy he has received, and a person who used to hide his wrongs in order to save face can tell the truth. Also, we can preach the word so that those who will hear the gospel may know the truth of salvation, and serve that work together. Even if the task each one has been given differs, if we take part by faith, holding the Lord's will precious, even a small place in life becomes a place of serving the Lord.

At times, even while knowing that the word is right, our steps may not move because of fear or craving. At that time, we must not stop at lamenting that our will is weak, but must lay before the Lord what thought is keeping us from following the word. We must seek the Lord's help, share the word with the saints, and do by faith, beginning from the things we have already come

to know clearly. If we put off following until all our worries have disappeared, worry will continue to take control of our decisions.

The Lord also spoke clearly of the outcome of the other house. *"But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great" (Luke 6:49)*. Since this person also heard the word, the difference between the two houses cannot be explained merely by whether one heard or did not hear. The problem lay in not actually believing and following the word that was heard, and because such a person had already grown distant from the Lord before difficulty struck, when the stream came the house immediately fell. If we think that remembering many words is enough, this warning sounds like someone else's affair, but the Lord demands a response from us who are hearing.

This warning must not be used as words to push away a saint who is discouraged because of his own shortcomings. If we have fallen, we must examine before the word of the Lord what went wrong and walk again by faith. Since the salvation the Lord accomplished has not changed, instead of clinging to our own failure to the end, we can rely on that grace and correct our wrongs. The saints who hear the word together must also not mock one another's weakness, but help one another return to the Lord and follow His word.

Let us examine what we have put off among the words the Lord has taught us today. If there is a person to whom we must show mercy, a wrong we must first acknowledge, or a work of the gospel we must undertake together, let us believe in the Lord and go forward to that place. Such obedience is not paying the price of the remission of sins, but living in gratitude for the salvation we have already received. For the person who calls Jesus, who saved us, Lord, and believes His word and follows it

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in today's life as well, that house will not be shaken even when the flood arises and the stream beats against it. ✉

The foundation of faith that is not shaken
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CHAPTER

7

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Who is the Lord who entered Capernaum?

< Luke 7:1 >

“Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum.”

Keep in your heart the word He spoke in the hearing of the people

Luke chapter 7 begins with the record that Jesus concluded His sayings and entered Capernaum. Though it is a single short verse, it shows that the One who gave teaching to the people and the One who went on to heal the sick and remit sins are the same Lord. We easily hear the Lord’s word only as good instruction, but we must also know who Jesus, who spoke that word, is. What must remain after we have heard the word is not only the memory of having been moved, but the faith that knows the Lord who spoke to us.

“Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum” (Luke 7:1). Jesus spoke His word in the hearing of the people, and after He had finished that teaching, He entered Capernaum. In the preceding chapter the Lord taught about blessings and woes, spoke of loving one’s enemies and of mercy, and also showed the difference between the person who hears the word and does it and the person who does not do it, saying, *“Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and*

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not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). This teaching He gave in the hearing of the people lets us know what kind of life the Lord is pleased with. Therefore, the one who hears must learn the meaning of what the Lord said, instead of picking out only the passages that are pleasant for him to hear.

We may gladly hear the passages that speak of grace, and turn the word that corrects our own thinking toward other people only. But because the Lord, who has compassion on us, also knows the craving and hypocrisy within us, the word that exposes those problems is also necessary for us. If we avoid the word that makes us realize our sin, we also fail to know why salvation is necessary. A person who hears the word selectively in order to keep his own thinking is still putting his own judgment first, even while saying that he learns from the Lord.

What we need is not the attitude of memorizing many words of the Bible and thinking that we know more than others. We must know which of our thoughts the word corrects, and what kind of Lord it teaches us to believe in. It is important to acknowledge ourselves as those who cannot but be judged before God because of sin, and to look to Jesus, who came to save such people as us. This is why learning the Bible must not end in raising one's own knowledge, but must reach the point of believing in the Savior.

The salvation that the One who gave the teaching accomplishes Himself

Just because Jesus had concluded His sayings, it did not mean that the Lord's work for the people was finished. After He entered Capernaum, He heard the plea for a servant who was sick and ready to die, and in the record that follows come the

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raising of a dead young man and the declaration of the remission of sins to a woman who was a sinner. People not only heard the Lord's word but also came to see the works He did. The Lord who gave the teaching was the One who had authority even in the face of problems that people could not handle.

Here is the reason we must read the words of the same chapter together. If we accept the Lord's teaching only as advice for right living, we may miss the Savior who gives us life in the face of sin and death. Jesus is not One who only told people what they must do and then left, telling them to solve it by themselves. The Lord came to this earth Himself and accomplished the work of salvation in order to give us the righteousness and life that we did not have.

Later, when the disciples of John came to Him, the Lord told them to make known the works He was doing. *"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them'" (Luke 7:22)*. The sick being healed, the dead being raised, and the gospel being preached to the poor revealed who Jesus is. Seeing these works, we must not stop at merely marveling that there is amazing power, but must know that the One who has that power is the Lord who came to save sinners. We cannot think of the One who spoke the word and the One who acts according to that word separately.

How did that Lord resolve our sins? By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and all the sins we will commit throughout our whole lives are also included in them. Because the Lord bore those sins, He was hung on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and thereby bore in our place the judgment we were to receive. Also, because He rose again from death and

became our Savior, what we believe is the salvation that has actually been accomplished, beyond respect for a person who left behind excellent teaching.

Our resolution or being moved cannot add anything to this salvation. The Lord has accomplished the work of removing sin, and we know that fact through the written word and believe it in our hearts. If we sever His having sins passed on to Him through baptism from His receiving the judgment for those sins on the Cross, we cannot fully explain why the Lord had to die. Therefore, the faith we must have as we follow the Lord, who concluded His sayings and entered Capernaum, is the faith that accepts this work of salvation the Lord did, just as the written word says.

In the same chapter, Jesus gave a clear word to a woman who was a sinner. *"Then He said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven'" (Luke 7:48)*. This declaration is precious not because the woman who heard the words had washed away her sins by herself, but because Jesus has the authority to remit sins. We, too, are assured of the remission of sins because we believe in the salvation He accomplished. Salvation is not true only on the days when our hearts are greatly moved, nor does the Lord's work disappear because our feelings have subsided.

The person who knows and believes in the Lord through the written word

The people of that day, on which He *"concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people" (Luke 7:1)*, heard the voice of Jesus directly, but we hear His word and the works He did through the Scriptures that Luke recorded. The basis of salvation does not become insufficient on the grounds that we do not see

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the Lord before our eyes. What matters is not whether we have gained a special feeling, but whether we believe in Jesus, of whom the Scriptures testify, and in the work He accomplished. If we make the intensity of our own feelings surer evidence than the record that the Lord has remitted sins, our assurance will waver along with a heart that changes every time.

Believing the word does not mean that there are no feelings of joy or thanksgiving. Only, it is not that joy first produces salvation; rather, thanksgiving and joy follow because we know and believe the grace the Lord has bestowed. At times when our hearts are heavy and even words for prayer do not come easily, let us not try to confirm our salvation by forcibly stirring up feelings that are lacking. We must examine again in the word for whom the Lord received baptism, died on the Cross, and rose again.

After declaring the remission of sins to the woman, Jesus spoke of faith and peace. *"Then He said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you. Go in peace'" (Luke 7:50)*. What the woman was to rely on was the word of the Lord who had saved her, rather than the assessment of the people who were there with her. Since the One who gives us, too, the assurance of the remission of sins is Jesus, our salvation does not become more complete because we have received people's praise, nor does it become lacking because we have been criticized. Faith is not a matter of making our hearts look great, but of accepting as true the work the Lord has accomplished.

To live by this faith, we must not leave the time of hearing the word as merely a thing of the past. We can learn and share the word together with the saints, and think of the grace the Lord has bestowed in daily life as well. When our own shortcomings are exposed, we can return to the gospel, and when another person is discouraged because of sin, we can also let him know

how the Lord has saved us. A person who keeps the word in his heart in this way goes further than repeating what he has heard, and by that word turns himself and his neighbors toward the Lord.

As we read the record that Jesus entered Capernaum, we come to see the works that the Lord, who had concluded His sayings, went on to do. Let us not forget that the One who taught us is the Savior who Himself resolved the problem of sin and death. Though the emotion we felt on hearing the word may pass, the salvation the Lord accomplished for us does not disappear. Let us accept that word in our hearts, be assured of the remission of sins, and live believing in Jesus, who has bestowed salvation on us. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Why did the centurion ask only for the word?

< Luke 7:2–10 >

“And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, ‘for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue.’ Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, ‘Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, “Go,” and he goes; and to another, “Come,” and he comes; and to my servant, “Do this,” and he does it.’ When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, ‘I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!’ And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick.”

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The man who brought the problem of his beloved servant before the Lord

The centurion had soldiers who followed his orders, but with that authority he could not protect the life of his beloved servant. When the servant was sick and ready to die, the fact was revealed that the authority to rule over people and the authority to give life are not the same. We, too, live accomplishing many things by our own strength, and then meet problems we cannot handle. The passage shows whom the centurion relied on in such a place, and why Jesus regarded his faith as precious.

"When he heard concerning Jesus, he sent unto him elders of the Jews, asking him that he would come and save his servant –ASV" (Luke 7:3). The centurion did not stop at grieving over his servant's sickness, but asked Jesus for help. He could not take away the suffering of the one he loved in his place, but he could bring that person's circumstances before the Lord. He asked Jesus to save his servant because he believed that the Lord had the power to do that work. Where his own orders could not reach, he relied on the authority of the Lord.

The elders who came at the centurion's request begged Jesus earnestly, saying that he loved their nation and had also built a synagogue. Because they knew the things the centurion had done, they considered it fitting that He should help him. But when Jesus later praised the centurion, He did not speak of the size of the building he had built or of the reputation he had received from people. What the Lord revealed before the crowd was his faith that relied on the word of Jesus.

When we come to the Lord, too, we must remember this point. Loving people and helping neighbors in need is a precious thing, but we do not obtain the right to demand grace from the Lord on the basis of those deeds. The reason we can come to the

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Lord is not that we have piled up much merit to present before the Lord, but that the Lord is the One who has compassion on us and saves us. Rather than putting forward our own toil, we must believe in the Lord, who knows our circumstances, and bring our circumstances before Him.

The authority of the Lord, which is greater than distance

When Jesus went with them, the centurion sent friends and conveyed another request. It was not a word meant to refuse the Lord, but a word of faith that the Lord did not necessarily have to enter his house in order to heal his servant. *"Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed" (Luke 7:7)*. The centurion did not regard the word of Jesus as mere words of comfort. Because he believed that when the Lord speaks, it comes to pass just as He says, he asked only for the word for his servant.

To know the meaning of this plea, we must also look at the explanation the centurion added afterward. He said that he himself was also a man under others, and that he had soldiers under him as well. His soldiers and servant went and came according to his instructions and did the tasks assigned to them. He brought his request before the Lord with the faith that, if even his own words, which carried limited authority, were carried out like that, then what Jesus says could not possibly fail to come to pass.

The centurion did not place his own authority at the same height as Jesus. Rather, saying that he was not even worthy to receive Him into his house, he acknowledged the exaltedness and power of Jesus. The fact that one has the authority to

command people does not mean that one can rule even over sickness and death, but the Lord is the One who rules over life. Because the centurion saw the authority of the Lord, who had power over his servant's illness, as greater than that illness, he did not attach the condition that the Lord had to touch his servant directly.

Our faith, too, does not lie in vaguely being convinced that what we want will happen. It must be clear toward whom our faith is directed, what He can do, and what He has accomplished. Though Jesus came clothed in a human body like us, He is originally God, who made all things, and the Son of God, who came to save sinners. A person who knows Him, even after seeing the limits of his own strength, does not conclude that there is no way of salvation either.

Especially in the problem of sin, we meet a limit, for we cannot repay or fix it by our own strength. Even if we add good deeds to erase the sins we have already committed, those sins do not disappear, nor can we avoid God's judgment by a promise to do well from now on. Just as the centurion could not hold on to his servant's life by his own orders, we cannot save our own souls by our own righteousness. Therefore, we must come to the Lord, who saves us from sin, and know the work He has accomplished.

Jesus did not become our Savior after demanding that we deal with our sins by ourselves and then come. When John tried to decline to baptize Him, the Lord said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and in this way, by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, He had all the sins of the world, including even the sins of our whole lives, passed on to Him once and for all. Because the Lord, who bore those sins, was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died, the Lord bore in our place the judgment for

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sin that we were to receive. Also, because He rose again from death and accomplished salvation, we believe in the Savior who has actually remitted sins, not in One who merely has the will to remit sins.

This gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a story that regards our potential highly. It is the news of salvation that tells us how Jesus resolved the problem of sin, which we ourselves cannot handle. There is no reason to leave out only our own sins from the sin of the world that the Lord had passed on to Him through baptism, nor is there any ground to consider the judgment He received on the Cross insufficient. A person who accepts that word in his heart distinguishes between the insufficiency of his own deeds and the perfection of the Lord's salvation, and comes to be assured of the remission of sins by believing in the Lord.

The faith the Lord regarded as precious and the servant who was already well

When Jesus heard the centurion's words, He made his faith known to the crowd. "*When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, 'I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!'" (Luke 7:9)*. Though the centurion was not an Israelite, he knew the authority of Jesus and relied on His word. This praise is not a judgment that one nation is better than another, but a word that shows what is precious before the Lord. A familiar religious environment or a long career cannot in itself take the place of faith; what matters is how one believes in Jesus.

We, too, need not look at the faith of the people in the Bible as something possible only for special people. Just as the

centurion relied only on the word without having the Lord before his eyes, if we know and accept the word written in the Bible even when there is nothing visible to our eyes or felt in our hearts, we have the same faith as he did. The faith that hears what Jesus did and believes that word is a way given to us today as well. When we believe in the Lord, who remitted sins through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, we are not excluded from salvation on the grounds that we lack qualifications to present before people. Because we know and believe through the word whom the Lord has saved, we, too, can live boldly in that grace.

The end of the passage does not record only the state of the centurion's heart, but tells us what actually happened to the servant. *"And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick" (Luke 7:10)*. When the people returned, the servant was already well. The power to heal the servant was not blocked because Jesus did not enter the house, and before the people confirmed it, the Lord had restored the servant. It was revealed that the authority of the Lord, which the centurion relied on, was not a vain expectation.

Reading this event, we must not make a rule that if we strongly believe in the result we want, everything will turn out as we wish. It was not that the centurion's faith produced the power to heal the servant; rather, he relied on Jesus, who has power. Today we, too, should bring sick people and difficult circumstances before the Lord, but we must not think that our own wishes are commands that determine the Lord's will. Because we believe in the goodness of the Lord, who has saved us, we can entrust all our circumstances to Him without hiding anything.

The problem the centurion first faced was the life of his beloved servant, which he could not save by his own authority.

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When he brought that problem before Jesus, he relied on the word of the Lord, which is greater than his own orders, and those who returned saw the servant restored. In the face of the problems of sin and life that we cannot handle, let us, too, not reckon only our own strength. Because the authority of the Lord, who has saved us, is fulfilled just as He says, as it was in the centurion's house, a person who has firmly accepted in his heart the salvation He made known through the word lives relying not on his own strength but on that word. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Come to the Lord, who brought the widow's dead son back to life

< Luke 7:11–17 >

"Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep.' Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise.' So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen up among us'; and, 'God has visited His people.' And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region."

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The Lord, who saw the mother who had lost her only son

Near the gate of Nain, two different processions met. Jesus was entering the city with His disciples and a large crowd, and from inside the city, those carrying out a dead man were walking out, and with them a mother. That mother was a widow who had lost her husband, and the one who had now died was her only son. Many people were beside her, but no one could bring that son back to life and return him to his mother.

In this scene we see a problem that people can grieve over together but can never finally resolve. The sorrow of losing a loved one does not become lighter because there are many who comfort, nor can death be reversed because people gather their strength. What the widow needed was not only words explaining how pitiful her situation was. She needed the Lord, who would see that woman's tears and give life even in the face of death.

"When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep'" (Luke 7:13). The Lord did not see only the young man lying in the coffin; He also saw the mother who had lost him and was weeping. The text does not explain what the widow had done well to deserve such grace; it tells us that the Lord had compassion on that woman. Moreover, Jesus did not first test how great the woman's faith was and then draw near. The Lord's compassion toward a person in sorrow was the beginning of this event.

We must not take the word the Lord spoke, telling her not to weep, as a rebuke that the feeling of grief itself is wrong. The Lord did not regard the widow's loss lightly, and He spoke with the authority by which He would soon bring her son back to life. We have not gained the right to repeat this word to a grieving person and urge him to dry his tears quickly. We must first learn

how the Lord saw that woman, and we, too, must consider the situation of a neighbor who has suffered sorrow.

We, too, have groanings we want to hide and worries that are not resolved by human help alone. Even a person who outwardly seems to handle things well comes to realize his own limits when faced with the problem of sin in his soul or the difficulties of his family. Having met such limits is no reason to draw away from the Lord. We must tell our circumstances to the Lord, who had compassion on the widow, and seek the grace of Him who knows us.

The command of life that reached the dead

After speaking to the widow, Jesus came near and touched the coffin. When those carrying the coffin stopped, the Lord spoke directly to the dead young man. *"Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise'" (Luke 7:14)*. None of those who heard this command could give life in His place, but Jesus had the authority to raise the dead. The center of this event lies not in the fact that people were amazed, but in who spoke such a word in the face of death.

We do not need to wonder how the young man gathered strength and got up. He was already dead, and he was in no state to prepare himself or show his own ability before hearing the Lord's word. Life did not come from the dead young man's potential; it was given by the authority of Jesus. Therefore, if we turn this word into nothing more than a slogan to awaken the human will, we miss the Lord, who actually raised the dead.

Jesus is God, who made all things, and He is the Lord of life. Just because He came among people clothed in a body like ours,

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we cannot think of Him as merely one of the powerful teachers. People mourn over the dead, but the Lord commanded the dead young man to arise, and it came to pass just as He said. A person who knows this difference does not stop at learning moving words from Jesus, but comes to believe in the Savior, who gives life.

The result of the word is clearly recorded in the next verse. *"So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother" (Luke 7:15)*. That the one who had been dead sat up and spoke shows that the Lord's comfort did not stop at words that make one forget sorrow for a moment. Jesus gave the young man who had come back to life to his mother. The woman who had been going out of the city gate following her dead son received her living son back by the grace of the Lord.

Since it is Jesus who gave life in the face of death, we who read this word must not forget the Lord's authority while considering only our difficult circumstances. At the same time, we must not demand, on the basis of this event, that every wish be fulfilled at the time and in the way we want. What we rely on is not the right to dictate outcomes, but Jesus, who has compassion on us and resolves the problem of sin and death.

Believe the grace by which He visited His people

The people saw what had happened before their eyes, and they feared and glorified God. *"Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen up among us'; and, 'God has visited His people'" (Luke 7:16)*. They could not attribute this restoration to the result of their own toil. Because they saw what God had done on the road where they

had been carrying out the coffin with human hands, they said that *"God has visited His people."* The report about Jesus also spread throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.

We, too, must not read this event merely as an amazing thing that happened to someone else long ago. Just as the death of her son was a problem the widow could not bear, we have the problem of sin and judgment that we cannot resolve by ourselves. Having few sins revealed before people does not mean that we can keep our lives by ourselves before God as well. We were all born as beings with sin, and if we die without resolving that problem of sin, we will suffer, in the face of eternal judgment, a grief greater than the grief of the mother who lost her son.

The Lord came to this earth to visit us who were in such a state. When He received baptism from John the Baptist, He had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lives, passed on to Him at one time, and bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross. The sinless Lord suffered death because He bore in our place the judgment for sins that we were to receive. Because the Lord, who rose again from death, is our Savior, just as the dead young man arose at a single word from the Lord, we who were under sin and judgment also hear this word of the gospel and receive life. We cannot make our efforts to save ourselves the basis of salvation; we believe in the salvation the Lord accomplished and are assured of the remission of sins.

Just as the young man of Nain did not overcome death by his own strength, so we did not overcome sin and judgment by our own righteousness. We heard what the Lord accomplished and received that grace by faith. Therefore, the reason a saved person gives thanks is not that his will is stronger and his deeds are better than others', but that the Lord gave life to him, who could

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not live by himself. A person who knows this grace does not make his salvation a merit to boast of, but gives glory to the Lord.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, we must come to the Lord with the difficulties of life. If we think that, having received grace, we can now handle every problem alone, we easily fall into despair again when our own strength falls short. Even after saving us, the Lord is still the One on whom we rely, and because He calls us, saying, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)*, we must bring the things that worry us to Him in prayer and seek the guidance of the word. We can also share our difficulties with the saints and receive help, and when we see the suffering of others, we can stand with them in the love we have received.

If someone is grieving, let us not hastily judge that person's tears as evidence of a lack of faith. Just as the Lord had compassion on the widow, we must consider that pain, share the help that is needed, and help him look together with us to the Lord of life. To a person who is afraid because of sin, instead of vaguely saying that it is all right, we can preach the gospel of how Jesus bore that sin and was judged. Making known the salvation the Lord accomplished is the very thing that helps him ask Him for the life that we cannot give with our own hands.

The path of the widow who was going out of the city gate changed at the place where she met Jesus. The Lord did what the many people beside her could not do, and to the mother who thought she had lost her son in death He gave her son, brought back to life. Today, let us, too, not look only at human limits and close even the way of coming to the Lord. Let us come to that Lord, who brought the widow's dead son back to life, and live believing in Jesus, who remitted our sins and gave us life, and entrusting our souls and lives to Him. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

See what Jesus did and believe in Him

< Luke 7:18–23 >

“Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things. And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to Jesus, saying, ‘Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?’ When the men had come to Him, they said, ‘John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?”’ And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.’”

John, who sent his disciples to Jesus

The disciples of John reported to their teacher the things Jesus had done. The news that the sick were healed and the dead were raised was news that made one ask who Jesus was. John sent two of the disciples who had brought that report to Jesus so that they could ask Him directly. In this meeting the disciples went beyond hearing reports about Jesus and came to confirm the things He was doing and the words He spoke.

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"And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to Jesus, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'" (Luke 7:19). This question asks who the promised Savior is. It is a far deeper question than confirming whether a man of power had appeared who could relieve people's hardships for a while. If the Savior God had promised was Jesus, they had to believe in Him and follow Him, so the disciples had to know clearly before whom they were standing.

We must not take this question by itself and conclude that John did not know Jesus or had abandoned his faith. John had already baptized Jesus, and he was the one who later saw Jesus and testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*. Moreover, after this meeting was over, Jesus testified of John as the messenger sent by God.

That a servant of God guides people rightly does not lie in leaving his own name and influence behind for a long time. What matters is helping those who hear the word to know who Jesus is and what He accomplished, so that they rely on Him. We can gratefully remember who preached the gospel to us, but our salvation does not depend on the authority of the person who preached it. Jesus, who is testified of through the gospel, is the Lord of our salvation.

In this respect we, too, must know the Lord clearly, like the disciples of John. We must not stop at vaguely following along because someone close to us believes, but must directly learn the words and work of Jesus recorded in the Scriptures and receive them into our hearts. If we have a question, we must not keep it hidden and merely repeat familiar words, but must look in the word for the answer the Lord has given. When we do so, the heart that leaned on people turns toward the Lord, who saved us.

The Savior clearly revealed by what was seen and heard

The two men John sent came to Jesus and presented, just as it was, the question their teacher had told them to ask. At that time the Lord was healing many people. *"And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight" (Luke 7:21)*. This record is placed between the disciples' question and the Lord's answer. When the disciples asked Jesus who He was, He was actually doing the work of restoring those who were suffering.

Jesus did not tell them to gather the assessments of other people. Telling them to report to John what they themselves had seen and heard, He made known concretely the things that were being done. *"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them'" (Luke 7:22)*. That those who could not see saw, those who could not walk walked, and the dead were raised revealed that the word of Jesus was not an empty promise. The disciples had to know that the One doing these things was the Lord, who came to save sinners.

We who believe the fact that Jesus actually healed people's bodies must also know who it was that did such amazing things. His healing the sick and raising the dead reveals His authority, and the word "*the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Luke 7:22)* lets us see together the news of salvation that He preaches. Jesus is not One who shows off His power to gain people's praise, but the One who saves people who are in suffering and sin.

Especially in the face of the evidence that the dead were raised, we come to look to the Lord of life. Just before this, the

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Lord raised the dead son of the widow of Nain. People could carry that young man out, but they could not give back his life, and when the Lord spoke, the one who had been dead arose. If we regard Jesus, who did such things, as merely a teacher who conveys moral teachings well, we have not sufficiently accepted the meaning of the authority He revealed.

The Lord not only visited those who were in physical suffering, but also saved us, who were under death and judgment because of sin. This salvation, too, is not an idea people made up to soothe their own hearts. When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, He had all the sins of the world, including even the sins of our whole lives, passed on to Him once and for all. The Lord, who bore those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death.

Therefore, saying that we believe in Jesus as the Savior must include this work He accomplished. Merely knowing the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection as separate stories, we cannot clearly explain how our sins were resolved. When we know together the fact that our sins were passed on to the Lord and the fact that the Lord received the judgment for those sins, we come to realize that His death is salvation for us. Because the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection are one connected work in this way, we accept this work the Lord accomplished as the salvation of our own souls.

The disciples of John did not need to invent or add to what they had seen in reporting it. This is because making known just as it was what the Lord had done was the right testimony. Today we, too, as we preach the gospel, do not need to add human merit or conditions to the salvation the Lord accomplished. Nor must we leave out the work of John, who passed sins on to Jesus, and speak only of the death on the Cross by itself. When we fully

preach the work of salvation that the Scriptures make known, those who hear also come to know what they must believe.

The blessing that belongs to the one who accepts the Lord

After telling them to report what they had seen and heard, Jesus spoke of the blessed person. *"And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me" (Luke 7:23)*. To be offended because of the Lord is the problem of stumbling in faith by not accepting Him and His work even though one has met Him. If a person rejects the Savior on the grounds that the good news he has heard differs from his own thinking, then the one who was seeking a savior ends up missing the very Savior who is before him.

We may first make up the image of Jesus we want, and then judge whether the Lord of the Scriptures fits that image. If we expect Him only as One who makes us recognized in the world, the word telling us to acknowledge our sin and believe in the grace of salvation may sound uncomfortable. But the way Jesus saves us is not decided according to our taste. We must accept, just as He is, the Lord, who received the baptism of John and was judged on the Cross as God had ordained.

Finding something we do not know while learning the word does not immediately make us people who have abandoned the Lord. A person who acknowledges what he does not know and looks further into the evidence the Lord has given can learn. The problem lies in pushing away the facts in order to keep one's own thinking even after hearing what the Lord accomplished. Since it is Jesus who saved us, our judgment, too, must be set right before the truth He has made known.

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This faith is also needed when our weakness is revealed after we have received the remission of sins. We must acknowledge and correct our own wrongs, but we must not, because of them, regard even the salvation the Lord accomplished as lacking. Jesus knew all our sins and bore them through His baptism, and He received the judgment for them and saved us. Instead of retreating while looking only at our failed selves, we must believe the grace He made known through the word and follow the Lord again.

To the question the disciples of John brought with them, the Lord answered with the work He was doing. Today let us, too, not leave vague who the Savior is, but clearly know and believe in Jesus, whom the Scriptures testify of, and His work. A person who has accepted the Lord's salvation has no reason to wander in search of another savior. Let us set our hearts on Jesus, who bore our sins and rose again from death, and let us also preach to others the salvation we have come to know and believe through the word. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

We must accept the will of God, who sent John

< Luke 7:24–35 >

“When the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings’ courts. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written: “Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.” For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.’ And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him. And the Lord said, ‘To what then shall I liken the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, saying: “We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not weep.” For John the Baptist came neither

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eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, "He has a demon." The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, "Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" But wisdom is justified by all her children.'"

The work entrusted to the man they met in the wilderness

After the disciples of John had departed, Jesus spoke to the multitudes concerning John. The people had gone out as far as the wilderness to hear the cry of John. However, the mere fact that they had been there does not mean that they knew who John was and for what he had been sent. By asking what they had gone out to see, Jesus turned the people's attention to the work of God that had been entrusted to John.

The purpose of going out into the wilderness was not to look at reeds or to meet a man clothed in gorgeous garments. Those who wore fine clothes and lived in luxury were in kings' courts. To know John rightly, they had to know what work God had entrusted to him, rather than looking at whether he had taken a high position in the world. So Jesus asked whether they had gone out to see a prophet, and He said that John was more than a prophet.

"*This is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You'" (Luke 7:27)*. John was not a man who appeared in order to obtain the place of the Savior for himself. He was the messenger whom God sent first and caused to prepare the way of Jesus. When we know together the promise that God would

send him and the work he was entrusted with, we can also know to whom the cry in the wilderness was leading the people.

Jesus said, *"I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist" (Luke 7:28)*. This is because God had established him as the representative of mankind. John did not stop at prophesying from afar about the Savior who would come, but was entrusted with the work of baptizing Jesus and passing the sin of mankind on to Him. The greatness of John does not depend on how famous he was among people. It lies in this office that God entrusted to him for the salvation of mankind.

Those who accepted the will of God and those who rejected it

When we know the work entrusted to John, we cannot pass over the baptism that Jesus received, either, as a ceremony that has nothing to do with us. Just as Jesus later asked, *"The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?" (Luke 20:4)*, the baptism of John was not a ceremony made by man but something that came from heaven, that is, the way God had ordained in order to remove the sins of people. Jesus received baptism from John and thereby had the sin of all mankind passed on to Him once and for all. The sins that each of us commits from birth until death are also included in that sin of the world. Bearing the sin He had thus taken upon Himself, the Lord was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and thereby received in our place the judgment that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. The will of God in sending John first is revealed through this work of salvation.

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John is the servant who prepared the way, and the One who bore our sins and accomplished salvation through His death and resurrection is Jesus Christ. Therefore, to acknowledge John is not to exalt him as the Savior. It is to acknowledge that God, who sent him, is right and to come in faith to Jesus, of whom he testified. The will of God in sending John first also lies here: it is to cause us to believe in the righteousness of Jesus, who saved us through the baptism He received from John, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection.

Yet even though they heard the same word, people's responses were different. All the people and the tax collectors, as those who had received the baptism of John, justified God, but those who regarded themselves as religiously high chose a different path. *"But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him" (Luke 7:30)*. By not receiving the baptism of John, they rejected the will of God toward them. The fault did not lie in God's not having made known to them the way of salvation.

The baptism the people received was their acceptance of John's cry to acknowledge their sins and return to God, so it must not be confused with the work of the baptism that Jesus received. Jesus, who was without sin, received baptism from John in order to have the sin of mankind passed on to Him and bear it. If a person who must acknowledge his own sins denies even that need, it is hard for him even to welcome gladly the Savior who came to bear sin. Even today, if people say that they believe in Jesus, who was hung on the Cross, yet do not believe in that baptism by which He had the sin of the world passed on to Him at the Jordan River, it is no different from rejecting for themselves the will that God ordained through John. We, too, must examine whether we are pushing away the salvation God has prepared because of a heart that wants to regard itself as right.

A heart unwilling to respond to either side

The heart that refuses the will of God was also revealed in their attitude toward John and Jesus. Jesus likened this generation to children calling to one another in the marketplace. *"They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, saying: 'We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not weep'" (Luke 7:32)*. This is a picture of those who do not respond when the flute is played and do not join in when there is mourning; a heart unwilling to accept anything, whatever was done, had already settled in.

When John came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, people accused him of having a demon. On the contrary, when Jesus came eating and drinking, they slandered Him as *"a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Luke 7:34)*. The people who had found fault with the one for not eating also found fault with the other for eating. Their putting forward reasons that were opposite to each other like this shows that they were looking for an excuse to refuse the word of God rather than trying to accept it.

Therefore, before this word, we cannot point out only the stubbornness of others. If we, too, set up our own thoughts as the standard before hearing the word, then whatever evidence we hear, we end up seizing only on the parts that do not suit our hearts. When sin is pointed out sternly, we may regard it as too strict, and when the grace that has saved sinners is preached, we may push it away, asking whether one can become righteous so easily. As long as we hold on to such an attitude, even if the grace of the Savior is testified of before us, we cannot believe that grace to be our own.

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To receive the word does not mean to follow any word whatsoever unconditionally. We must know through the word whom God actually sent and how Jesus bore our sins. Even though we know the work of salvation that He thus makes clear, we must not refuse it because of our own reputation and our own thoughts. What a sinner needs is not to look for a method that pleases him more than the salvation God has prepared, but to believe in the salvation that has already been accomplished.

The wisdom of God revealed in His saved children

The accusations against John and Jesus could not make the salvation of God fail. The Lord said, *"Wisdom is justified by all her children" (Luke 7:35)*. The fact that this wisdom is right is revealed in the children who have received the remission of sins by believing in what God has done. That people who could not remove their sins by themselves have been saved by the righteousness of Jesus and have come to call God Father is not a result brought about by human wisdom.

The word of Jesus that he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than John also teaches us the preciousness of this salvation. However great the office entrusted to someone on this earth may be, it cannot take the place of the grace of becoming a child of God, and John, too, is a person who is saved by believing in Jesus, of whom he testified. The Lord did not make the work of John worthless; rather, He made clear how precious the status is that a person who has received the remission of sins and belongs to the kingdom of God enjoys.

The ground on which we have become children of the kingdom of God also does not lie in abilities superior to others or in a high position. Because Jesus bore all our sins, received

the judgment, and rose again, we who believe in that salvation have become children of God. Once we know this grace, we come to acknowledge how good is the will of God, who sent John and saved us through His Son. We come down from the place of judging the wisdom of God and give thanks as people saved by that wisdom.

Even when the world makes light of the salvation of God, we have no reason to be ashamed of that grace. We can believe in the salvation the Lord has accomplished just as the word says, and preach that righteousness to those who are still afraid because of their sins. What the people who went out into the wilderness had to see was neither reeds nor fine clothes, but the will of God, who sent John and saved us through His Son. Knowing the One who saved us and setting our hearts on His word is the life of those who have accepted that will, so let us treasure the grace by which He has made us His children and live according to that word of salvation. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The love and peace of the woman who received the remission of sins

< Luke 7:36–50 >

"Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, 'This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' So he said, 'Teacher, say it.' 'There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?' Simon answered and said, 'I suppose the one whom he forgave more.' And He said to him, 'You have rightly judged.' Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you

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gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.' Then He said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?' Then He said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.'"

Different hearts toward Jesus in the same house

Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus to his house and asked Him to eat with him. But when a woman knew that Jesus was in that house, she brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil. The Scriptures make clear that this woman was a woman who was a sinner in that city. The woman came behind Jesus, stood at His feet weeping, and wet His feet with her tears; she wiped them with her hair, kissed His feet, and poured the fragrant oil on them. The man who had invited Jesus and the woman who had come to find Jesus were in the same place, but their hearts toward the Lord were not the same.

Seeing what the woman was doing, Simon thought in his heart that if Jesus were a prophet, He would know what kind of sinner this woman was. His judgment was that if Jesus knew the woman's sin, He would not have let her come near Him. But it was not that Jesus accepted her because He did not know her sin. He knew even the heart of Simon, who was judging the woman,

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and He spoke to him. What Simon should have considered, before how bad a person the woman was, was the question of what kind of salvation the One who had come to his house gives.

Like Simon, we at times examine the exposed faults of others while regarding our own sins as small. But we cannot remove our own sins before God by showing ourselves to be better than other people. In the story Jesus told Simon, of the two debtors, one owed five hundred denarii and the other fifty denarii. There was a difference in the amounts, but there was a decisive point in common in the situation of the two men.

"When they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" (Luke 7:42). Both of them had nothing with which to repay, so it is not that the one with the smaller debt could have repaid it by himself. We, too, may think that we have sinned less than others, but since God looks not at how many or how few our sins are but at sin itself, that thought cannot remove the judgment for sin. Sin is not merely a small blemish that makes the heart uncomfortable, but a matter that must be judged before God. From the fact that without the grace of the remission of sins no one can escape the judgment of hell, no one can be an exception by his own righteousness.

The love that arises when we know the grace of having our debt canceled

When Jesus asked which of the two would love more the one who had canceled their debts, Simon answered that it would be the one who had had more canceled. The Lord said that his judgment was right. In this story, it is not that the debt was removed as a reward after much love had been shown. The grace

of cancellation was first granted to the two men who had no ability to repay, and the one who received that grace came to love the one who had removed his debt. On God's side, He removed the sins of both of them, but on man's side, love differs according to how much one knows how much has been canceled for him. In this order, Jesus made the woman's heart clear to Simon.

Turning to the woman, the Lord told Simon what he had not done and what the woman had done. Simon gave no water for washing His feet, but the woman wet the feet of Jesus with her own tears and wiped them with her hair. Simon gave no kiss, but the woman did not cease to kiss the Lord's feet. It was also the woman who poured the fragrant oil. The Lord did not compare the actions of the two merely as skills of hospitality; rather, He spoke of how their hearts toward Him had been revealed.

"Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little" (Luke 7:47). That the woman loved much means that her faith was great; in that love there were faith in and gratitude toward the Lord, who granted the remission of sins. Therefore, this word must not be changed into the meaning that in order to receive the remission of sins one must store up enough love. If that happens, the cancellation granted to a person who had nothing with which to repay turns back into a debt that must be repaid. The woman's love toward Jesus came from a heart that had accepted grace.

Our service, too, must begin here. If we calculate only how much we have offered to the Lord, we come to envy those who have done more or despise those who have done less. But when we know the fact that the Lord has resolved the debt of sin that we could not repay, the reason for our gratitude changes. This is because it was not what we offered that saved us, but the grace

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the Lord granted first that gave us life. A person who remembers that grace cannot boast of his service as his own righteousness.

The Savior who can proclaim the remission of sins

Jesus did not end His words at correcting Simon's assessment of the woman. *"Then He said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven'" (Luke 7:48)*. To the woman who had been known to people as a sinner, the Lord Himself declared the remission of sins. Those who sat at the table with Him asked in their hearts who this was who even remitted sins. Because we can believe that word only when we know who the One is who can give peace to the woman, we, too, must have a clear answer to this question.

Jesus is not One who makes light of the problem of sin and tells us that it is all right. He is the Son of God, who came to this earth to save sinners, and the Savior who Himself bore the sin that people cannot resolve. When the Lord received baptism from John the Baptist, He had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. All the sins that each of us commits throughout our whole lives are also included in it. It is not that God remits our sins because He does not know them; rather, because the Son actually bore those sins, we who believe receive the remission of sins.

Jesus bore the sin of the world that had been passed on to Him through His baptism, was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died. The Lord received in our place the judgment that we had to receive because of our sins. And He rose again from death and became the Savior who gives us eternal life. Here is the answer to the question that those who sat at the table asked in their hearts, namely, who it is that remits sins. Therefore, the

faith the woman had was not a vague heart expecting that God would look kindly on her, but faith that accepted as her own salvation the salvation that Jesus accomplished through His baptism, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection.

When we believe in this salvation, there is no need to pretend to be righteous while hiding our sins. Nor, for that matter, is there any reason to remain in despair, looking only at our sins after admitting our wrongs. The Lord did not merely add what was slightly lacking in us; He completely resolved the problem of the sin that we could not repay. Whenever our faults are exposed, what we must look back on is not how much we have tormented ourselves, but the righteousness of Jesus, who bore even that sin.

The peace enjoyed with a heart that believes in the Savior

Finally, Jesus gave the woman a clear word. *"Then He said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you. Go in peace'" (Luke 7:50)*. What saved the woman was not the amount of her tears or the price of the fragrant oil, but the remission of sins granted by the Savior, in whom she believed with her heart. Nor, on the grounds that faith is important, must we this time make the fervor of our own faith the price of salvation. Faith must be directed toward Jesus, who saved us, and the work He accomplished.

If we entrust our hearts to people's assessments, it feels as if there were no way to come to the Lord because of a wrong committed a moment ago or rumors from the past. On the contrary, if we receive a good assessment from people, we can deceive ourselves as if we were fine people even without the

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grace of salvation. What sets these two thoughts right is the word of the Lord. Because it is the word spoken by the Savior, who knows our sins and bore those sins, we must accept that word in our hearts rather than people's assessments.

The peace the Lord gave does not mean that after receiving grace one may live apart from the Lord. As the Scriptures say, *"The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17)*, a person who has received the remission of sins by faith also lives the rest of his life by faith. The woman believed in the Savior, came before Him, and offered Him her love and gratitude. We, too, once we know the grace of having received the remission of sins, want to hear the word of the Lord who saved us and live according to His will. As we hear the word together and share our faith, we come to know that grace more clearly, and we also come to preach the news of salvation to those who are still suffering because of their sins.

Of the two people who were in the same place in Simon's house, the one who received peace and went home was not the host who had invited Him, but the woman who had been called a sinner. Today, we, too, must look at what the Lord has accomplished for us before reckoning whether we have offered enough to the Lord, and our peace and our service all come from that grace. Let us believe with our hearts in Jesus, who saved us even though He knew our sins, and let us live in gratitude, setting our hearts on the word of the Savior, who resolved the debt of sin that we could not repay. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

A life of perfect faith

< Luke 7:36–50 >

"Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, 'This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' So he said, 'Teacher, say it.' 'There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?' Simon answered and said, 'I suppose the one whom he forgave more.' And He said to him, 'You have rightly judged.' Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant

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oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.' Then He said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?' Then He said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.'"

We ourselves are the town sinners

Though people have heard this word countless times, there are not so many who know its meaning exactly. We can see that there are not so many people who know the fact that the main character of this word is none other than themselves.

A Pharisee invited Jesus. There comes the story that, when Jesus went into the Pharisee's house and sat down, a woman in that town who was a sinner came looking for Jesus. The word says *"a woman in the city who was a sinner" (Luke 7:37)*, and this means that this woman was the town sinner. This woman was not a quiet sinner but a sinner notorious in the town. She was a town sinner who dragged all kinds of scandals around with this man and that man. That woman, knowing that Jesus Christ was having a meal at the Pharisee's house, came looking for Him. How notorious must she have been for it to be recorded like that? In the old days, if someone did something, rumors spread far and wide.

The Bible tells the story with this woman, the sinner of that town, as its main character. Yet even among Christians there are people who think like this Pharisee. That is, there are people who think that they are different from this woman because they have received the remission of sins. But the people who are exactly

the same as that woman, the notorious sinner, the woman branded as a sinner in that town, are none other than we ourselves. It is not only this woman who was notorious in that town; we ourselves are the very town sinners.

Do you know how many sins we commit in this world? This woman may have committed all kinds of sins going around this town, but we too do all kinds of things as we live our whole lives in this world. Would we be an exception? There is no one who is not a town sinner. If what we are were exposed before God, could we help but be called town sinners? We are not hidden sinners, not sinners who occasionally sin in hiding, but sinners notorious for sinning so much.

All the people on this earth are sinners notorious in the town, exactly like this woman. Yet there are people who say that they are not so, who, like the Pharisee, act as though they had broadened their knowledge, walked well, and behaved well, and as though, even if they had sinned much in the old days, they were now people who had nothing to do with sin. Is that really so? What soul is there that is not exactly the same as this woman, the town sinner? Is a pastor so? Is a Buddhist monk so? Is a priest, a nun so? Are students so? Is a university professor, a respected elder of the neighborhood so? They are all town sinners. They are all the same.

Even so, people say that they themselves are not like that. You yourselves are like that, and I myself am like that. There are countless women in the town; would only this woman be like that? No. All the women living in that town are town sinners, and all the men living in that town are town sinners. They are all much the same. Those who live pretending to be righteous are nothing special either. Would clergy who live without marrying be any different? They are the same sinners too. You yourselves, who are born again, are also like that. Human beings are ugly

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and filthy. When God looks at us, we are town sinners. If the things we do as we live our whole lives on this earth became known, we would be no different from the town sinner. That is what we are like.

The question is how much of a sinner one knows oneself to be, how well one knows one's own shortcomings. Those who know this well bow their heads in their hearts. To such people Jesus is lovely. Those who know well what they are, those who can clearly discern what they are, those who know that there is not the slightest difference between themselves and this woman—such people become the ones who pour fragrant oil on Jesus Christ and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Among Christians there are far too many who do not know that they are town sinners. There are people who lead religious lives without ever discovering, in their whole lives, that they are worthless beings, people who think they are different from the town sinner, people who say, "I am different from the people in the bars. I am different from the gamblers. I am different from those who commit fornication." What is different about them? They are the same. They themselves do the same things and yet say they are not like that, but before God all human beings are the same. Even while gathering every day, crying, "Lord, Lord," and begging for their sins to be remitted, they must know that they themselves are such people. We ourselves are such people. But countless people think that they are not town sinners but small sinners. But we are town sinners.

We too commit all kinds of filthy and ugly sins in our hearts. Yet people divide themselves into an upper class and a lower class. Human beings are all, without exception, lower class. They are like this woman notorious in the town. If each of us, living before God, knows how ugly and filthy a human being he is, he can do exactly what this woman did and be saved exactly

as she was. But if one believes, like the Pharisee, that he is not such a person, it is over. He cannot accept the gospel of the remission of sins, and even if he has accepted it, he comes to spit it out again. We must know what we are.

The gospel is not a common thing

A woman who was a sinner notorious in the town brought fragrant oil in an alabaster flask, stood behind Jesus, and wet His feet with her tears. Who loves God most, and who serves God most? The one who knows that he really is a notorious sinner—such a person offers what is truly precious before God and serves God preciously. A person who does not know what kind of sinner he is, who does not know his own nature well, cannot bring anything precious before God.

What kind of person lives for the Lord all his life? The person who knows that he really sins readily and is truly lacking, and yet that Jesus has borne all his sins—that person serves God very dearly, knows the gospel to be precious, and gives up all his precious things for the gospel. A person who does not know well that he is a sinner and does not know what he is cannot give them up. Even after receiving the remission of sins, the one who knows that he has many faults and is lacking truly offers everything he has before God for this gospel and serves the gospel alone.

A person who does not know himself well disregards the gospel because it is the basics. He regards the gospel as a common thing, but do you know how beautiful and how precious the gospel is? Without the gospel we are cursed and die. He regards this gospel that has saved him as such a common thing. But it is not such a gospel as people think. Jesus' having saved

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us is not a common thing. It is not like tossing someone a piece of candy. The gospel is the most precious thing in this world.

Do you say that just anyone easily believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus Christ removed our sins? That is not so. Because people believe in the gospel so cheaply, they serve the gospel cheaply. Because they believe in Jesus like an accessory, they serve Him like an accessory. They do things formally, without their hearts in it, and act as though with that they were serving the Lord fully and doing well. They say their faith is good? Because they believe so cheaply, they live doing such things.

Dear fellow believers, the gospel is something our lives cannot do without. Even though God exists, if this gospel were not there, we would be in hell and perdition. Yet how can people believe in such a common and worthless gospel—they think that anyone who merely calls, "Lord, Lord," receives the remission of sins. How can one receive the remission of sins by saying, "Lord, Lord"? Do you think the gospel is not a secret but a common thing like a pebble on the street? The one who has discovered the truth acts exactly as this woman did. This gospel is not something discovered by just anyone. Today people say they believe in the gospel, but because they believe in a common Jesus, a worthless Jesus, the gospel seems laughable to them, and they say that you are saved and I am saved too.

If you tell a person who believes in Jesus to talk about the gospel, he cannot. He says that Jesus died on the Cross for him, but does that alone make the gospel? He says that Jesus, who died on the Cross, saved him; but if one leaves out the fact that Jesus had sins passed on to Him through His baptism and calls such vague knowledge the good news, one makes the gospel into something trivial. That is not the gospel. For the gospel, one must know the attributes of Jesus Christ and must know

concretely how Jesus Christ removed our sins. Only when one knows how many sins He removed is it the gospel. The Lord removed all the sins of this woman, the sinner of that town. That is the gospel. To say that He took away original sin but must take away actual sins every day is not the gospel.

The meaning of washing with her hair and kissing His feet

This woman, the town sinner, was not someone who had sinned only once, but a sinner who had become thoroughly accustomed to sinning. Jesus bore all this woman's sins. So this woman, with fragrant oil in an alabaster flask, did the thing of which it is written that she *"stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil" (Luke 7:38).*

A person who knows that he is a sinner cannot stand boldly before Jesus putting forward his own righteousness. A person who knows what he is cannot believe in Jesus so confidently. He cannot do so because he is ashamed of himself. This woman stood at His feet and wept. Because she was so thankful that Jesus Christ had saved her, that the Lord had borne all those many sins of hers, she shed tears of gratitude and came before Jesus with the alabaster flask. We can see the heart of this woman, who wanted to serve the Lord in order to spread widely what the Lord had done. A person who has truly and perfectly received the remission of sins before the Lord acts exactly as this woman did.

This woman washed Jesus' feet with her hair, kissed His feet, and poured fragrant oil on them. Dear fellow believers, do you

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have the knowledge of believing clearly in the fact that Jesus Christ has perfectly and completely removed your sins? The spiritual meaning of this woman's washing Jesus' feet with her hair is that this woman knew and believed that Jesus Christ had come to this earth and borne all the many sins she had committed. If one does not know the clear gospel, one cannot believe. Without the exact knowledge of how Jesus came to this earth to save him and how He removed his sins, one cannot believe.

This woman washed the feet of Jesus Christ with her hair. This woman believed that Jesus Christ had cleanly remitted her so many sins, sins as many as the mist and as many as the clouds, the sins she would commit until she died, through that one work the Lord did when He came to this earth with those feet. This woman clearly had such knowledge, and she knew and believed the course Jesus walked, that Jesus had come with those feet and removed all her sins.

That she kissed His feet means that she kissed the work Jesus Christ did. Have you kissed the work Jesus Christ did for you? For this woman, the town sinner, and for us, the sinners of this world, what did He do with those feet when He came to this earth clothed in flesh? He bore all our sins. In the light, His word says that He bore all our sins. Do you kiss the work our Lord did, that part which He spoke to us in the light? Do you believe? To kiss means to believe.

From people's point of view, they will say, how could the woman kiss Jesus' feet when they were covered in dust and sweat, dirty and ugly? Dear fellow believers, what does that tell us? It tells us that the works of Jesus Christ—His coming to this earth clothed in flesh and bearing all our sins so painfully in the Jordan River, His saying *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)* when He died on the Cross, and His rising again on the third day after His death—did not look dirty or trivial but looked truly precious. To

this woman, the town sinner, the work Jesus did did not look trivial but looked precious. Because those feet looked so beautiful, she kissed Jesus' feet.

Halfway sinners regard it as too trivial that Jesus received baptism in the Jordan River and bore all the sin of the world, and as for His dying on the Cross, they just say, "So He died; I believe." The question is why, while they kiss Jesus Christ who died on the Cross, they do not kiss the fact that He had the sin of the world passed on to Him in the Jordan River, the river of death, and went about preaching the gospel, and saved us and made us perfect.

Kiss the work Jesus did with His feet

Those feet speak of His having borne all our sins. There is no other gospel. The gospel is the Lord's coming to this world clothed in flesh, His bearing all the sin of mankind by receiving baptism in the Jordan River, Jesus Christ's bearing all our sins and receiving judgment on the Cross in our place, and Jesus Christ's dying for us and, three days after His death, God the Father's raising Him up again and seating Him at His own right hand. Only when all of this is there is it the gospel.

If God had not come clothed in human flesh, we could not have been saved. Many Christians believe only in Jesus Christ crucified, or only in Jesus' having come as a human being. By not believing in the baptism by which He bore all the sin of the world in the Jordan River, they reject the will of God for themselves. He said, *"The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?" (Luke 20:4)*, and the baptism of John is from heaven. It is what God ordained. That is, He ordained that the sin of mankind would be removed through the baptism of John.

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By Jesus Christ's receiving baptism, the sin of the world passed on to Him, and we human beings came to be made sinless. That is precisely the gospel.

Therefore, we must kiss that work Jesus Christ did with His feet. We must kiss the work Jesus Christ did. Yet there are far too many people who do not kiss it. Such a person is not a town sinner but a sinner known only to himself. Only a town sinner comes before Jesus Christ and kisses Him. I want you to know the fact that only a person who truly is lacking before God and sins much kisses wholeheartedly the work Jesus Christ did. Those who think they sin only occasionally and call themselves sinners who are only slightly lacking do not kiss the feet of Jesus Christ. All our sins passed on to Jesus Christ when He received baptism in the Jordan River, and those who, without kissing that, say they believe well in Jesus Christ are sinners.

This woman kissed the feet of Jesus Christ. She gave thanks that Jesus had taken away all her sins. This woman had not sinned for just a day or two. Everywhere she went she sinned, and everywhere she went rumors of her affairs and scandals spread. Since she was notorious in such a cramped little town, could her life have been bearable? Only such a person, only the person who knows and believes the fact that our Lord bore even those sins, kisses the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is to say, he is one who has received it into his heart.

Do you accept it? Were you a sinner like this woman, or were you not? Were you a sinner who sinned a little by making a mistake now and then? It is not that one sins a little through some mistake. It is not that one has the experience of having sinned once or twice. Human beings are those who sin until the moment they close their eyes. Jesus Christ bore that sin, and bore that sin too, and bore all of them. Do you believe that you are a town sinner? You are such a person. I am such a person, and the

people of the whole world are such people. Do not act as though you were not. The one who says, “I am not such a person,” spits Jesus Christ out even after having believed in Him. That is, he does not kiss Jesus’ feet. People wonder whether there is anything else besides this, but what else is there for us human beings? Spiritually, what else is there for us? We can be saved only if Jesus Christ bears all our sins, so what is more precious than this, and what is better than this? Which religion has it, and whom could one go to and find it? Where in this world is there a love greater than the love of Jesus?

We must spiritually kiss the feet of Jesus Christ. Do not think that you yourselves are small sinners or that you will never sin again. Do not think, that is, that you used to be like that but are not like that now. You do not know what sins you will commit in the future. You do not know yourselves, but Jesus knows everything. That is why the Lord came to this earth and bore, once and for all in the Jordan River, all the sin of mankind—the sins of a lifetime, the sins of the town sinner, wicked sins and sins of weakness. Do you believe that you are such a person? If you say you are not, you cannot serve the gospel preciously.

It is because we have weak parts every day that we have reason to give thanks and serve the Lord. If one says he has nothing lacking, there is nothing to serve for either. A person for whom it is all over once he has received the gospel is not one who has received the remission of sins. Such people think that they hardly sin, that they do not sin anymore, and so it is hard for them to believe that the Lord bore even the sins they do commit. The point is that the Lord does not grant such people that faith. As for those who say that they no longer need the church since they have received the remission of sins, whether they really need the church or not is something we will find out by waiting and seeing.

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This woman believed that Jesus Christ had borne her so many sins, sins more numerous than the hairs of her head. Because the work He did with those feet was so thankworthy and lovely to her, she believed, kissed it, and poured fragrant oil on it. That is, she lived a life of spreading it.

The Gospels record the woman who poured fragrant oil, and this woman was the town sinner. This woman was notorious for fornication. Are not all the people on this earth sinners just like her? Who is there that can say he is not? A Buddhist monk, a pastor, a priest, an officeholder in the church, a layperson—who? Let the one who says he is not such a person come out before God. They are all people of that sort. Yet they hide themselves.

We who are gathered here have received the remission of sins. That is, we have received the remission of sins because we were such sinners. It is not that we received the remission of sins without being such sinners. It is that Jesus Christ bore all our sins, and so we have received the remission of sins. It is a truly ridiculous thing to say, "I was not like that, so if You will only remit this one sin, I will not sin anymore, so please remit it." Such a person sins again once that time has passed. That person has not yet become a true sinner. It is because he does not know that he is a person who does those things all his life. Rather, the person who knows that he is such a sinner, who knows that he is a person who commits such sins until he grows old and dies, does not commit such repeated sins. He leaves sin behind, saying, "Oh, Lord, You have borne all this sin too. This is not right." The Lord has saved human beings whose very nature is like this.

Among those who believe in Jesus there are too many who have much righteousness of their own. What is there about them that is not like that? Before God we are such people. As for the person who says, "Still, that is not me," God throws him into such circumstances and makes him surrender in the end. Before

God the human heart is corrupt, and what comes out of the human heart is filthy and corrupt, like a dirty rag. Yet those who act within the church as though they were not like that, as though they were righteous, and do not know that they are town sinners, leave the church. Because they have so much righteousness of their own.

Five hundred denarii and fifty denarii

We need the Lord, we need this gospel, and we need the church all our lives. This woman washed His feet with her hair, kissed them, and poured fragrant oil on them. This woman poured something precious on Jesus, and this fragrant oil speaks spiritually of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This is truly good news, beautiful news, a sound more beautiful than any other sound in this world, the sound that has removed the sin of mankind. The absolutely beautiful thing, the most beautiful sound of all, is precisely that all the sin of mankind has been removed. The fragrant oil is precisely the fact that our Lord bore, by receiving baptism in the Jordan River, the sins of us human beings who are such town sinners, all the sins we commit every day, all the sins we commit until we die. Fragrant oil is oil, and when it is poured out its fragrance spreads. Fragrant oil is many times more costly than perfume. It is oil, but oil with a very strong fragrance. This speaks spiritually of her having given her whole life to the work of serving the gospel, to the spread of the gospel.

Who are the people who live such a spiritual life? Sinners. Dear fellow believers, the point is that a town sinner lived such a life. This person knew that she was a sinner. But the Pharisee thought, *"This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and*

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what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). Dear fellow believers, have you ever become a sinner before God? Are you merely a person who falls short before God? Have you ever become a sinner, saying, "Before God I am a real sinner"?

The Pharisee judged this woman to be a complete sinner on the basis of what was outwardly revealed. There are sinners whose sins have been revealed outwardly, and there are sinners whose sins have not yet been revealed. We must become sinners completely revealed before God. It is not that we merely fall short before God, but that we say, "I am a sinner, and because I have sinned before God, I am a person who can only go to hell." We are not sinners who merely fall short, but sinners who can only be judged completely and go to hell. We must know that we are such people.

When one comes to know oneself, one is grateful and thankful that Jesus Christ has borne all of one's sins. And one kisses His feet, kisses the work Jesus did, gives thanks, follows Him, pours fragrant oil on Him, serves Him, and, offering oneself for the righteousness of spreading His gospel, lives together with Jesus. As it says, *"It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20)*, now our living is living the life of Christ. "I could only be judged, could only die, and could only go to hell, but our Lord bore all my sins and saved me. Lord, who have borne all the sins I will commit out of weakness in the future, Lord, who have saved me perfectly from hell, I will live my whole life for You." This woman lived that life.

What kind of person poured the fragrant oil from the alabaster flask on Jesus? The Bible tells us what kind of person was saved and what kind of person kissed Jesus. The person who knows that he is a sinner who can only go to hell, the person who knows the fact that sin is recorded in his heart, the person who

knows that, when examined in the light of the word, he goes to hell—that person believes in the work Jesus Christ did when He came to this earth clothed in flesh, namely, that He bore all our sins by receiving baptism in the Jordan River at the age of thirty, saying, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*; he believes that Jesus Christ died on the Cross; and he believes that Jesus Christ rose again and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God the Father. God, seeing the faith of the person who believes that God has given the right to become children of God and has given the remission of sins to those who believe in what Jesus Christ did, says that that person has kissed Jesus' feet. The Bible tells us that the person who believes that Jesus Christ has borne all those sins more numerous than the hairs of his head has received the remission of sins.

"'Simon, I have something to say to you.' So he said, 'Teacher, say it.' 'There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?' Simon answered and said, 'I suppose the one whom he forgave more'" (Luke 7:40–43). The Lord speaks spiritually. He has something to say to all of us. What is it? What our Lord must surely say is that there are two kinds of debtors to the creditor. Before God we are all debtors. We are sinners before God. But what kind of sinners? One is a sinner who can only die, and the other is a sinner who merely falls short. This is what is different.

Sinners who merely fall short are very many on this earth. Even within the Christian world there are many sinners who merely fall short. But the one who owes five hundred denarii goes to hell unless it is by the grace of God, unless God removes all his sins completely and flawlessly, unless He bears all those sins. "I cannot stop sinning. My life itself is sin, and sin itself is

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me. I cannot stop myself." This divides people into two kinds. Some are sinners ethically, and some are sinners who can only go to hell.

There are these two kinds of sinners, and neither has anything with which to repay. However slightly a sinner may fall short, he has nothing with which to repay before God. He has nothing with which to make up for his sins. Since it says, *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23),* one must die and be judged, but one cannot just die and be judged. That one cannot repay means that one must give up one's life for one's sins. One must die, but our Lord cancels the debt. Our Lord has canceled it for both. That is, whether one has become a great sinner or a small sinner, He has canceled it for all. On the human side, feeling that one is a small sinner or a big sinner is just one's own feeling; examined in the light of the word of God, all are the same sinners.

God has canceled all the sins of this world. Therefore, from God's side, the sins of the people of this world have all disappeared. Though we were sinners, we have become righteous. If one knows that he really is a sinner, believes in the work Jesus did, and kisses His feet, he becomes righteous. Jesus Christ canceled the sins of both men. To say that He canceled them means that He paid the price Himself in their place and removed them. It means that He Himself filled up the judgment for sin in full. Jesus Christ received baptism from John and received judgment on the Cross for us. He is Jesus Christ, who did not merely say so with words, but actually died for us.

Then Jesus asks Simon which of these two will love him more. Simon answered that it was the one who had more canceled. The one who has had more canceled loves the Lord more. The one who has received the remission of all sins loves the Lord and serves the Lord. The one who knows that he is such

a sinner loves Jesus and believes in this gospel. The point is that the one who does not know that he is such a sinner does not believe in this gospel.

The Pharisee who did not even give water for His feet

Jesus said, *"Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head" (Luke 7:44)*. There are times when we sin before God in our hearts and in our actions, and are you not thankful that Jesus Christ has borne all those sins? That she washed His feet with her tears speaks of tears of gratitude.

Dear fellow believers, when Jesus came into the Pharisee's house, the Pharisee did not even give Him water for His feet. This means that this Pharisee did not believe in Jesus Christ. Because he did not believe, he could not serve Him either. The Pharisee was a man who owed a debt of fifty denarii, and he thought that he was a person who merely fell short, not a sinner through and through. That is why, when Jesus came in, he did not even give Him water for His feet. He had never become a sinner. This woman was different. The Pharisee was saying to Jesus Christ, "When did You remove my sins? How are You my Savior? You are my teacher, but are You really the Son of God?" The Pharisee regarded Jesus merely as a teacher and did not believe in Him as the Son of God. He did not believe in Jesus Christ, who had removed his sins, as his Savior. He was a sinner, yes, but not a sinner going to hell, just a sinner who fell short a little. He was a sinner who said that even though he had sin, he would not go to hell.

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On this earth there are too many sinners who merely fall short. Sinners who merely fall short never believe in Jesus. They only pretend to believe, and never accept the work Jesus Christ did. There are the works Jesus did for thirty-three years after coming to this earth, but the Pharisees believe some parts and do not believe other parts. That the Pharisee did not give water for His feet means that he did not believe in Jesus as God. But this woman wet Jesus' feet with her tears and washed them with her hair. This means that this woman believed in the work Jesus Christ did when He came. She was truly a sinner who could only die, and she had sinned not just once or twice but all her life up to then, yet she believed that, just as He said, *"Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18)*, He had washed away all those sins and had borne even the sins she committed every day, and so, being so thankful, she served the Lord in tears.

She washed Jesus' feet with her hair. It was because this woman had no way to express her gratitude and love. There is no way to express that Jesus Christ bore all the sins more numerous than the hairs of one's head. When we believe, we come to make a confession of faith. One could express it in a single word, saying, "Lord, You have borne this sin of mine too, and You, Lord, have borne all the sins of this world," but the one who has truly received the remission of all the sins as many as these hairs tells them one by one, every one of them, as if counting the hairs of his head, saying, "Lord, You took away this sin of mine too, and I committed this sin, but You, Lord, took it all away." Confessing that every sin, whether a special sin or a small sin, passed on to the head of Jesus Christ, confessing his faith, he believes in the Lord with thanksgiving, saying, "I thank You for having borne all my sins, these so many sins." And he

serves. The one who has received the remission of all those many sins serves in that way.

Dear fellow believers, have you received the remission of sins more numerous than the hairs of your head? You commit, in your lifetime, more sins than the hairs of your head. We do not know how many hairs we have. This woman washed Jesus' feet with her hair, but would she have struck a pose while washing them with her hair? That woman's face was smeared with tears, and she wiped Jesus' feet with her hair. "Because You came to this earth and received baptism, these so many sins of mine have been remitted." Were we not such sinners? Were we not sinners who commit more sins than the hairs of our head? There is no one among us human beings whose life is not like this. There are people who say that they have sinned only so much that they could count on their fingers when they committed such sins, but we were not such sinners. We live committing more sins than the hairs of our head before God, and then we die and go to hell because of those sins. Jesus Christ bore all those sins. When we confess our faith and make our confession of faith, it is not that we have committed one or two sins. Our Lord, knowing that we would commit more sins than the hairs of our head, came to this earth and personally bore all our sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and died in our place.

Dear beloved saints, are all the saints in the church righteous? What is there that is righteous? If one speaks of being righteous, it is believing in Jesus Christ that is righteous—are our actions righteous? There is nothing right in a person who does well for himself but does nothing for God. Are our deeds right, or are our thoughts right? What is there that is right? We must kiss before Jesus Christ. For us human beings who commit more sins than the hairs of our head, Jesus came to this earth clothed in human

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flesh and bore them all in the Jordan River, and we, by believing that word in the light of the word, must read the four Gospels, which record the works Jesus did, and kiss that recorded fact, that word. Do you kiss it?

Confess your faith every day

"You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil" (Luke 7:45–46). Dear fellow believers, the point is that the one who knows Jesus Christ perfectly kissed Him from the time He came in. As Jesus opened the door and went into the Pharisee's house, this woman went and clung to Him without warning, and, shedding tears, followed Jesus and kissed Him. Spiritually, this means that even after we met the Lord, came to know this gospel, and received the remission of sins, we have many weak parts, and yet we followed Him, giving thanks and believing that our Lord bore all our sins of weakness too. By being received just once, the remission of sins becomes the perfect remission of sins. But the testimony and faith of that remission of sins must take place every day, and our faith is needed every day. Because our lives fall short, it is needed every day.

Look back on your lives. Look back on how lacking you are. This woman did not cease kissing. By believing that the Lord bore all the shortcomings and sins in his life, one kisses the gospel. It is knowing that those are sins. Do you think that one enters Christianity once and thereby becomes a Christian? A confession of faith is needed every day. It is needed until we die. Peter confessed, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*. When the Lord said, *"Simon, son of Jonah, do*

you love Me more than these?" (John 21:15), Peter confessed, *"You know that I love You" (John 21:15)*. Jesus Christ had them make a confession of faith every day. He had them do so until the day He ascended. In our hearts too, we must make the confession of faith that Jesus is our Savior. I hope that you will confess your faith without ceasing.

A life of pouring out fragrant oil—look at this woman

"You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil" (Luke 7:46). The woman poured fragrant oil. Are we spiritually spreading the gospel? Are we spreading the fact that Jesus Christ has removed all our sins? Do you give your lives for the gospel? After receiving the remission of sins, do you give your lives not for yourselves but for the gospel, for God, for the will of Christ? The life of a truly born-again person is a life of giving oneself for the gospel.

This woman did not live for herself. She gave all the savings of her lifetime to Jesus. The one alabaster flask of fragrant oil—according to another Gospel, she broke it. That is, she gave the whole of it. Dear fellow believers, we too can give ourselves whole to the Lord like this woman. I hope you will give not a little of your lives at a time, but all of it. God wants you to give your whole lives. We want to give our whole lives and live the life of Christ. We want to give our whole selves for the spread of the gospel, and to give all the good things we have.

This woman lived a spiritual life. Only the one who has become a sinner in the light receives the remission of all sins by grace. Only those who have truly become sinners when examined in the light of the word of God accept, just as the word

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says, the fact that He removed sin through the word of God. The one who acknowledges the word of God accepts and believes the word of God. Only the one who believes that this is the word of God accepts the word, believes it, accepts the grace of the word, and accepts that grace which is recorded, that Jesus Christ has removed all our sins by the word.

What about the many people today who are not spiritual? They do not accept the word. There are people who do not accept it, saying that in the Bible there are both the word of God and the words of men, so that errors could have occurred in translation. But it is said that God is light, and it is said that God, in His word, reveals to us the truth of what is wrong and what is right. Only the one who has become a sinner in the light, who has become a sinner by the word, accepts the word, becomes righteous, and accepts grace; but those who are not spiritual do not accept it because they know too little. This Bible is the truth.

Those who have become sinners in the light accept God's grace in the light. This light speaks of the word of God. Through the word of God we receive the remission of sins. The word of God tells us exactly what sin is, what the truth is, what blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is, what judgment is, what faith is, what human righteousness is, and what the righteousness of God is. It is because they do not know the word exactly that people do not believe. While believing in Jesus, do you serve the Lord, or do you serve people? People say that serving a little, rather than giving their whole lives, is serving the Lord. What kind of serving is that? This woman broke the alabaster flask of fragrant oil, flask and all. It says that she did not just pour it on Jesus' feet but poured it out without sparing. She poured out everything, broke it all. That is, she gave the most precious thing of her life. That is, there was a complete change in her life.

Dear fellow believers, only a great sinner before God kisses Jesus' feet. The point is that a person who is only a little bit of a sinner does not kiss the work Jesus did. Only great sinners, town sinners, kiss Jesus like this woman. There are many small sinners inside the sanctuaries of the churches of the world. Such people do not kiss Jesus' feet, the gospel. That is, the one who does not know his own shortcomings does not kiss this immense truth. He says that he is not such a sinner. He says, might there not be another way, even apart from Jesus? If one does not accept the gospel like that, it is hell. All those who, calling themselves halfway sinners, sinners who merely fall short, do not kiss this gospel go to hell. The person who knows that he is a sinner who can only go to hell, who says that, according to the word, hell is a place where only those with sin go, so he is going to hell—the fact that Jesus Christ has removed all that person's sins, do you believe that? Only a great sinner kisses Jesus' feet.

There is a hymn that sings that a great sinner received a blessing and obtained the way to live. A great sinner kisses the Lord's feet, the work the Lord did. Small sinners do not kiss it, and small sinners who thus do not kiss the gospel of the baptism all go to hell. The one who owes fifty denarii can neither serve the Lord, nor believe in Him, nor kiss His feet. The one who owes fifty denarii is the Pharisee who leads a religious life. Whether a religious leader or a person of holy conduct, the one who does not believe in this gospel because he does not think he is such a sinner goes to hell.

Five hundred denarii speaks spiritually of the grace of God. It means that one cannot receive the remission of sins except by the grace of God. The one who owes five hundred denarii, the one who can only go to hell before God, believes the truth that Jesus Christ abundantly removed all that sin for which he could only go to hell, that sin more abundant than the mist, when He

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received baptism from John. The one who has received the remission of all sins serves the Lord. The one who has received the remission of original sin only cannot serve the Lord. We serve the Lord because we have received the remission of all sins. Because our Lord bore all the sins we commit every day, Jesus also bore all the sins we will commit in the future, even though we have not committed them yet. Because our Lord is eternal, He bore all sins eternally when He came to this earth. So we have received the remission of all sins. Only the one who believes that Jesus took away all these sins serves the gospel.

Our Lord said, *"Do you see this woman?" (Luke 7:44)*. Who is this woman? She was the town sinner. She was a shameful person who could only die. Our Lord saved such a person, who could only go to hell and could only be cursed. That is why this woman washed His feet with her tears, kissed His feet, and washed the feet of Jesus Christ with her hair. This woman lived a life of believing in her heart before Jesus Christ and serving the Lord, and she believed exactly the clear truth that our Lord bore all her sins, more numerous than the hairs of her head, and the fact that Jesus Christ was her Savior. He tells us to look at this woman. He is telling us to believe like this woman when we believe in Jesus Christ.

Dear fellow believers, do you see this woman? We have seen this woman. *"You gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven" (Luke 7:44–47)*. This tells us to live this woman's life. God has shown us this woman. This woman was the object of salvation and its model, and this woman's faith was a perfect

faith. The Lord bore all this woman's sins perfectly. The word says that He bore not only this woman's original sin but also her actual sins, and so removed all her sins. Do you see this woman? Because she owed five hundred denarii and had nothing with which to repay and so could only go to hell, He bore all this woman's sins, and He said, "This woman believed in Me, served Me, and proclaimed Me. You too, live such a life."

Dear beloved saints, are we also the same kind of people as this woman? Do we live the same life as this woman? We must live the same life as this woman. It is not that we live it by ourselves; our Lord has given us grace so that we can live that way. We are those who need the Lord's grace every day. Is there anyone righteous among us? Is there anyone who has his own righteousness, anyone who has any cleverness of his own? Our Lord is the One who is great, and our Lord has saved us. Look at this woman whom our Lord tells us to look at. I hope that you will engrave on your hearts the work our Lord did for this woman and how this woman followed the Lord, and go on following the Lord with faith before God. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

We are the ones who owe five hundred denarii

< Luke 7:36–50 >

"Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, 'This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' So he said, 'Teacher, say it.' 'There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?' Simon answered and said, 'I suppose the one whom he forgave more.' And He said to him, 'You have rightly judged.' Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My

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feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.' Then He said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?' Then He said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.'"

Those who believe in Jesus have no sin

Jesus has removed all the sins of you and me. A person who believes in Jesus rightly, a person who has received the remission of sins, has no sin. Because our Lord came to this earth and removed all the sins of this world, those who believe in it have no sin. Our Lord also speaks to this woman who poured fragrant oil on the feet of Jesus, and what He says is that a person who believes in Jesus has no sin.

Our Lord said, "*'There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?' Simon answered and said, 'I suppose the one whom he forgave more.' And He said to him, 'You have rightly judged.' Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman?'" (Luke 7:41–44).* It means that the one who has had more canceled loves Jesus more. In this way, all of us believe in Jesus, and because Jesus has paid for all our sins, those who believe have no sin. But how we see ourselves—this is the part that our Lord spoke about.

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Acknowledge that we are the ones who owe five hundred denarii

One man owed five hundred denarii and another owed fifty denarii, and since neither of them had anything with which to repay, both had their debts canceled. We believe that Jesus has removed all our sins, and the point here is what one really is like. Like the one who owed five hundred denarii, such a person is one who has committed so many sins that he cannot but go to hell; yet, because he could not deal with his own sins by himself before the Lord, he believed in the Lord, and he received the remission of sins by believing that the Lord has removed all sins. Knowing what he really is, that he was one who could not but be destroyed, he truly gave thanks and believed before Jesus, who saved him who commits countless sins like a debt of five hundred denarii, and so he had his debt canceled and received the remission of sins. That is why that person loved Jesus more than the one who had owed fifty denarii and had it canceled.

Our Lord speaks with these two people in view. One is this woman who came up behind Jesus weeping, wet His feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and poured fragrant oil on them, and the other is this Pharisee. Our Lord canceled the debts of these two kinds of people alike. He canceled them alike so that there would be not a single sin. A person who, like the Pharisee, lives well and pretends to live piously in front of people, a person who has committed few sins by his deeds, or a woman notorious in the town like this woman—these two people owed fifty denarii and five hundred denarii before God, and because they could not repay, our Lord canceled the debts of both of them as though they did not exist. The Lord resolved it, declaring them to be without sin. So both of them received the remission of sins before God.

Our Lord has removed the sins of all people. Whether a person commits many sins in this world or commits few sins, He has removed the sins of all people. But on man's side, people decide for themselves, saying, "I am a person who commits more sins than that person," or "I am a person who commits fewer." But in fact, seen before God, everyone is exactly the same. They are the same sinners and the same people who cannot but go to hell. It is not that a person goes to hell because he has committed many sins by his deeds, nor that he goes to the kingdom of heaven because he has not committed a single sin by his deeds. Whether sins are many or few, sin is sin.

Unless it is washed with water, it does not become clean

To speak in terms of something dirty like filth getting on the body, whether a person has a little on him or a lot on him, it is the same in that something dirty is on him, and it is the same in that it smells. The person with a little on him must wipe it off, and the person with a lot on him must wipe it off too. It is not that a person has no need of something to wipe with just because only a little got on him. However, the person with a lot on him feels so uncomfortable that he cannot go before people, and if someone says that there is a smell, I cannot tell you how much it pricks him. The person with a little on him does not feel it so greatly.

Because I grew up by the seashore, even if something dirty got on me while I was playing in the sea, I washed it off in the seawater. If you wash in water, there is no need of anything to wipe with. If you just keep swimming and then come out and look, you are clean. It is far cleaner than wiping. But when

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something dirty got on me while playing outside and I could not wash it off quickly, I cannot tell you how dirty and filthy it was; until I took a bath, I could not concentrate on anything.

Our Lord has canceled it all. That He canceled it means that He resolved it on the side of Jesus. If all people believe in Jesus, they all have their debts canceled. That is because Jesus has resolved all sins. Then there cannot be a single sin. If someone says that he has sin even though he believes in Jesus, that is a lie. That is believing in Jesus wrongly and believing in a false way. That is religion.

Our Lord speaks, subtly hinting that this woman who poured fragrant oil on the feet of Jesus, wet the feet of Jesus with her own tears, and wiped the feet of Jesus with her own hair is the one who owed five hundred denarii, and that the Pharisee is the one who owed fifty denarii. Then who had more canceled, and who loved Jesus more? Naturally, the one who owed five hundred denarii, the one who had that debt canceled, loved Jesus more. Jesus has remitted all sins. Jesus looked at that woman and said, *"Your faith has saved you. Go in peace" (Luke 7:50)*. So if someone says that a person who believes in Jesus has sin, that is believing wrongly, and it is terribly wrong. How can one who believes in Jesus have sin? There is no sin.

Then, through this word, we must acknowledge before God that we mankind, you and I, every one of us, are people who, like this woman, owe a debt of five hundred denarii. And how did He make the sins of this woman, the sins of you and me, into no sin? Our Lord came to this earth and washed our sins away clean with the baptism He received.

Sins were passed on through the baptism He received from John

That is exactly like what I told you, that if you go into the seawater and wash, there is no need of anything to wipe with. Through that baptism Jesus received from John when He came to this earth, the sins of you and me, of all the people of the world, of the people who owe five hundred denarii, were passed on to Jesus. Through the baptism Jesus received from John when He came to this earth, the sins of all people were passed on to Jesus. Therefore, we have received the remission of all our sins through faith. The reason we can say that we have no sin is that Jesus came to this earth, received baptism, had all our sins passed on to Him, and made us sinless; that He canceled our sins; and that our Lord resolved what we could not resolve on our side. That is why we have been saved by believing in Jesus and have become people without sin.

We have no sin because we believe in Jesus; we have become people without sin by believing that Jesus has remitted all sins. And the reason we can be without sin is that Jesus came to this earth and bore our sins through the baptism He received from John, and we believe it. If we did not believe in the baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross, how could we, who are people who cannot but sin, become people without sin? We have become people without sin because our Lord has remitted all our sins, has canceled them all, and has washed them all away.

There is no one in this world who has received the remission of sins by resolving his own sins himself. However fine a person may be, if he has become a person without sin by believing in Jesus, that came about through faith, and he became a person without sin because God, on His side, unilaterally removed that person's sins. However good the thing you wipe with may be,

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unless you wash with water, it is never washed clean. Unless it is water, it is not washed perfectly. Water washes away what is dirty without leaving anything behind. If you wash with it, one thing is clear: it has been washed clean, and there is no condition.

In this way, just as we become clean when we wash in seawater, our Lord has remitted our sins. He has made us people without sin. Those who believe have no sin. How was their sin taken away? Because Jesus came to this earth and received baptism from John, the representative of mankind, we have no sin. We have no sin by believing in Jesus. Then is there judgment, or is there not? Judgment does not remain for us, because Jesus received it in our place by being nailed to the Cross and dying. That is why we have been saved and have no sin. So we serve the Lord because we have received the remission of sins.

This woman brought costly fragrant oil, poured it on the feet of Jesus, and served Him with all her heart. When a person dies, the corpse gives off a strong smell. So people soak cotton in very costly fragrant oil and wipe the corpse with it. Then, rather than the smell of the rotting corpse being given off, people are overcome by the fragrance of the oil and cannot smell the corpse rotting. This woman poured fragrant oil for the time after Jesus would die, and the fragrance filled the house; and she also stood at the feet of Jesus, shedding tears, wet His feet, and washed the feet of Jesus clean with her hair. A person who has received the remission of sins, a person who has received grace from the Lord, a person who has had all his sins canceled, loves the Lord and does the work of the Lord. He serves the Lord.

We have no sin. We have no sin because we believe in Jesus. We have no sin because Jesus has canceled all our sins. We have no sin because Jesus came to this earth and received baptism. We have no sin because we believe. We have no sin because our Lord, on His side, removed our sins before we believed. Today

I am telling you that God has made us perfect, that He has made us sinless, and that we have been saved. How can a person become a person without sin? He has become a person without sin because Jesus has remitted his sins.

Today there are many people who believe in Jesus and yet do not know that they have become people without sin. There are many who believe in Jesus and yet are always sinners. There are also many who say that they believe in Jesus and believe that they have no sin, and yet still have sin. If you believe in Jesus, you have no sin. That is because Jesus received baptism and canceled all our sins. Because the Lord, on His side, saved us from sin—because He received baptism, was nailed to the Cross, rose again on the third day after His death, and became our living Savior—we have become saints without sin by believing in what God has done. True faith is to have no sin, and one who believes in Jesus rightly is one who has no sin. One who has no sin is not without sin by merely believing; he has no sin because Jesus came to this earth and received baptism from John, and because He received the judgment on the Cross. This did not come from man, nor did it come about by man striving, nor did it come about by human effort. This word clearly says that He canceled the debt.

A debt is canceled when one has no ability to repay

Long ago there was a rich man. This rich man was a tremendous landowner. Long ago, the nobles of England owned a tremendous amount of land. There were many servants who tilled the fields of those nobles, worked for them, and lived on the wages they got there, and there were small farmers who rented the landowner's land, farmed it, paid the landowner a

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certain amount, and lived on the rest. Because the lords had a tremendous amount of land, their storehouses were always overflowing even if they did not work, and their wealth always overflowed just from taking in taxes. But those who farmed small plots had to pay the lord the grain they had promised without fail, even if a drought came or blight and pests struck, so after paying it, they themselves had nothing to eat. What they then took to eat was grain borrowed at high interest. It was grain for which, if you borrowed one measure in spring, promising to repay it later, you had to give back one and a half measures in autumn. They kept taking it to eat, trying to farm that way, but when they were about to harvest, blight and pests struck and the crop failed completely. When the crop failed, they had no seed, so they went to the lord again, got seed, and farmed, and it was like this day after day. The farmers were debtors. Later, their debts became so great that they said, "Do with me whatever you will." They had no ability to repay. They did not even have anything to live on right away.

So the lords occasionally canceled debts. When there was a special day, such as their own birthday or their son's wedding, they gathered the small farmers and canceled their debts. "Today is the day my son marries and I receive a daughter-in-law. My heart is truly glad. So I have also set this as the day on which I cancel the debts of those who have owed me until now. Gather, all of you. Bring all your certificates of debt." The lord took them all, burned them all in the fire, and said, "You now owe me nothing. You have no debt." This is cancellation.

Our Lord said to us, "You will live committing such and such sins from now on. You will live committing sins in the world. Bring all that sin of the world to Me. I will cancel it. I will resolve it." Our Lord came to this earth, received baptism, and received the judgment on the Cross. God the Father gave up His

own Son, had Him receive baptism from John, had Him receive the judgment on the Cross, and raised Him on the third day after His death. So through His own Son He canceled all the sins of people. Those who believe in this gospel, in which He canceled the sins of all people through His own Son, have their debts canceled, and those who do not believe are still debtors. God has canceled the sins of all people through His own Son.

To cancel a debt is something done when one has no ability to repay it. There is a prisoner serving a life sentence who must live inside prison until he dies, and on a day of great national celebration, grace is shown and his life sentence is reduced to twenty years in prison. Then, when there is another holiday, it keeps being cut down from twenty years to fifteen years, and then to ten years. That is cancellation. It happens that way even if he does nothing inside the prison. Our God, too, canceled all the sins of people who could do nothing about their own sins and could not but go to hell, and saved them. Because God loved us, He sent His own Son, passed all our sins on to His own Son through baptism, had His own Son nailed to the Cross and put to death for the judgment of sin, and raised Him again, and so He canceled the debts of all those who believe in His own Son. That is how we have been saved.

Only those who have had everything canceled do the work of God

The Pharisee invited Jesus to have a meal at his house. But when Jesus entered that house, he did not bring Him water in a basin. He gave Him neither water to wash His hands nor water to wash His feet. So Jesus said to Simon, *"I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet*

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with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil" (Luke 7:44–46). Who loved the Lord more? This woman loved Him more. That is right. The one who has had much canceled loves much.

When the Lord removed sin, He removed all sins forever. He removed all sins. Not one remains. And those who had everything canceled did the work of God. They did the work of our Lord. This woman did the work of God by pouring fragrant oil on His feet, so that the baptism Jesus received and His death would be spread to the whole world. Of the woman who poured fragrant oil in Bethany, too, Jesus said, *"Wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her" (Matthew 26:13)*. Those who have had everything canceled, those who have received the remission of sins by believing in the Lord, serve the Lord. Only those who have received the remission of sins, only those who have had everything canceled, do the work of God. Those who have not had everything canceled cannot do the work of God. Only those who have had their debt canceled can give thanks, only those who have had their debt canceled can rejoice, and only those who have had their debt canceled do the work of God.

Today our Lord has removed the sins of this woman in this way and canceled them all. This woman was in fact a very notorious woman. Even so, He canceled all her sins. Because our Lord has canceled all our sins, we were so deeply moved and thankful that we were saved through faith, and after being saved, we are so deeply moved and thankful that we love our Lord. And we serve Him. We want to spread the gospel. We want this gospel to be spread to all the nations of the whole world. We

have received the remission of sins. Remembering without fail that we have received the remission of sins, we believe that you and I have no sin, that everything has been canceled, and that Jesus has saved us by the baptism of Jesus and by the blood of the Cross. By believing this, we want this gospel to be spread to the whole world. We want this gospel to be spread to all people.

Because we have had our debt canceled, we want to preach the gospel

If we are to preach the gospel, we must start from the fact that Jesus has canceled everything; if we are to do the work of God, we must start from the fact that we have received the remission of all our sins. It is that, because Jesus received baptism from John and washed away our sins, and because we have no sin, we therefore spiritually hope and desire that this gospel be spread to the whole world, and so we exert ourselves. Because we are grateful and thankful that the Lord has saved us, and thankful that we have no sin, we cannot help but have the heart to do the work of God more diligently and more abundantly. God has saved us like this. For this we give true thanks.

Dear fellow believers, you and I have had all our sins canceled through our Lord. Do you believe? Our having had all those sins canceled is because Jesus came to this earth and washed away all our sins by receiving baptism from John, and so we have come to have no sin. We have been saved because Jesus was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood, and received the judgment for sin. We give all glory and thanks to God. We give thanks to the Lord, who gave us salvation so that we can work for this gospel. We give thanks before God the Father, who gave

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us grace so that we can do the work of God even though we are lacking.

Because countless people are still wandering, we are so thankful, and all the more thankful, for the salvation we have received. Because we have been saved from among people more numerous than the grains of sand, because we have received precious salvation, the remission of sins, and the cancellation of all our sins, we are all the more thankful. So we truly want to preach this gospel. We want to do more of the spreading of the gospel and of mission work, and we want to go out to more meetings and spread it to all nations. If He had not canceled our debt, such a heart would not arise, but because we have had it canceled, such a heart arises. Because there is nothing to worry about anymore on account of sin, we have more courage. God has given us this heart. We give thanks. ✉

Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

We are those who have to do with the Lord

< Luke 7:36–50 >

"Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, 'This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' So he said, 'Teacher, say it.' 'There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?' Simon answered and said, 'I suppose the one whom he forgave more.' And He said to him, 'You have rightly judged.' Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My

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feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.' Then He said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?' Then He said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.'"

Do we have to do with the Lord?

I would like to testify of the word concerning the woman who came with fragrant oil in an alabaster flask and *"stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet" (Luke 7:38)* and poured the fragrant oil on them. There was a time when this woman came to Jesus, poured fragrant oil on His feet, washed the feet of Jesus with her hair, and wet His feet as she shed tears. At that time Jesus had been invited to the house of a Pharisee, and because this happened there, the Pharisee was thinking, *"This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39)*. Jesus told Simon the parable of the one whose debt had been canceled and rebuked that Pharisee: "When I came into your house, I did not even receive water for My feet. But this woman, when I came into this house, washed My feet with her tears and poured fragrant oil on My feet, and in this way she has treated Me." So the gist of this word is that the one who has had much debt

canceled loves much, and the one who has had little debt canceled loves little.

The stories of the women who poured fragrant oil on Jesus are recorded in the Gospels. In one Gospel, concerning what the woman who poured fragrant oil in Bethany had done, He said, *"Wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her" (Mark 14:9)*. So we know well what this woman did. I will also speak of what this woman did, but there is something I want to speak of more than that. Jesus, who appears in this word, is the Master of you and me. Does Jesus, who appears in this word, have to do with you and me? He does. Are there any here who have nothing to do with Jesus?

In the word of the Scriptures there are many miracles and wonders of Jesus, and many words of blessing and promises that Jesus spoke. But whether Jesus has to do with you or not—this is what is important. For those who have to do with Him, it is even better when they hear the word of Jesus, and it is also really good when they sing praises. There is a hymn that says that we have done nothing for the Lord and only believe in the remission of sins that the Lord has accomplished, and I really like its words. Before that, I was feeble and weak and lived only committing sin, and it says that I believe in the water and the blood, the gift given for such a one as me. It is truly good.

It is fortunate, and truly a thing to be thankful for, that we have to do with the Lord. Because we have a relationship with the Lord, this is so good; without that relationship, nothing would have anything to do with us. It is fortunate that the Lord and we have to do with each other; if not, this word of God would have nothing to do with us. In the word of God, the Lord and this woman also have to do with each other. Because they have to do with each other, this woman came behind Jesus, shed

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tears, washed the feet of Jesus with her hair, and poured fragrant oil on the feet of Jesus. She did so because they had to do with each other, and Jesus also, saying that the one who has had much debt canceled loves much, said to this woman, *"Your sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48)*. Jesus and this woman are in a relationship in which they have to do with each other.

The relationship between you and me and Jesus is also one in which we have to do with Him. The Lord is our Creator; He made and formed us, remitted our sins with the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, loved us, made us His own people, and became our shepherd. We have become His; we have become His sheep and His workers, and we are those who will enter His kingdom and live with Him forever. We have become those who have to do with Him. Because we have become those who have to do with Him, it is really good.

Everyone who has received the remission of sins must become a disciple of the Lord

The workers in the church, the male and female servants, and the saints all have to do with the Lord, and so all who have received the remission of sins must become disciples of the Lord. They must become disciples who uphold and follow the will of the Lord. That is what I want to say. The Lord saved us from sin and placed us on this earth, and you and I must live the life of a disciple of the Lord. But there are those who do not live the life of a disciple, who only receive salvation and then stop, who put forward only their own righteousness and seek only their own comfort, and who, at the level of "Anyway, as long as I have received the remission of sins, that is enough," say that what the church does is the church's business and what the ministers do

is the ministers' business, and what has it to do with me? I am saying this word hoping that such people will truly not forget it.

All who have received the remission of sins must become disciples of the Lord. Just as the Lord said, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19)*, the disciples of the Lord must make disciples of all the nations and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to them. People who do not become disciples but live a detached life, set apart from Him, saying, "The Lord is the Lord and I am I," are greatly in the wrong. They are a thorn in the eye of the Master. There is a word in Proverbs that a lazy person, when his master looks at him, is *"as vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes" (Proverbs 10:26)*. People who do not truly live the life of a disciple of the Lord before the Lord are a thorn in His eye. When a thorn gets into the eye, how irritating, how stinging, and how hateful it is!

Dear fellow believers, the Lord has removed our sins, and we have received the remission of sins by believing in the Lord; but if we only receive the remission of sins and stop there, if we live just going to church and attending worship as if living a religious life and following only the life of our own flesh, then in the Lord's eyes we are a real thorn. The Lord has saved all the people of the whole world. He saved them in this way and wanted us to spread this gospel; He wanted us to preach the love of the Lord and the salvation that the Lord has given; and if we do not preach this, we are truly a thorn in His eye. Just as He said in Revelation, *"Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:16)*, it is truly so.

What you and I must clearly know as we live having received the remission of sins is that we must live the life of a disciple. We are those who uphold the will of the Lord and have to do with the Lord, so when the Lord rejoices, we also become glad;

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and we are disciples of the Lord and those who follow our Teacher, so we must do the things that please the Lord, uphold the will of the Lord, and live well by the power the Lord gives while we live on this earth. Nevertheless, many people do not want to live the life of a disciple; they just attend church as if living a religious life, come out and attend worship and go, saying, "If I do just this much, it is enough. Do you know how hard it is to get by in society?" That is not right. It is very much not right. The Lord has saved you and me from sin and has removed all the sins of you and me, so how can we do that? Having received the remission of sins, how can we act as if the work of the Lord were none of our concern? We can never do so. If we are those who have properly received the remission of sins, if we are those who have truly had our debt canceled, we can never do so. You and I were headed for hell; we were those who had to be cursed, live wretchedly, and be destroyed; but the Lord is the Creator of you and me and also the Savior who saved you and me from sin, the One who has to do with you and me—so how can we do that? It makes no sense. It makes absolutely no sense.

This woman came behind Jesus, shed tears, and washed the feet of Jesus with her hair. For a woman, her hair is her life. For a woman, her hair is something extremely precious. That she washed the feet of Jesus with that hair means that she knew the deeds of Jesus, that Jesus had come as the Savior for her and had saved her from sin. So, being so grateful and thankful, even though she knew she would be disgraced before people and knew she would be mocked, she met the Lord and confessed her faith before the Lord, and, being so thankful, she washed the feet of Jesus and poured everything she had on the feet of Jesus.

A person who has received the remission of sins and does not live the life of a disciple makes no sense. This woman met Jesus

and did such things because she and Jesus had a relationship; but if you and I receive the remission of sins and only come to church and only attend worship, as if commuting to and from work, and do not live the life of a disciple, only doing what we are told and not volunteering, having no tender heart, having no tender feeling toward the heart of the Lord, and on the contrary sneering at what the church does and mocking it, saying, "Those people are crazy; they are like fanatics; they should do it while also getting along well in society," then we are not disciples. Whoever has received the remission of sins must become a disciple of Jesus Christ. We must live the life of a disciple. It must never be that, after simply receiving the remission of sins, the longer our life of faith goes on, instead of living the life of a disciple we merely come to know the forms of the church well and become shrewd, and so sneer at and make light of what the church does. If so, we cannot remain in the church. The relationship between the Lord and you is broken off.

If we have truly received the remission of sins, we cannot do that. The Lord has saved you from sin, so how can you do that? However much our circumstances improve, how can we live without living the life of a disciple and without upholding the will of the Lord? However bad the conditions become, however much our circumstances worsen, how can we not live the life of the Lord? We could only die and could only go to hell, but the Lord removed all our sins, made us the people of the Lord, and brought our dead life back to life—so how can we not do it? It makes no sense. So when I see a person who says he has come into the gospel and received the remission of sins but follows only the desires of his own flesh, tries to go only in that direction, and tries to lead even others in that direction, I say directly, in my heart and also immediately with my mouth, "It seems there

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is a problem with your salvation right now." Such a person must look back at his own salvation.

The Lord, who is not only the Savior but also the bridegroom and the shepherd

Dear fellow believers, He said that the one who has had much debt canceled loves much. How many sins do you and I commit? If we are people who have received the remission of all those sins through the Lord, without a single one left, we cannot but love the Lord much, and we come to love Him much. It is not that we are told to love; we come to love. How can we not love Him? As for people who say they believe in the Lord and say they have received the remission of sins, yet neglect the work of the Lord and idle about, that is stranger. How can that be? Is the Lord only the Savior who saved us? Is He not the bridegroom of you and me? Is He not the shepherd of you and me? Then is the Lord One who would just completely remove our sins and say, "Now it is over. It is goodbye between you and Me now. I am your Savior. I was passing by for a moment and pulled you out when you had fallen into the water. Now I am going to attend to My own business. I do not know when we will meet again. If we meet again, just thank Me"? No, He is not. The Lord is not only our Savior but also our Master. He is our shepherd. He is the bridegroom of you and me. That Lord absolutely has a relationship with us. He guarantees our future, guarantees our present, and guarantees everything. So how can we idle about? It is utterly incomprehensible.

Jesus, who died because of our sins, rose again and is alive even now, so our relationship with Him who saved us continues today as well.

People say that the pyramids of Egypt are mysterious structures, wonders of the world. But those, too, were built up by people, so they are not that mysterious. What is truly strange, what is truly a mystery, is that the Lord and you and I are connected, yet we live as if we were not connected. The Lord is the bridegroom, the shepherd, and the Master of you and me; He is the Lord who actually protects and helps you and me, who governs all of life and death, fortune and misfortune, who takes responsibility for everything of ours and blesses us; yet we live as if we had no relationship with Him. That is the mystery. We have received the remission of all our sins, the Lord has become our bridegroom, we have become the Lord's, and we will go and live in the Lord's kingdom; the purpose of our living on this earth, too, is that He placed us here to do the work of the Lord, and we live because the Lord gives us power and gives us blessings in everything—so how can we do that?

People say, "You have good faith and you are a pastor, so it is so for you, but we are not like that," but that is absolutely not so. It is exactly the same even for lay believers. In this, you and I are the same. Do you think it is easier because one is a pastor? It is the pastor who does more work. The pastors, the evangelists, the workers, your seniors and those who have gone ahead of you do more work; there is no one who idles. I am not saying that you do not work. I am saying that there are many who, while living on this earth after receiving salvation, speak of their own lives as their own lives, as if they had no relationship with Him, and live thinking that this is wise. We live because of the Lord. Who is there who could live apart from the Lord? Not only here, but who is there in the whole world? There is no one. We breathe today and sing praises because the Lord gives us power, and we live like this because He holds our hearts and souls. It is because we have a relationship with Him.

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The Lord told us to make disciples of all the nations. When we receive the remission of sins, we are disciples. We live the life of a disciple. This is our destiny. All the saints in the church, even the Sunday school children, are all soldiers. The children, too, all have to do with the Lord. Who is there who has nothing to do with Him? A person who only receives salvation and idles about is a thorn in the eye. Dear fellow believers, do you know how much the Lord wants us to spread this truth of salvation—that He came to this earth and saved all mankind from sin? Do you know how much the Lord loves you and me? In fact, if there is someone who does not do the work of the Lord, if there is someone who idles about, those who work lose strength. When we are doing it together with all our strength and people slip away to the side one by one, we lose heart and cannot do the work. It is strange. Confusion comes: are we abnormal, or is that person abnormal? But however much we think about it, however much we look at the Bible, and however much we pray, we are absolutely not abnormal. What is wrong with working for one's own bridegroom, for the One whom one loves?

Toil for the One we love is not toil

What kind of confession is the confession that we have done nothing for the Lord and only believe in the remission of sins that the Lord has accomplished? The Lord is the Lord of you and me, the One who has a relationship with you and me, and the King of kings; and that One has a relationship with you and me. He loves us and we also love Him, so what is toilsome about doing something for the One we love? Can what we have done for the One we love be toilsome? It cannot be toilsome. We have done nothing. Even if we say we have done it, we did it because

the Lord gave us all the power, we did it because the Lord was pleased, and we did it because He placed us on this earth. Yet He says that what we have done we have done well, praises us, and says He will give us many rewards, and so we are so thankful.

The Lord loved us like this. The Lord came to this earth for this woman who washed the feet of Jesus, bore the sins of this woman through the baptism He received from John, and for this woman gave His own body over to the Cross and suffered death. Since He came to save this woman, this woman, out of gratitude to the Lord, is now doing such things. It is the same with you and me. When the Lord is lovely, what reason is needed? Do we only receive salvation and say, like a mathematical formula, "I was a sinner, then I met the Lord and received salvation. That is as far as it goes. Let us part for a while and meet on that day in heaven"? Treating the Lord that way is not the appearance of a person who knows the love of the Lord. In sacrificing for the One we love, there is nothing toilsome at all. Isn't that so?

I am a man, but the Lord is my bridegroom. Do not think it strange. There is not the least shame in it. That the Lord is my bridegroom, my Lord, my shepherd, and my God—there is no one higher than Him. Nowhere. There is no one to compare with Him. Jesus Christ alone is the One who takes responsibility for us and guarantees us. He is a perfect One. If He has planned and carried it out, if we have come into His plan, He takes responsibility for everything. He takes responsibility from beginning to end, even for our souls.

We must live the life of a disciple. Our ministers may leave alone those among the saints who received the remission of sins only a short while ago, but if those who received the remission of sins more than a year ago idle about, they take hold of them and put them to work. Because we have flesh, that may happen; but when we are in the church, do we not do fleshly things? Do

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we not eat delicious things for the flesh and live in the flesh? We do. I cannot live without the Lord. If I go out into the world, life has no savor, so for what joy would I live? Only when there is a right cause can one stake one's life on it and live toiling; what is so great about a person who lives only for himself? For a person, it must be clear why he was born, what he is, where he came from and where he is going, and for what purpose he must live; but they do not have that. Dear fellow believers, if you are going to live like that in the world after receiving the remission of sins, for what do you live?

Fulfill your duty as an ambassador of the kingdom of God

We are ambassadors of the kingdom of God. We are ambassadors sent to this earth. If one has been dispatched as an ambassador to some country, he must know how many of his own countrymen are in that country and who has just left the country, and he must protect his own nationals. And he must defend them. We are ambassadors who have come to this earth from the kingdom of God. As ambassadors of God, what must we do? When people suffer because of sin, we must preach to them the gospel by which they can receive the remission of sins. We must preach the gospel to them, and if they are unhappy, we must make them happy. We must protect the people who resemble the image of God. We must enable them to live happily. The president of a country has the duty to make the people live well and happily so that they do not suffer economic ruin. If one is a president, he has the duties of a president, and if one is an ambassador, he has the duties of an ambassador. If we are the righteous, we have the duties of the righteous. Abandoning that

duty and idling and playing about is like an embassy staff member who, even after receiving word that one of his own nationals is in difficulty, is indifferent and does not do his duty. What kind of ambassador is that?

You and I are ambassadors who have come down to this earth from the kingdom of God. He did not place you and me here to eat well and live well on this earth and then come before the Lord. He placed us on this earth to preach the gospel, to preach Jesus Christ. Since He placed us here as ambassadors of God, we must fulfill that duty as ambassadors. An ambassador must go whenever he is recalled. You and I, too, will someday go to the kingdom of the Lord. When the Lord comes, we will go to the kingdom of the Lord, and we may go earlier, before that. Who knows?

What we, the ambassadors of God, must preach is the news that Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Because He bore that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment in our place, and rose again; and we preach that people should believe in this Jesus and receive the remission of sins.

Because I spoke a lot about Revelation in the past, these days I do not often speak of such things. But it will certainly come to pass just as that word recorded in Revelation says. He said that the sun will scorch people, that the waters will become blood and all living creatures will die, and that a third of the forests will be burned up. That is not something that will happen in the distant future, nor does it mean that it will happen right away, but it will certainly come to pass. Yet there are many people who, living in this age, have already heard all the word of God and know it all, and still live without knowing how we must live now.

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I am not saying that you do not work. Those who do it do it with all their might. We must stay alert. We must do our duty.

When we go before the Lord, we can only confess that we have done nothing for the Lord. Because it was not we who did it, but we did it because the Lord gave us power; and also because, as those who have received the love of the Lord, it is only right that we love the Lord, do the works the Lord has entrusted to us, spread the gospel, and live for the Lord—we can only say such words. It is natural. While people are dying because of sin, does one think only of how to make his own flesh live well? Dear fellow believers, while we are in the church, do we live poorly? Do we eat poorly? In the church, whoever's word it is, if it is right, we say let us do it that way. If that word is more right and more beneficial, we say let us do it. If your family does not do the duty of an ambassador well and fights among themselves, do not be dragged along with them; you yourself, at least, must follow the Lord well. I am not telling you to do bad things. Living for the Lord is happiness for you and happiness for me. Sacrificing and toiling for the One we love and living for Him—that is happiness. It is true happiness. I cannot tell you how good it feels to do something for the One you love.

So when the workers are having a hard time, I understand, but I say, "If it is hard, let us at least order something delicious and eat it together. There is no one in the world who will comfort us, so let us at least buy and eat something delicious among ourselves and comfort one another." To gather among ourselves and comfort one another, to share and eat together when there is something delicious, and to love our brothers and sisters and love the ministers—is this not loving our own bodies? Is it not loving our own family? A person who has received the remission of sins and lives only for himself, a person who lives only for his

own flesh, is an unhappy person. He seems very smart, but when you look closely, he is extremely selfish and childish. It is only because people cannot do it all, only because they lack the ability; but if one has the heart, has the opportunity, and has the ability to do it, and then does it, how good that is!

If we live for the Lord, we become rich

It is not that our flesh fares poorly because we live for the Lord. We fare even better. Do people say, "If you spend much of what you have for the Lord, how can you live well on what is left? Only if you keep it all and manage it can you live well"? Absolutely not. The word says, *"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)*. Dear fellow believers, this is the secret. If you and I live our lives for the Lord, we become rich. But if we live only for ourselves, we become poor. This is well known, but one must experience it to know it. It is extremely good. The Lord said that anyone who has left house or brothers or sisters or parents or children or lands for His sake and the gospel's is one *"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 10:30)*. That is the promise of the Lord. Would we receive only a hundredfold? It means that He repays even in this world those who are persecuted for the Lord, those who live for the Lord, such righteous people.

The Lord is absolute. It is not that everyone who has received the remission of sins is blessed. A person who has received the remission of sins and, though lacking, lives the life of a disciple, a person who has set his heart, a person who, though lacking,

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lives on in the One who gives power—to such a person the future is guaranteed, and the Lord loves and blesses such people. A person who lives only for himself becomes a beggar. He becomes extremely stingy, so that when a guest comes, he has nothing to serve. If this person seems likely to help him, he treats him generously; if not, he treats him meanly. Even when his own parents come, he says, "Go to your younger son's house; go to my elder sister's house." Because he has nothing, he cannot help doing so. But try living for the Lord. There is no one who has to do that because he has nothing. We can live well. In the past you lived only for yourselves, but did you live well? You struggled desperately, hounded as if someone were chasing after you. You were troubled because of sin, and there were hardly any days when you could really laugh at ease with a relaxed heart.

Dear fellow believers, having received the remission of sins is no small thing. Having become the people of God is no small thing. That the Lord has a relationship with you and me is no small thing. How great it is that the King of kings has a relationship with you! Even in the world, if one has a relationship with a powerful person, people's attitude changes completely. It is a great thing, depending on whom one has a relationship with. But the Lord has no relationship with a person who does not live the life of a disciple. We must clearly know this. A person who does not live the life of a disciple lives without any connection to it, even though the Lord has saved him from sin. I am saying this so that you may do well. If you live the life of a disciple of the Lord, you will do well. Your faith will also grow well. You will receive the protection of the Lord. As the days go by, you will shine like the rising sun.

I believe that everyone in the church, whether the children, the middle and high school students, the Sunday school children, the young people, the women, or the adults, must do a lot of

work. In the world it may be enough just to do exactly the work one is assigned, but in the church we must do a lot of work. Everyone must jump into this work of the gospel that we are doing, saying, "What can I help with? What should I do?" and step forward to carry at least one small load, if nothing else. With the attitude of a servant, with the heart of a disciple of Jesus Christ, we must do the things that please the Lord, asking what it is that pleases the Lord in the life of a disciple. I know that a person who will not do it will absolutely not do it even when I preach like this. Still, I am saying this because what must be done must be done. If you and I live the life of a disciple, it also becomes a very good education for the children of you and me. The children of you and me come to have faith before God, come to learn faith, and come to receive blessings. Do you think education is done with the mouth? Only when the adults actually practice it themselves do the children see it, learn from it, and follow it.

The bride before the eternal bridegroom

This woman did this because Jesus was her Savior. She did this because she had a relationship with Him. You and I also serve the Lord like this because we have a relationship with Him. The Lord is not One who has no relationship with you and me. The Lord is One who has a relationship with you and me. He is the eternal bridegroom. He is the eternal bridegroom, the eternal shepherd, and the eternal God, and we are the people of the eternal God. On this earth we are the workers of God. We are like the Shulamite woman who works in the vineyard. Just as the word says, *"Do not look upon me, because I am dark, Because the sun has tanned me" (Song of Solomon 1:6)*, even if the

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people of the world look at us with strange eyes, you and I are the bride before the Lord. We are honored ones. We are the objects of His love. You and I must live the life of a disciple. God has allowed you and me to live the life of a disciple. I give thanks. ✉

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CHAPTER

8

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The women who received grace from the Lord and served with their own possessions

< Luke 8:1–3 >

"Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance."

The kingdom of God preached in the cities and villages

When Jesus went through the cities and villages, there were women who followed at His side together with the twelve disciples. Women who had been healed of diseases and set free from evil spirits were also with Him and served the company with their possessions. Luke recorded the gospel that Jesus preached and the lives of these women within the same scene,

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and their going along with Him shows how a heart that believes in the gospel appears in daily life.

The text says that Jesus went *"preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him" (Luke 8:1)*. The purpose for which Jesus went to every city and village lay in preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God to the people. The disciples went about with Jesus and heard His word, and the women served the company. The tasks entrusted to them were different from one another, but they were people who were together, centered on the gospel that Jesus preached.

Therefore, when we think of the work of serving the Lord, we cannot look only at the place where the word is preached. For if there is the work of preaching the gospel so that someone may hear the word and be saved, there is also the service of providing what is needed so that this work may continue. That the names of these women were recorded together with the work of Jesus, who preached the gospel, makes us look back on what the toil of our daily lives is used for.

This scene also tells us what the Church of God today is together for. The church is the place where people who have received the remission of sins through the love of the Lord gather to hear the same gospel and serve so that this gospel may be preached to others. Though our circumstances and the roles entrusted to each of us are different, the Lord who has gathered us and the word of salvation that we are to preach are the same. Therefore, even the small tasks done within the church must be connected to the gospel of the kingdom of God that Jesus preached.

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Those who received grace first

Introducing the women, Luke records *"certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities" (Luke 8:2)*. They were not people who had paid the price of service in advance in order to be healed by Jesus. Jesus first looked upon their suffering, and they, having received grace, now served while being together with Jesus. To understand service, we must look at from whom the women received grace before looking at what they offered.

We, too, cannot begin true service apart from the salvation the Lord has given. Just as the women received the help of Jesus and were with Him, we too begin a life of following the Lord from knowing and giving thanks for the remission of sins that the Lord has given us. Our sins do not disappear because we offer a lot of material things or diligently help other people. No matter how much we toil, we cannot wash away the sins we ourselves have committed, and so we must know what Jesus, who delivered us from sin, has done.

When Jesus received baptism from John, He said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. With that baptism, all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus, and in them are included even all the sins we will commit throughout our whole lives. Because He was the One who had sins passed on to Him in this way, Jesus received the judgment for those sins in our place by being nailed to the Cross, shedding His blood, and dying, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. Just as the women did not heal their diseases with their own hands but were healed by the Lord, we too are people who have received the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

A person who believes in this salvation cannot put forward his own service as the grounds for the remission of sins. For it is not that Jesus took our sins upon Himself because we first did something for Him, but that Jesus first took all our sins upon Himself and accomplished salvation. If we keep this order in our hearts, we can give thanks even in the place of service. We come to see even the fact that we, though lacking, have something to offer the Lord as part of the grace we have already received from the Lord.

Serve together with the possessions you have received

In the text, the names of Mary Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Chuza, and Susanna appear, and it is recorded that many other women were also with them. Without comparing how great their possessions were, Luke says that they *"provided for Him from their substance" (Luke 8:3)*. Their faith did not stop at the thought of being fond of Jesus. It appeared as the service of actually offering what they had and supplying what was needed for the lives of Jesus and the disciples.

We must remember this word also when we use what we have for the Lord. Not only material things, but also the strength of our bodies and our time, and our ability to think and work, have been entrusted to us. Because what each has received is different, the form of service cannot be the same either. However, while we wait, thinking that we can serve only when we have something more, we must not pass by the work we can carry out with what has already been entrusted to us.

Preparing meals for those who preach the gospel, taking care of the place where we gather together to hear the word, and

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taking on the tasks needed for the gospel to be preached are also concrete service. When we do such work, our hearts must go beyond merely checking whether the work is finished. If we think about who will come to hear the word through this toil and what the saints working with us need, the work entrusted to our hands and the heart that loves the gospel do not become separated from each other.

Neither should we think that by offering our possessions we are filling up for the Lord something that He lacks. Because the strength with which we can work and the time in which we live have also been received from the Lord, in the end we are serving the Lord with what we have received. If we know this fact, those who give much cannot boast of their toil, and those who have little can also give thanks and offer their share. What gathers our hearts into one is not the size of our possessions but the grace we have received from the Lord.

Also, the record that many women served together shows us the need for unity. Since one person cannot do all the work alone, we must regard the work entrusted to others as precious and faithfully carry out the part entrusted to us. If we make light of one another's toil on the grounds that the visible roles are different, the heart to serve together also grows weak. When we look to Jesus, who saved us, we can gather our hearts for the same gospel.

A life that has received grace leads to service

Of even the women whose names were not recorded, Luke says that there were *"many others" (Luke 8:3)*. Their detailed stories are not recorded, but the fact that they were with the company of Jesus and served is clear. We, too, even if we cannot

make our toil known to everyone, can give thanks for the grace we have received and carry out the work needed today. This is because we regard the spreading of the gospel of Jesus as more precious than being recognized by people.

For this reason, we must not think of the life of faith as divided into the word heard in worship and the life lived outside of worship. If we have believed that Jesus has remitted our sins, we must also examine what the body and time that have received that grace are being used for. If our confession of faith is beautiful but in reality we live following only our own convenience, we must reconnect the grace we first received with our life today. From thinking of the love the Lord has shown us, the heart of service is renewed.

Of course, as we serve together, there are times when our bodies grow tired and things do not turn out as we wish. If at each such time we treat the Lord with the attitude that we must be treated according to how much we have toiled, service becomes painful. If we remember the remission of sins that Jesus has already given us, we can rely on the Lord and ask for help even in insufficient circumstances. Looking after one another's difficulties within the church and sharing the work that is needed is also a life of enjoying that grace together.

In the opening text, Jesus preached the gospel in the cities and villages, and the women who had received grace were with Him on that way. Today, too, we have people who have not yet heard this gospel of salvation. I ask you to serve together, offering the possessions, bodies, and time you have received from the Lord so that the gospel may be preached to them. Just as the women served the company of Jesus with the grace they had received, our days too must become lives that are used for the gospel of the Lord who saved us. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The four kinds of hearts that receive the seed of the word

< Luke 8:4–8 >

“And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: ‘A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.’ When He had said these things He cried, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’”

Even when a great multitude gathers, the hearts that receive the seed differ

People from every city came to Jesus and formed a great multitude. But Jesus did not end His word with the fact that many people had gathered; rather, He spoke about the sower and the ground on which the seed fell. Though the same seed was received, in some places it disappeared, and in other places fruit a hundredfold was borne. This word makes us, who are in the

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place of hearing the gospel, examine how the word we have heard is being received in our hearts.

Jesus said that when the seed was sown, *"some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it" (Luke 8:5)*. The seed that fell on the road was trampled and eaten by the birds and could not sprout. This means that fruit is not produced merely by the fact that the seed was sown. Even if the gospel has come to our ears, if we let it pass by without thinking about why salvation is necessary, our having heard that word cannot lead to faith.

People can pay attention to the matters of living right now while being indifferent to their own sins and the kingdom of God. But if we know the fact that we cannot stand before God with the sins we have committed, we cannot take lightly the word about salvation. For we, who must receive the judgment for sin, need the Savior who gives us the remission of sins and lets us enter the kingdom of God. We must look back on whether, even while sitting in the place where the gospel is heard, we are pushing it away as though it were words we do not need.

A heart that hopes for the kingdom of God is different from a heart that takes up a religion in order to gain more in the world. We believe in Jesus in order to be saved from sin and to live forever with the Lord. If we do not know the value of this salvation, even after hearing the gospel, our hearts are easily taken away by the words of other people. Therefore, we must not push the word away by putting our own thoughts first, but accept in our hearts what Jesus has done for us sinners.

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Even after the sprout has come up, the word is needed

On the rock, the seed sprouted but did not grow to the end. Jesus said, *"Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture" (Luke 8:6)*. Between the sprout that first came up and the fruit borne at the end, there is a time of growing. Because we cannot live through that time merely on the memory of having rejoiced upon hearing the gospel, our hearts must keep receiving the word of God and grow in faith.

When we first hear the news of salvation, we rejoice in the fact that our sins have been resolved. But if we forget what salvation that joy is based on, when we meet difficulties, it is easy to judge the grace of the Lord by our own circumstances. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that we believe in is the work of salvation that Jesus actually accomplished for us. The roots of our hearts must be put down not in the feelings of the day but in the word that testifies of how Jesus removed our sins.

The word of salvation sown in our hearts is this. Jesus came to this earth to save sinners and received baptism from John, and with that baptism all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus once and for all. Because even the sins we would commit throughout our whole lives were all passed on at that time, Jesus bore those sins and went to the Cross, and by shedding His blood and dying He received the judgment for those sins in our place, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. Only when this word is planted in our hearts and grows does the assurance of the remission of sins not wither according to our deeds or circumstances.

Therefore, I ask you not to stop at the thought that since you have received the remission of sins, there is no more word to

hear. We must keep hearing what promises the Lord who saved us has given to those who believe, and what He makes us live the rest of our lives for. If we forget the hope of the kingdom of God and make receiving good treatment in the world the reward of our faith, then when the things we want do not come to pass, the life of faith itself comes to feel meaningless. Just as moisture is needed for growth even after the sprout has come up, our faith does not wither but grows only when we keep hearing the word of salvation we first heard.

Do not let cares block the word

The third seed fell among thorns. Jesus said, *"The thorns sprang up with it and choked it" (Luke 8:7)*, and here we must see the fact that while the seed was growing, the thorns also grew together with it. It is not that, because we heard the gospel at first, thoughts of worrying about the world do not grow in our hearts. Since worries about making a living and about the future arise even for us who believe, we must examine what is occupying our hearts.

Doing the work needed for living is not in itself rejecting the word. The problem lies in the fact that, like the thorns that grew together with the seed, the cares left as they were even after we heard the gospel have, before we know it, grown bigger than the word and are choking it. When we begin to follow such thoughts, we keep putting off the time to hear the word and the place to be together with the saints. The cares of trying to protect our own lives are, on the contrary, blocking the word planted in our hearts.

The way to overcome these cares does not lie in fully providing for the future by our own strength. We must rely on the Lord who saved us, ask for what we need, and accept the

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word the Lord gives. Continuing to hear the word while sharing our circumstances with the saints and asking for help is a life of believing in the Lord more than our own thoughts. If we put off believing until the difficulties are gone, the cares grow all the more, but if we hold on to the word in the midst of difficulties, we come to rely on the Lord who guides us.

Therefore, we must not regard what blocks the fruit of faith as only other people's problem. For we, too, can come to regard the work of serving the gospel as useless toil while chasing only our own happiness. When such thoughts arise in our hearts, we must return to the remission of sins and the promise of the kingdom of God that the Lord has given us. If we regard the salvation we have received from the Lord as precious, we can also use our life today to preach the gospel to those who do not yet know that salvation.

The hundredfold fruit that grew in the good ground

Of the last seed, He said, *"Others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold" (Luke 8:8)*. The good ground received the seed and let it grow, and that seed bore much fruit. The good heart that the good ground refers to is a heart that accepts and believes the word of God. Instead of picking out and hearing only the words that suit our own thoughts, we must accept the word both when the Lord reveals our sins and when He speaks of the grace of salvation.

A person who believes in the gospel with this heart does not stay in the joy of himself alone having received the remission of sins. For he knows that the word of salvation that has become life to him is needed by others as well. He goes forward into a

life of preaching the salvation Jesus accomplished to those still suffering because of sin, helping those who have heard the word to grow in faith, and becoming a strength to weary saints. The fruit of faith appears in serving other souls with what one has received from the Lord.

We must not think of the hundredfold crop as if it were our own property increasing or our own name being exalted. For a person who has received the kingdom of God as a gift, there remains the work of living for the souls who will come into that kingdom. The reason to serve the gospel does not disappear just because what we need has been provided to some extent. The Lord said, *"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (John 12:24)*. When we look upon those who still need the gospel, we see the work to which we must give our hearts and time.

Finishing this parable, Jesus cried out, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Luke 8:8)*. It is a call not to stop at standing among the great multitude and listening to the story, but to receive the word in our hearts and bear fruit. I ask you not to let it slip away like the wayside, not to dry up like the rock, and not to leave the thorns to block the word. I ask you to hold the word of Jesus, who saved us, in your hearts and give the rest of your lives for the souls who do not yet know that salvation. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Faith that keeps the word overcomes temptation and worry

< Luke 8:9–15 >

“Then His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘What does this parable mean?’ And He said, ‘To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that “Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.” Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. (And that which fell among the thorns, these are they that have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection – ASV). But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.’”

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The disciples who ask Jesus the meaning of the parable

The disciples, who had heard the parable of the sower, asked Jesus its meaning. It was because, though they had heard where the seed fell and the different results, they had to know what that word teaches. When we hear the word, we too cannot be satisfied with knowing the story. We must know what our hearts are like before that word, and receive the faith that Jesus teaches.

Jesus said to His disciples that it had been given to them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. He also said that to the rest He spoke in parables so that *"seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand" (Luke 8:10)*. In this way, to hear the word of Jesus and know its meaning is a precious grace. Since Jesus Himself explained the meaning of the parable when the disciples asked about it, we too must follow the explanation of Jesus rather than judging the four fields by our own thinking.

The first word with which Jesus explained it was this: *"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11)*. Therefore, looking at the four fields cannot end with dividing people's characters into four kinds. We must see whether a person who has heard the word of God believes that word, whether he holds on to it even when he meets temptation, and on what he sets his heart while he lives. This parable is a teaching about the hearts of us who are hearing the word right now.

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The devil who tries to take away the word, and saving faith

The person by the wayside also heard the word. But Jesus said that the devil comes and *"takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved" (Luke 8:12)*. What the devil tries to take away is the word that enables people to obtain salvation. If a person hears the word and yet leaves it outside his heart without believing, he may be led away by other thoughts and words and lose that news of salvation.

At this point, we must know clearly what it is that we must believe. Since our own good heart or our resolve to believe does not remove our sins, salvation lies in believing what Jesus has done for us. This is exactly what that word, which the devil tries to take away, conveys. Jesus, by receiving baptism from John, had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and the sins we commit throughout our whole lives are also in that sin of the world. Bearing those sins He had thus taken upon Himself, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and so Jesus received in our place the judgment that we sinners were to receive.

And Jesus rose again from death and became our Savior. Therefore, to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is to accept in our hearts that Jesus has completely remitted our sins through all this work of salvation. Because we receive the remission of sins by believing in this salvation, even when our own sins are revealed, we must not reduce in our thinking the extent of the sins the Lord took upon Himself.

Also, we must not think that the word of salvation has become our own faith merely because other people believe it. We must accept in our hearts that Jesus took our sins too upon Himself, received the judgment, and accomplished salvation. If

we hold on to our own righteousness even while hearing the word, we come to regard that grace as unnecessary. To acknowledge that we are people who cannot resolve our sins by ourselves, and to believe in the salvation Jesus has given, is the heart that receives the word.

The root of faith that is revealed in the midst of temptation

The person on the rock received the word with joy when he heard it, but Jesus said of that person that *"these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13)*. The fact that a person rejoiced at first does not by itself overcome all the temptations that come afterward. When hardship strikes while we live according to the word, what our hearts are relying on is revealed.

We easily think that if we believe in the gospel, everything from then on must work out as we wish. But when what we expected does not come about, or when difficulty arises in keeping our faith, we sometimes regard even the reason for following the Lord as gone. Such a heart is taking the circumstances before our eyes as a more certain basis than the salvation the Lord accomplished. Jesus speaks of being tempted and of abandoning faith because of that temptation as two different things.

Therefore, the harder times are, the more we must keep hearing the word of the Lord who saved us. We must engrave on our hearts why the Lord had to take all our sins upon Himself, and what the hope of the kingdom of God is that the Lord has given to those who believe. To hear the word in the church and share faith with the saints is not a matter of imitating the joy of

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the beginning. It is a matter of learning the salvation of the Lord, which does not change even when circumstances change, and of putting down the roots of our hearts into that word.

We too have the weakness of being afraid and shaken in the face of temptation. Even so, rather than regarding ourselves as people who have been cast off and leaving the word, we must lay our weak hearts before the Lord and ask for His help. I hope that you will learn the word you do not yet know, and that when you realize your own thinking was wrong, you will turn back and accept that word. The root of faith deepens not when we claim to be strong on our own, but while we rely on the word of the Lord.

The cares that take hold of the heart as we go on living

The person among the thorns also heard the word, but the Lord said of such people that *"as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection" (Luke 8:14)*. Here, the words "as they go on their way" make us look back on the time of our daily lives. There are cases where a person suddenly abandons faith in the face of a great temptation, but the worries and cravings we harbor day by day can also grow and block our hearts from living according to the word.

Being worried about making a living, seeing riches as something secure, and having our hearts drawn to the pleasures of the day are not matters far from us. So we cannot assert that, since we already believe in the gospel, we have nothing to do with the thorns. If we keep thinking only about what to eat and how to live, the word that God takes care of us is pushed further

and further back in our hearts. In the end, we come to think that because we follow the Lord we are not getting the life we want.

If such a heart has arisen, we must examine our worries in the light of the word of God. The fact that we are worried about our future does not do away with the need to rely on God. Rather, we must ask the Lord who saved us for what we need, and fulfill by faith the work the Lord has entrusted to us. When we keep a heart to hear the word and serve the gospel even while looking after our livelihood, we can refuse to let the riches and pleasures of the world become the master of our hearts.

The heart that keeps the word and the fruit of patience

Jesus' explanation of the good ground is clear. He said, *"The ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15)*. This good heart is not a heart that boasts of having much that is good within itself, but a heart that accepts the word God gives. When we accept the word that exposes our wrongs and warns us, just as we believe the word that comforts us, we can overcome by faith the stubbornness and worries that block our hearts.

To keep the word does not stop at remembering what we once heard. It is to regard the word as right and to live believing its promise even when our own thinking and the word are at odds. The Scriptures say, *"Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23)*. Since hearing the word with a good heart does not mean that no thorns will ever grow afterward, we must keep examining ourselves in the light of the word and keep our hearts. We must hold on together, in

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our daily lives, to the faith that the Lord has saved us and the faith that the Lord will guide us from now on as well.

Patience, too, is not a merit by which we prove our own strength in order to obtain salvation. Because we believe that the Lord who saved us will fulfill His promise, we wait without abandoning that word even in the time when no fruit is visible before our eyes. Even when we have preached the gospel and the other person does not accept it right away, and even when the work of serving takes longer than we thought, we must set our hearts on the Lord. As we hold one another up with the saints and serve the gospel, faith grows, and the fruit of helping other souls is also borne.

The disciples asked the meaning of the parable, and Jesus taught them the heart of those who *"having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15)*. Now we too, who have heard this teaching, cannot merely examine which field is someone else's likeness. I hope that you will lay before the word your own hearts, which are in the midst of temptation and worry, and believe to the end in Jesus who saved us and in His promise. The grace of knowing the meaning of the parable must lead to our faith that keeps the word and endures today. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Do not keep the light of the gospel covered with a vessel

< Luke 8:16–18 >

“No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but sets it on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light. Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.”

The purpose of letting people see the light

Even if a lamp has been lit, if it is covered with a vessel, a person who comes in cannot see the light. This is why the fact that the lamp was lit cannot by itself be said to have fully accomplished the purpose of the lamp. With this scene, Jesus teaches what kind of life a person who has heard the word must live. The Lord, who has given the word of salvation to our hearts, wants us who believe that word to shine the light of the gospel on other people as well. Therefore, we must not remain only in the past experience of having heard the word, but must look back

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on whether we are believing that word in our hearts and preaching it now.

The Lord said, *"No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but sets it on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light" (Luke 8:16)*. A lampstand is the place on which a lamp is set, and the light placed there shines on the person who comes into the house. The purpose for which the Lord spoke of the lamp also lies in whom He intends the light to be seen by. If we who have received the remission of sins are satisfied with knowing the gospel and keep it hidden, a person who is still in anguish because of sin cannot hear the truth of salvation that we believe. To bring out what we have received from the Lord so that that person, too, comes to know the Lord is the life that shines the lamp of the gospel.

We must not think of boasting to people of our own piety or ability as shining the light. What we are to preach is the word of how Jesus removed our sins. Because we know the fact that we, too, could not resolve our sins by ourselves but received the grace of the Lord, we can let those who have not yet been saved hear the gospel without turning away from them. The life that shines the light does not come from boasting of oneself, but from a heart that is thankful for the salvation the Lord has given.

The light of salvation that cannot be kept hidden

The Lord says, *"For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light" (Luke 8:17)*. After making clear the reason for setting the lamp on a lampstand, He said that what is secret will be revealed and what is hidden will be known. Therefore, we must preach to other people as well the gospel of the salvation the

Lord accomplished. When the light of the gospel is preached, people come to know their own state of being bound by sin, and they hear who Jesus is, who saves them from that sin. Therefore, what we preach must clearly contain not the vague expectations of people, but what the Lord actually did.

John saw Jesus, who had received baptism from him, when he met Him again, and testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*. Because at the time Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus once and for all, John called Jesus the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. The sins we commit from the time we are born until we die are also in that sin of the world. Because Jesus bore that sin, He received the judgment in our place on the Cross and shed His blood and died, and He rose again from death and saved us from sin and death. In the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we believe and preach, there are together, in this way, the baptism by which He bore sin, the Cross on which He received the punishment for that sin, and the resurrection of the Lord, who overcame death.

But if, even after hearing this word, we think that Jesus took away only the sins of the past, or that we must separately wash away the sins we will commit from now on, we end up dividing with our own thinking the salvation the Lord accomplished. Only when we believe the word just as it is—that He bore the sin of the world—can we know that all our sins were passed on to the Lord and that the judgment for them is also finished. If we preach only nicely dressed-up words without the assurance of the remission of sins in our hearts, we cannot show this light to other people either. We must first believe in our hearts the gospel of the water and the Spirit that He accomplished for us.

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Take heed how you hear

That is why the Lord said, *"Therefore take heed how you hear" (Luke 8:18)*. More important than how much of the word we have heard is what kind of heart we have before that word. If we let it pass, thinking it a story we already know, then even though we hear the word, we do not accept it so that it corrects our thinking. On the contrary, a person who acknowledges that what the Lord said is right turns back before the word even when it differs from his own thinking. He hears not only the word of comfort but also rebuke and exhortation as the word of the Lord that he himself needs.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, worries about life and thoughts of insisting on our own will arise in our hearts. When we look only at our own circumstances, we feel that we have no room to serve the work of the Lord, and when we meet difficulty, worry comes before the faith that the Lord will help us. What is needed at this time is not to claim that we have faith while leaving our worries as they are. It is to hear the word, engrave on our hearts again who the Lord is, and face our present circumstances with a faith that relies on Him. Here lies the reason why we who have been saved also need time to keep hearing the word.

We must not neglect the time of hearing the word together in the Church of God. If we put only our bodies in the place where the word is heard while our hearts are bound to our own plans, we end up missing the very word that would hold us up. We must think about what the Lord is teaching us, examine our own judgment by the word we have heard, and believe. Learn the parts you do not understand, confirm again the truth you have already heard, and keep it in your heart. Only when there is this

kind of hearing can we clearly preach to others as well the salvation we believe.

The faith that is added to the person who hears and believes

The Lord said, *"Whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him" (Luke 8:18)*. A person who has the faith to accept the word comes to know the Lord more deeply and to rely on Him as he keeps hearing. He can now go forward entrusting to the Lord the things he used to see only with fear, and he comes to take up by faith even the work of the gospel that he was about to give up, pressed down by his own circumstances. This does not mean that we must receive a new salvation again and again, but that the faith that believes the word of the Lord who has already saved us grows.

On the contrary, a person who regards himself as having faith while not accepting the word must examine what that assurance is based on. Even if he can speak the contents of the gospel, if he does not actually believe what the Lord did, the knowledge he thinks he has cannot save him. Through this warning, the Lord makes us stand not leaning on the memory of having heard in the past, but with a heart that believes the word now. We must not remain in the place of pushing the word away by insisting on our own judgment. Faith cannot be confirmed by how we evaluate ourselves; it is revealed in whether we accept as true the word the Lord has spoken. So we must not direct this warning only at others, but each of us must accept it in our hearts.

Let us think of the will of the Lord, who gave us the lamp. To keep hearing and believing the word does not end with

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enjoying peace of heart by ourselves alone. The more clearly we know the salvation we have received from the Lord, the more we also come to look after those who need that light. Preach what Jesus did to those who do not yet know the way of the remission of sins, and labor together so that they accept the word. I hope that you will not keep the light the Lord has kindled covered with a vessel, but will believe the word of salvation He has let us hear and live shining it on other people as well. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Those who hear the word and do it are the Lord's family

< Luke 8:19–21 >

"Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd. And it was told Him by some, who said, 'Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You.' But He answered and said to them, 'My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.'"

The family who waited outside

Jesus' mother and brothers came to see Him, but they could not come near because of the large crowd. It is easy to think that family members who have lived together are closer to one another than anyone else. However, when Jesus heard the news that His family had come, He spoke of who is truly close to the Lord. This answer makes us, too, look back on the grounds on which we say that we are the Lord's family. This is because we cannot regard ourselves as being of one heart with the Lord merely on the grounds that we have attended church for a long time or that we are familiar with one another.

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The passage tells us, *"Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd" (Luke 8:19)*. These were the actual mother and brothers of Jesus, and the crowd was gathered around Jesus so thickly that they could not approach Him. Then someone told Him, *"Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You" (Luke 8:20)*. We must listen carefully to the standard by which the Lord, who heard this news, speaks of His own family. Faced with words that announced a relationship bound by blood, Jesus pointed to *"these who hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21)*.

We, too, love and care for our families, but a relationship of the flesh cannot take the place of a relationship with God. It is not that we automatically receive the remission of sins because there is someone in our family who believes in the gospel. Also, being close to people who have been saved and our believing in the word of the Lord are not the same thing either. To know who the family the Lord spoke of is, we must first examine our own hearts before the word of God, rather than the intimacy between people.

The relationship that begins with believing the word

The passage says, *"But He answered and said to them, 'My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it'" (Luke 8:21)*. In this answer, the Lord spoke of hearing and doing together. If we act according to our own zeal without hearing the word, we cannot follow the will of the Lord, and if we hear it but do not accept it, we cannot live according to that word either. First, we must hear the word God has spoken

and believe that it is right. Because we have that faith, we come to give our hearts to the work that pleases the Lord and to take part in it.

Then what is the grace of the Lord that we must first hear and believe? It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which has delivered us from sin. When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River, He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and within them He also bore, without leaving out a single one, the sins we commit throughout our whole lives. And because He bore those sins, He received in our place on the Cross the judgment that we were to receive, shedding His blood and dying. The Lord, who rose again from death, in this way saved us, who were bound by sin and death. We receive the remission of sins by believing not in the good deeds we ourselves have accomplished but in this salvation that the Lord has accomplished.

Becoming the Lord's family did not begin with people who got along with one another forming a gathering. The Lord had compassion on us, who could not but be judged because of sin, and because He let us hear the word of that salvation, we came to draw near to the Lord. That is why those who believe in the gospel together meet as brothers and sisters who have received the same grace, even though they have lived in different circumstances. There is no reason for anyone to boast of the life he has lived, nor can any one person claim that his merit for salvation is greater than another's.

If we forget this grace, we easily think that the Lord will accept us only when we do much work or show the size of our devotion, and turn even the word to hear and do into a condition for obtaining salvation. Since it is the Lord who removed our sins, and we have come to belong to the Lord by believing in that grace, the toil of serving the Lord must come from the faith

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that is thankful for the salvation we have already received. Only when we keep this order clearly in our hearts can we serve the Lord with joy, and we also come not to put forward our own toil by comparing it with that of others.

Join together according to the word you believe

The Lord's answer contains the word *"these who hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21)*. Since He called those who hear and do His family, we, too, must not remain in a place where we explain our faith only with words and turn away from the Lord's will in our lives. If we say that we believe and yet do not set our hearts at all on the work the Lord wants, we must look back on what that confession is actually a confession of believing in. This is because, to a person who truly knows the grace he has received, the will of the Lord who bestowed that grace becomes precious.

The Scriptures say, *"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31)*. Among the works done for the glory of God, the foremost is preaching the gospel. The Lord wants us to preach the gospel we have received to those who have not yet been saved as well. Because we know the love that delivered us from sin and judgment, we come to hope that others, too, will know and believe in that love. Therefore, even when we carry out the work entrusted to us in the church, we must keep in our hearts the purpose of helping someone, through that toil, to hear the word of God and receive the remission of sins. When we know this purpose, we can give our hearts even to small work that is hardly noticed.

Even within the Lord's family, the work entrusted differs from person to person. Though the work entrusted and the circumstances differ, the purpose of preaching the gospel is the same. Therefore, rather than regarding only the work we do as important, we must look into what those who toil with us need and cooperate with them. There is a limit to what one can do alone, but when we join our hearts together, we can help one another where we fall short. Here appears the picture of brothers and sisters who believe in the same Lord actually working like one family.

Joining together in faith means not merely waiting for someone else to do it whenever a necessary task arises. If there is something to learn, we must learn it; if we do not know well the work entrusted to us, we must consult with others; and if someone else is struggling, we must share and bear that burden. Rather than making the work difficult by insisting only on your own way, think together about what is beneficial for preaching the gospel. Such toil is not a struggle to build up qualifications before the Lord, but the conduct of those who, having already received the Lord's grace, live according to His will.

The joy and responsibility of one family

The grounds on which we live as children of God do not change. The Scriptures say, *"But 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)*. Just as this word says, those who believe in the Lord become children of God. Therefore, even when our shortcomings are revealed, we must not try to wash away sin by adding more toil, but must rely on the grace of the Lord who saved us. Leaning on that grace, we can

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acknowledge and correct what we have done wrong and unite our hearts with the Lord's will again. That there is a family that helps one another is also a grace the Lord has given so that we may walk this path together.

In the church, we call one another brothers and sisters. This name holds, together with the joy of having received the same salvation, the responsibility of serving the Lord's work. If we take the toil of others for granted or count only the benefit that will come back to us, we lose the heart of one family. We must remember that the will of the Lord who saved us has been entrusted to us all, and carry out that work while regarding as precious those who are with us. What could make our lives more worthwhile than being used in the work of giving life to other souls through the gospel?

Jesus, who heard the news that His family was waiting outside, called those who hear the word and do it His own family. Let us, too, not be satisfied merely with the name of the Lord's family, but join together according to that word. I hope that you will believe in your hearts in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which saved you, and toil for other souls together with the brothers and sisters who have received the same grace. In that life of giving both body and heart while being thankful for the salvation the Lord has bestowed, the will of the Lord, who has called us as one family, is fulfilled. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, whom even the wind and water obey, is with us

< Luke 8:22–25 >

"Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side of the lake.' And they launched out. But as they sailed He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!' Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. But He said to them, 'Where is your faith?' And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, 'Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!'"

The crisis on the boat with the Lord

The disciples got into the boat with Jesus, but while they were crossing the lake, they came into such danger that the boat was about to sink. When something like this happens on the path

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we have set out on following the Lord, we, too, are bewildered. Having expected that everything would go smoothly if the Lord was with us, we easily find even our faith in the Lord shaken in the face of an unexpected difficulty. However, the fact that a windstorm struck that boat and the fact that Jesus was with them were true at the same time. When we meet a problem, we must not erase one of these two facts.

The passage begins, *"Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side of the lake.' And they launched out" (Luke 8:22)*. It was Jesus who said to cross the lake, and the disciples set out according to that word. Therefore, we cannot say that they had left the Lord and gone the wrong way merely because they met a windstorm. Things that are hard to bear can come upon us, too, who follow the Lord. This is the reason why, when a problem arises in the work of serving the gospel or in our personal lives, we must not judge from those circumstances alone that the Lord is not with us.

The crisis at that time was not a vague worry. Since it says, *"As they sailed He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy" (Luke 8:23)*, the boat was filling with water, and the disciples actually felt the danger of death. At that time, Jesus was asleep in the same boat as the disciples. However, the fact that the Lord was asleep does not mean that the Lord's power had disappeared. In this crisis, the disciples come to learn who Jesus, who was in the same boat with them, is.

We, too, ordinarily confess that the Lord is almighty, but when we meet something we cannot solve by our own strength, we see only the problem right before our eyes as big. We weigh whether we can handle it with our own ability and then conclude that we cannot go any further. Our weakness is real, but it does

not limit even the Lord's power. The more perilous our circumstances are, the more we must go forward with the faith that relies on Him, instead of merely keeping the knowledge of the Lord in our heads.

The One who commands the wind and water

The disciples came to Jesus and woke Him. The Scriptures record, *"And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!' Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm" (Luke 8:24)*. The Lord did not turn away from the emergency they pleaded about. When Jesus arose and rebuked the wind and the waves, the windstorm that the disciples could not stop by their own strength ceased, and the lake became calm. In this scene, the disciples saw the Lord, who is greater than their fear. The word of the Lord was manifested as the power that rules the wind and water.

The disciples who saw this asked one another, *"Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!" (Luke 8:25)*. A person can see the wind blowing and look for a way to escape, but he cannot command the wind and water and make them submit. Jesus could do so because He is God, who made all things. Because He is the Master of all the things He made, even the wind and water obeyed when the Lord commanded. The One whom the disciples had with them in the same boat was not a teacher who merely gives good teachings, but the almighty Lord.

Since Jesus, who saved us from sin, is this very Lord who rules even the wind and water, we can rely on His power even in the difficulties of life. Because we believe that the Savior, who

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bore all the sins of the world, is still with us now as the almighty God, we entrust to Him the problems that are hard for us to handle with our own strength. The more we know the Lord, who saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the clearer the grounds of faith for seeking His help become as well.

The Lord, who commanded the wind and water, did not cover over the problem of sin with words alone, but bore it Himself. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all; not just the sins of one person for a brief time, but even all the sins we commit throughout our whole lives were passed on to the Lord at that time. Because He bore those sins, the Lord received in our place on the Cross the price of sin and the judgment that we had to receive, shedding His blood and dying, and He rose again from death and overcame sin and death. Because the Lord has thus solved the problem of sin, which man cannot solve with his own righteousness, we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and are assured of the remission of sins.

A person who believes in this salvation in his heart can look to the One who saved him even when he meets difficulty. When he thinks of the grace the Lord has bestowed on him, he comes to know that there is no need to bear everything alone because of his present weakness. If he thinks that he must live the life after salvation by his own strength alone, he easily grows weary even in the face of small problems. But if he believes that Jesus, who saved him, is the almighty God, he can ask the Lord for help even while acknowledging the limits of his own strength.

Where do you place your faith?

After the lake became calm, Jesus asked His disciples, *"Where is your faith?" (Luke 8:25)*. He did not end His word at telling them to be relieved and move on since the crisis was over. The Lord made them look back on who they believed Him to be. If we stop at being amazed to see the wind and water obey, when we meet difficulty next time we easily become bound again by our circumstances alone. We must know in our hearts and believe who Jesus, who did that work, is.

We, too, may speak of the times we received help from the Lord, while actually holding on to today's problem alone. We pray about the big matters of the church, yet we do not bring the worries of our own lives to the Lord, and we soon become discouraged when no solution is in sight. The Lord, who saved us, is the One on whom we must always rely, both in the work of preaching the gospel and in the difficulties of daily life. Since He is God, who has made us His children and cares for us, we must tell Him the things that are hard for us to handle and ask for wisdom and help.

Prayer does not end with informing the Lord of our urgent circumstances. It also includes believing that the Lord is the One who will help and waiting for His help. Do not try to hide the fact that your strength is lacking, but lay before the Lord the work you must carry out and the problems you have not solved. We must ask for wisdom so that we can follow the Lord's will, and go forward one step at a time, also consulting with fellow believers in the church. We must not let go of the work we have to do on the grounds that we have entrusted it in faith, but carry out that work relying on the Lord.

Whenever our circumstances weigh down our hearts, we must think again about the object of our faith. However fierce

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the wind that threatened the disciples was, it was not stronger than Jesus. Our worries now, too, cannot change who the Lord is. Therefore, do not receive the word that the Lord is with you merely as a vague comfort, but believe in Him, pray, and stand in the face of difficulty. The Lord knows our weakness, and He is the One who helps us carry out the Lord's work.

In the boat the disciples had boarded, there was a windstorm, but there was also Jesus, who calmed that windstorm. Do not forget the Lord, who is with us, because of the fact that there are difficulties in our lives. I hope that you will believe that the Savior, who delivered us from sin and death, is God, who rules even the wind and water, and tell Him today's problems. In the boat where the Lord is, do not try to handle everything alone, but rely in your hearts on Him who saved us, and follow the path along which the Lord leads. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The man who left the tombs and proclaimed the news of salvation

< Luke 8:26–39 >

"Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, 'What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!' For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, saying, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Legion,' because many demons had entered him. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned. When those who fed them saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and

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in the country. Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. They also who had seen it told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned. Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, 'Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you.' And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him."

The man whom even chains could not control

People think they can govern their own lives by themselves, but in the face of a bondage from which they cannot escape even by their own will, they lose their strength. The man who appears in today's passage could not live in a house and dwelt among the tombs. People bound him with chains and shackles to keep hold of him, but even that could not solve the problem. The Lord came to the country of the Gadarenes, where this man was, and met him. In that meeting we see together the power of the Savior, who came to the place where human strength had run out, and the way in which the one who received that grace was to live.

"And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs" (Luke 8:27). A house and clothes are things a person needs in

order to live daily life, but this man could not enjoy such a life. Even though people tried to keep him under guard as he was seized by the demon and driven out into the wilderness, he broke the bonds and went out. What he needed was not to have his body bound with stronger chains, but to be set free from the demon that had seized him. Therefore, the important question is not who can control him, but who can save him.

As we look at this man's condition, we must also look back on our own spiritual state. Even while committing sins, we thought we could escape from sin by our own resolve and effort. We live following our cravings and make ourselves and others suffer, and even when we resolve never to do so again, we cannot cut off sin completely. Even if we keep the rules of religion or become people recognized by others, the sins we have already committed do not disappear. When we honestly know ourselves to be like this, we lay down the thought of making ourselves clean by our own strength and come to seek the Savior who will deliver us from sin.

The Lord's command that even demons cannot defy

The demon-possessed man fell down before Jesus and cried out with a loud voice. The passage makes the reason clear as follows: "*For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man" (Luke 8:29)*. Because Jesus had first commanded it to come out of him, the demon pleaded before the Lord. Its name was called Legion because many demons had entered him. Those demons, which people could not control by force, could not stay as they wished before Jesus. They begged "*that He*

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would not command them to go out into the abyss" (Luke 8:31) and pleaded to be allowed to enter the herd of swine.

When the Lord permitted them, the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd of swine ran down into the lake and drowned. This event reveals that demons are not beings that give life to people, and at the same time it shows the authority of Jesus, who casts them out. We must also think about where a life that follows sin and cravings ends. We cannot live forgetting the judgment for sin, with our hearts taken captive by getting what we want right before our eyes. The One whom we, who have no power to save ourselves, truly need is Jesus, who delivers us from sin and death.

The Lord, who with a single word set free the man whom even chains could not hold, released us from the sin that had been binding us by bearing it Himself. When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and the sins we commit from the time we are born until we die are all included in them. Because He bore those sins, He received the judgment for sin in our place on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and rose again from death, and so He saved us from sin and death. Since we have received the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must know and believe how the Lord resolved the sins that we could not cut off by our own resolve.

The life regained at the feet of the Lord

When those who tended the swine made this known in the city and in the country, people came to Jesus. *"Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the*

man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid" (Luke 8:35). The man who until a little while before had been living among the tombs was now sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. People had tried to bind him and keep him under guard, but the Lord delivered him from the demons. The appearance of the man sitting in that place tells us how great a salvation the work the Lord did was.

Those who saw this told how he had been saved, but the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes were seized with great fear and asked Jesus to depart from them. At that time the man who had been saved had a different wish. *"Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying" (Luke 8:38)*. He did not want to leave the One who had delivered him from the demons that had been tormenting him. His begging to be with the Lord was not an act of paying a price to obtain salvation, but a heart that knew the grace it had already received and wished to remain at the Savior's side.

For us too, who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, this grace comes first. If we think we were saved because we are better than others, we forget the great work of the Lord and come to boast of our own labor. But when we know that the Lord saved us who could not resolve our sins, we come to rely on the Lord and to want to hear and follow His word. Rather than doubting even the Lord's salvation because of the shortcomings that appear in us every day, we must believe in the Lord, who has already borne the sins of our whole lifetime and received the judgment. On that faith we can give thanks for the grace we have received and accept the work the Lord entrusts to us.

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Return home and proclaim the great things

Jesus told the man who begged to be with Him what he was to do. *"'Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you.' And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him" (Luke 8:39)*. The Lord told him to return home. To the man who had wanted the way of boarding the boat and leaving together with Him, He entrusted the way of proclaiming the Lord's great work in the place where he had been living. A person who follows the Lord does not insist only on the way he himself wants, but accepts the work the Lord has spoken of. That man went back and proclaimed throughout the whole city what Jesus had done for him.

Jesus told him to tell what great things God had done, and he proclaimed the great things Jesus had done. To testify of the work of Jesus, who had saved him, was to make known the great work of God. What he had to boast of was not his own strength that had overcome the demons or a faith superior to that of others. It was the fact that the Lord had delivered him from the bondage from which he could not escape by himself. When we too preach the gospel, we must not stop at telling how much our lives have changed, but must clearly preach how Jesus saved us with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

The people we meet at home and at work also need that word of salvation. Do not think that you can speak of the Lord's grace only after you have everything in order. We must preach, just as it is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we have believed and by which we have received the remission of sins, and take on the task of helping that person also hear and believe the word. The Lord, who sent the man who had lived in the tombs back home, gave him a life of proclaiming the news of salvation. I

hope that you will keep in your hearts the grace by which He delivered us from sin, and proclaim that great work and live in the place where the Lord sends you. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

The father who entrusted his dying only daughter to the Lord

< Luke 8:40–42a >

“So it was, when Jesus returned, that the multitude welcomed Him, for they were all waiting for Him. And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And he fell down at Jesus’ feet and begged Him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying.”

The father who stood facing the life of his daughter

From among the crowd that had been waiting for Jesus, Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came out and fell down at Jesus’ feet. Parents can do many things for their children, but with a loving heart alone they cannot hold on to a life that is dying. Jairus too had a heart for his daughter, but he had no power to save that child, and so he begged Jesus to come to his house. What we must look at is not how high a position he held, but to whom he entrusted the matter he could not solve by his own strength.

How it was when Jesus returned is shown in this word: *“So it was, when Jesus returned, that the multitude welcomed Him,*

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for they were all waiting for Him" (Luke 8:40). Jairus also came forward to that place where the people who had been waiting welcomed Jesus. The fact that he was mixed in among many people does not mean that even his desperate situation was the same as that of the others. Because there was a dying daughter in his house, welcoming Jesus led to a plea begging to take the Lord to his own house.

The Scriptures make the reason clear as follows: *"For he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying" (Luke 8:42)*. The twelve-year-old only daughter was the only child in that house, and with what the father had, he could not hold on to that life even one day longer. Though that life was about to end, the father could not live in her place or cut off part of his own life and give it to the child. Like this, between what a person earnestly wants and what a person can actually accomplish, there is a limit that cannot be crossed.

Our problem of sin also reveals that limit. Even if we have the thought that we do not want to sin, sin comes out in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and the sins we have already committed do not disappear by themselves just because we have repented of our wrongs. A resolve to live well from now on likewise cannot pay the price of the sins of the past. To give life to a sinner, it cannot stop at encouraging the sinner's resolve; there must be a Savior who actually bears that sin and resolves the judgment.

Even the ruler of the synagogue fell down at Jesus' feet

Look at what Jairus did. It is written as follows: *"And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the*

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synagogue. And he fell down at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come to his house" (Luke 8:41). His position as a ruler of the synagogue and his appearance falling down at Jesus' feet are recorded together. Though he had a position, his daughter's life did not depend on that position. The way of resolution that the passage shows lies not in the office the father held, but in Jesus, whom he begged to come to his house.

As we look at this scene, we must not think that the act of falling down itself has the power to give life to a person. The reason Jairus came to Jesus was not that his posture was admirable, but that he had to seek help from Jesus. If we switch around the one who begs and the One who gives life, even faith becomes a merit that a person must provide. This is why we must clearly know whom we are asking rather than boasting of how earnestly we asked.

We too, who seek the remission of sins, cannot make the religious life we have built up the basis of our salvation. This is because a history of having believed for a long time or an office recognized by others cannot bear in our place the sins we have committed. If sins could be erased by adding good deeds, the sinner would in the end have to obtain life by his own works. But since we who have sin cannot take on one another's sins and remove them, we must rely on Jesus, who came from outside us and bears our sins.

Knowing one's own inability does not mean sitting down without any hope. Jairus came to Jesus with the situation of his dying daughter and asked Him to come to the very house where that daughter was. We likewise have no reason, when our sin is exposed, to hide that fact or to keep away from the Lord until we get better by ourselves. Knowing and believing what Jesus, who came to save sinners, has done is the way forward for a person who has acknowledged his own limits.

Believe in the righteousness He fulfilled to give life to sinners

Jesus did not leave us alone, merely telling us to try to govern sin. When He 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)*. The Lord is without sin, but to save sinners He received baptism from John, and with that baptism He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The Lord Himself took on the sins that we could not cast off by ourselves.

The sin of the world transferred to the Lord includes all the sins we commit throughout our whole lifetime, from the time we are born until we die. It is not that He took on only the sins of the days gone by and left the sins that will be exposed in the future for each of us to resolve. Because the Lord bore even the sins not yet exposed to our eyes, we do not look for the basis of the remission of sins in our memory or in our perfect conduct in the future. If we reduce the scope of the sins the Lord bore to the extent of our own experience, we will again try to resolve the remaining sins by our own strength.

Jesus, who bore sin by receiving baptism from John, was crucified on the Cross with that sin. The blood He shed and the death He died on the Cross were a vicarious death in which He bore in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive. And the Lord rose again from death and saved us from sin and death. Therefore, the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we believe is not a vague expectation that we may receive help, but the word that conveys the salvation of Jesus, who took on sin with His baptism, paid its price on the Cross, and then rose again.

This is also the reason a sinner can come to the Lord. We must not take the word that the Lord has compassion on us to

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mean that He leaves sin covered over as it is. Because Jesus loves sinners, He took their sin upon His own body and even received in their place the judgment of death that sin demands. Only when we see the love of God and the judgment of sin together in the Lord's baptism and the Cross, without separating them, can we know that the remission of sins does not change according to our feelings.

If, while believing in this salvation, we again examine our own qualifications and decide whether we can come to the Lord, our hearts cannot rest. This is because even while we examine our qualifications, our shortcomings keep being exposed. Our peace lies not in living without a single day of shortcoming, but in believing in the Lord, who bore even the sins that come from those shortcomings. This is not taking sin lightly, but not taking lightly the work of the Lord, who actually underwent the judgment for sin.

Therefore, there is no reason to turn away as if salvation had collapsed from the beginning every time our weakness is exposed again. Just as Jairus laid down his dignity as the ruler of the synagogue and fell down at Jesus' feet, we too must lay down the labor of trying to establish our own merit and rely on the righteousness of the Lord, who bore all our sins. When we believe in what the Lord has accomplished in this way, we can live by the grace we have received.

The father who could not save his daughter begged at Jesus' feet for Him to come to his house. The fact that there was no power in his hands to save a life did not block even the way to come to Jesus. Let us too not step back from the Savior because of the fact that we cannot remove our sins by ourselves. Believing in Jesus, who knows our whole lifetime and has borne all those sins, let us entrust to the Lord the life that we could not save by our own strength. ✉

Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

The fountain of the flow of blood was dried up by the righteousness of the Lord

< Luke 8:40–48 >

"So it was, when Jesus returned, that the multitude welcomed Him, for they were all waiting for Him. And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And he fell down at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But as He went, the multitudes thronged Him. Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped. And Jesus said, 'Who touched Me?' When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, 'Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, "Who touched Me?"' But Jesus said, 'Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me.' Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. And He

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said to her, 'Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace.'"

We who spiritually suffered from a flow of blood

When we look at the word we have read today, it tells of the woman who suffered from a flow of blood being healed of her disease through Jesus. It is the event in which, while Jesus was on His way to heal the twelve-year-old daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, a woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years touched the border of the garment of Jesus by faith and was healed of the flow of blood. *"Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped" (Luke 8:43–44)*. A flow of blood is a disease in which one keeps bleeding continually; it must have been truly wearisome, and I believe there was not a single day when the blood did not flow. If we think that you and I had been this woman, it is such a pitiful thing. In fact, spiritually we, too, were exactly the same as this woman who suffered from a flow of blood.

We were beings who could not help but live committing sins every day, who could not guarantee that we would not bleed in the future no matter how much we wiped away the flowing blood, and who could not help but keep bleeding continually. But this woman, who while suffering from that disease for as long as twelve years *"could not be healed by any" (Luke 8:43)*, touched the garment of Jesus and was healed.

You and I, too, while living in this world, had no day of receiving the remission of sins because of our sins. When one

leads a religious life, one commits sins again today and offers prayers of repentance again; in some religions one recites Buddhist chants, in some religions they say one must perform duties, and in some places they say one must believe in Jesus and add good deeds to that as well. Because of this, there was never any way to escape from being this sinner. But just as, when the woman who suffered from a flow of blood touched the border of the garment of Jesus, power went out and she was healed, as the word says, *"I perceived power going out from Me" (Luke 8:46)*, so it was with us too. It was so with me, and it was so with you. Until then, we were those who spiritually had a flow of blood in us, who could not help but commit sins every day, and in whom sin kept gushing up endlessly even when we wiped it away. But when we truly believed in what the Lord had done—when we believed just a little—sin was simply cut off. In fact, this is the story of you and me, and the story of everyone who has received the remission of sins.

We simply knew and believed, and sin came to an end

Everyone who knows and believes in this work—that the Lord came to this earth and, for the righteousness of God and in order to remove our sins, received baptism from John for us, died on the Cross for us, rose again from death, and saved us—has received the remission of sins cleanly like this. This may seem like nothing special, but in fact it is something tremendous. When we think of the past, think of the future, and think of the present, truly, when we knew and believed that our Lord came to remove our sins, every problem of sin was resolved. How thankful this is! It means that we simply knew and believed in

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that salvation which the Lord came to this earth and accomplished for us, and sin disappeared.

In the past, wanting so much to remove sin, we fasted and prayed, did good deeds, and were zealous in religion, yet sin did not disappear. But when we simply knew and simply believed through the word what the Lord had done—that is, Jesus, who received baptism from John in the Jordan River, bore the sin of the world, died on the Cross, and rose again from death—when we held on to that word, the sins of you and me came to an end. Just as the fountain of this woman's flow of blood dried up, we, who truly could not be healed by anyone, have been healed. I believe that this is the power of the Lord and our remission of sins. Truly, the Lord has power and is great. Although we are nothing, the Lord came to this earth for us and saved us. When we think of how we could become people without sin, we are so thankful for the grace of the Lord, and the power of the Lord is so great. Truly, if we had lived with this sin until now, we probably would not have been able to endure it and would have died.

No matter how much we studied the Bible and no matter how much we thought—thinking only of the blood of the Cross, clinging to it, asking, praying, fasting, memorizing the Bible in order to know the truth, and thinking deeply about what the conclusion was and whether this was really the truth or not—there was no end to our thoughts. When we grew tired of thinking, rested, and then thought again, we were back where we started. Thought gave birth to thought, and there was no end. Everything else was resolved and we could see the end of it all, but as for the problem of sin alone, we could not see its end. So although we said we believed in Jesus, and although we believed in the blood of the Cross, what happens when we commit sin again? We had to offer prayers of repentance again, and as we

kept doing so, when we felt too ashamed, there even arose in us the wish that Jesus would come down once more and die for us again, and so many thoughts came to us. But our Lord has removed all our sins. The Lord truly has power, and in order to remove our sins He came to this earth, received baptism from John, shed His blood on the Cross, rose again from death, and saved us perfectly.

This is the power of the Lord. This woman came behind Jesus and lightly touched the border of His garment, and the power that was in the Lord reached this woman, and the fountain of her flow of blood dried up. We, too, knew in that way what the Lord had done and simply believed, and sin itself disappeared. Now we have become those who have the Holy Spirit, who find no joy in living unless we do righteousness, unless we preach this gospel and believe in the gospel. We are now finished with sin. Though we do commit sins because we are weak, loving sin in our hearts and going in that direction has come to an end. This woman and we are truly the same. What happened to this woman is what has happened to us. Jesus said, *"Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace" (Luke 8:48),* and it is truly so. We truly believed in what our Lord had done, and we received the remission of sins. Dear fellow believers, have you received the remission of sins? You just lightly believed in what the Lord had done, didn't you? It was not that you believed with great effort, saying, "I believe"; you simply knew and simply accepted it, and what happened? Did sin not come to an end? It is a tremendous power.

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The work He did out of unconditional love

In fact, this is the work the Lord has done for us. This is the work by which God, because He loved us, removed all our sins. The Scripture says, *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16)*, and God so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son, caused Him to receive baptism from John, caused Him to die on the Cross, and caused Him to rise again from death, and saved us. It is the work God did because He loved us like this. Because He loved us, He came to this earth; because He loved us, He received baptism from John; because He loved us, He bore the sin of the world; because He loved us, He died for us; and because He loved us, He rose again from death and saved us. This is the amazing power of God. We believed this, and we received salvation. Those who do not receive the remission of sins are truly the problem.

God loved you and loved me and did this work for us; what is so great about you that you cannot believe it? What is there to think so much about? Is there any condition to God's love? There is no condition in God's loving us. It is unconditional love. That is exactly agape love. He loved us with a love that asks nothing in return, a love that makes no demands. Because we resemble His own image, without any condition on our part, God on His side loved us, and in order to remove our sins He sent His only Son to this earth, caused His only Son to receive baptism from John, to die on the Cross, and to rise again from death, and saved us. God saved us because He loved you and me and had pity on us without any condition. This is exactly the salvation of God.

If we believe this, it is salvation; but a person who does not believe this is truly a hard-hearted person, and a person who relies on his own goodness is a very bad person. A certain ruler

came to Jesus and asked, *"Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18)*, but a person who does not believe in this way and relies on his own goodness, a person who has much goodness of his own, a person who has many thoughts of his own, goes to hell. We have no righteousness at all before God. There is nothing good in us, and in the final analysis, we do good for our own sake and sacrifice for our own sake, but there is no true goodness. Loving without expecting anything in return and without any condition, as God does, is not found in human beings. Only God alone has loved us without condition and without expecting anything in return. So He loved you and me without expecting anything in return and without condition, removed all our sins, and gave us salvation. That is why we must believe.

When she touched Him by faith

We must know and believe this fact. The woman who suffered from a flow of blood lightly touched the border of the garment of Jesus with her finger, and she was healed. We must do it with faith. That God does not lie, that Jesus is God, that God loved none other than me myself, came to this earth, received baptism from John for us, died on the Cross for us, rose again from death, and saved us—we must believe that. We must believe by faith in what Jesus Christ has done; if a person does not believe, there is no remission of sins for that person. When she touched Him by faith, she was healed by that power. We must know what the Lord has done and believe like this: "Ah, so this is what He did. Then there is no sin. Then all sins were passed on to Him. Then the Lord received all the judgment for us. Then the Lord has made us live. Then the Lord is our God

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and our Savior." We must believe, even with faith as small as a mustard seed.

"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'" (Romans 1:17). This word speaks of both things. As to how one becomes righteous, in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. No matter how one-sidedly God has saved us and how He has saved us with the water and the Spirit, with the water and the blood, out of unconditional love, if on our side we do not believe that fact, that truth comes to have nothing to do with us. It is revealed from faith to faith; after the righteous have received the remission of sins by faith, the word says, *"The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17)*. We live by faith. Whatever we may face, if we truly believe in God, unite with the church, and believe not in theory but in reality, then God bestows power on that person who relies on Him and believes in Him to that extent.

So not believing in what God has done, in the fact that He loved us unconditionally, is precisely a great sin. Can God lie? He is not One who lies, and He has recorded in the Bible what He has done; so how can you see this and still not believe? If you do not believe after seeing this, will you believe only when you see visions, miracles, and wonders? A person who tries to believe in that way is not believing in God but believing in his own thoughts. He is believing in some power, in a powerful person. Because that is not believing in God, we must know what God has done through this word of the Bible, in which what God has done is recorded, and believe it in our hearts. Thereby we come to believe, and that fact takes effect on us, and we receive salvation. Even after receiving salvation, when we live before God by faith, following the will of God, we become able to live

by faith. We become able to live even when we meet with hardship.

The coverings of fig leaves and the tunics of skin

If you ask who the most evil person in this world is, it is the person who thinks that he himself is good and thinks that God or other people are more evil than he is. That person is the most evil person and a hypocrite. It says that this woman was a woman who *"could not be healed by any" (Luke 8:43)*. By no one, not even by one's own goodness, can one's own sins be removed. Doing good oneself is exactly the same as making coverings of fig leaves and wearing them. The Bible says of Adam and Eve that *"they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings" (Genesis 3:7)*, but since fig leaves are plants, they dry up completely after only two or three days. On the first day, when you make the clothes and put them on, they are fresh and nice, but after just two days they dry in the sun, shrivel, and twist. After just three days, they crumble crisply the moment you sit down. The leaves and the stems all break off. That is what our human righteousness is like. That is why the Bible spoke of fig leaves. This is human goodness.

The goodness of God is the tunics of skin. It is written, *"For Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21)*. The righteousness of God is that sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering by the laying on of hands, that instead of killing us, the sacrificial offering that had those sins transferred to it was killed, and that God accepted that animal and saved from sin those who believe, just as God had ordained. So a person who believes in his own righteousness is the most evil person and a very wicked person. This is so both

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before receiving the remission of sins and after receiving the remission of sins. Faith is not believing in one's own goodness but believing in the goodness of God, believing in the power of God, and relying on God.

Sometimes there are people who come into the church and then just leave. Even when some people leave while their ties to this place still remain, God sometimes saves them later, just as He looked upon Abraham and saved Lot. He sometimes saves them and also leads them, and does so. But if someone has heard the gospel without any such ties and leaves without believing, that is the end forever. It happens that way because they know roughly but do not believe. That you and I have received the remission of sins—this is a tremendous thing. We could not help but live buried in sin, in the midst of sin, all our lives; do you know how painful it really is to be bound by sin? Dear fellow believers, have you ever suffered, being bound by sin? Are there any among you who, because you had much goodness, said, like that ruler, *"All these things I have kept from my youth" (Luke 18:21)*, and asked what other commandment you had to keep? Repent. Such people must turn back even now.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, a person who says, "Try to be as good as I am," does the same thing again. Speaking frankly before God, is there any human goodness, whether before receiving the remission of sins or after receiving the remission of sins? God makes such a person suffer severely. It is the work of God to make him suffer, break all his human goodness, make him give up completely, and make him hold on to the righteousness of God alone. It is exactly like coming out with a shovel in front of a bulldozer and shoveling. I do not know whether this is a good analogy, but when a bulldozer comes and pushes once, even a rock this big is simply pushed away, and a pile of dirt disappears completely with a single push; whereas no

matter how well you shovel a pile this big with a shovel, stepping on the ground to dig and scoop out, stepping and scooping again, and working hard, if a bulldozer pushes for just one minute, it is far better than a month's work. That is the difference between human goodness and the goodness of God. How good could we humans possibly be? What is there to be so proud of? There is nothing. That is why we must believe in the righteousness of God.

Even by just touching the border of His garment

It says that even by just touching the border of His garment, the flow of blood was healed. If we only know in our hearts what Jesus has done and believe in our hearts what the Lord has done, sin simply disappears. We become children of God. After that, too, if we only simply believe in and rely on the power of God, our problems are also resolved. It is a simple truth, but knowing it is extremely important and believing it is extremely important. If there are any among you who do not believe, break that goodness. And expose your own evil concretely. People who have much righteousness of their own are extremely stubborn people. Generally, such people are those who think that they are good. The goodness of such a person must be thoroughly broken. With such a person, we must not just rebuke him indiscriminately; only when we point out concretely what he has done wrong and tell him, and point it out concretely and tell him again, does he barely come to know. If we speak as if talking about someone else, or just as if telling a Bible story, he neither believes nor listens closely; he just hears it halfheartedly.

If you go before a person who puts forward his own righteousness and say, "I am lacking," you will be mocked

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instead. He says, “You are lacking, but I am not lacking. You just believe well yourself. Listening to what you say, it seems Jesus suits you, but He does not suit me.” Yet in fact, Jesus is exactly the right Savior for that person too. So before such a person, we must not act as if we were worthless. To a person with much righteousness of his own, we must point out his faults concretely. The day our Lord will come is not so far away. The world changes very fast. So I do not count on having a long period in which this gospel can be preached. We must preach the gospel now, while things are peaceful like this; what will we do when the time comes that the gospel cannot be preached? I have the faith that when this gospel has been preached to a certain extent, there will be a forecast that the Lord is coming, and that a little while after we hear that forecast, the Lord will come. Before then, we must preach the gospel to those who think themselves great. We must pray for those who pretend to be smart, the blind, those suffering from a flow of blood, people like you and me in the past, and preach the gospel to them. In fact, if we compare humans with one another, there is no one who does not have as much goodness as that person. Everyone is at least that good. The acts of love that person has done, we have also done, and there is nothing we have failed to do. Anyone, when seen before God, falls hopelessly short, but when seen before humans, I believe that person and we are about the same.

We must chip away at it bit by bit. Just as drops of water falling from the edge of the eaves someday bore through the stone beneath them, if we keep speaking the truth, someday a hole will open up. Even a person with much goodness gets a hole in him. So he comes to know that he has no goodness and comes to believe. A person who holds on tightly to his own goodness is in fact that way because he himself is lacking. Still, we must

break it for him. If we cannot break it, God breaks it. On the other hand, there are also many people who have completely given up in despair. There are very many people who try to believe, saying, “I am nothing.” Because there are various kinds of people, we must speak the gospel accordingly: wait for those who need waiting for, quickly preach the gospel to those who do not need to be waited for, and break the human righteousness of those who pretend too much to be good. To a person who chases after the world too much, we must not sow the gospel too hastily but wait and watch for a while. This is because if he goes out into the world after hearing the gospel, he becomes far worse than he was before. If in the past he did a little wrong, after he hears and accepts the gospel and then goes out into the world and becomes a mess, he becomes worse. Since the Holy Spirit is in you, in such matters you should also listen to what those who have gone before you say, unite together and pray, and in any case give your hearts, unite, and serve the Lord with the gospel.

Why Jesus received baptism

I keep thinking of the old days. I keep thinking of the time when I had not received the remission of sins, and of how much I suffered because of sin; it was truly so very hard, and so I really wanted to know this truth. But people who wanted to know this were very rare. It seems there are hardly any people who, without having received the remission of sins, want to know concretely why Jesus received baptism. Even after I met the Lord, when I asked people, there were a few who said it had just seemed a little strange, but there seemed to be no one who had searched out what this was. Among the people I had met, there were hardly any. I had been interested in this from very long ago.

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After reading through the Bible several times and also studying theology, the thing that remained most unresolved for me was why Jesus received baptism, why He received baptism from John the Baptist. So I asked countless questions, prayed, begged and pleaded, and sought out and read all the books in that field, but in fact there was not a single book that explained it satisfactorily.

But the word was telling me. When Jesus 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)*. Here, righteousness refers to what is right before God, to justice. And the word before it, 'thus,' is the Greek word 'houtos,' and this word itself means 'in this way,' that is, that it must be this and nothing else. It meant that Jesus absolutely fulfills all that is right only by receiving baptism from John. The moment I came to know this word, it was over. Everything was finished, with nothing more to say. Just as, even when fluorescent lights have all been installed, it is a pitch-dark night as if they had not been installed at all as long as the switch is not turned on, but when everything is installed and the switch is flipped on, the light comes on and it becomes bright—so the soul becomes bright. My soul became bright, the dark heart that had been so gloomy because of sin in the past became peaceful and calm, and a peace like a river, which truly cannot be fully expressed in words, came into my heart. And the Bible was all resolved. The whole Bible was simply all resolved, even without reading it. "Ah, this is the word. That is this word." The problem of life, of how I should live, remained a little, but this truth of the Bible was all resolved.

God has saved you and me. When I think of how God has saved me, I am truly so thankful. Just as God has saved me, He has also saved you, and just as He has saved you, He has also saved all the people around you. But a person who does not

believe must go to hell. So we must believe. Not believing is the most evil thing, and after we believe and receive the remission of sins, hardship comes so that we may live relying on God; not relying on Him at that time is evil. Since it is written, *"The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17)*, I ask you to rely on God. When we rely on Him and believe, His work is taking place. I give thanks before God, who has saved us.

There are difficulties, too, but if we hope for them to be resolved in the Lord, they are all resolved again. Because on our side we have much righteousness of our own, are stubborn, do not rely on God, and live as we please, God gives us difficulties in order to break our stubbornness and lead us to live according to His will. If we look to God, believe, and wait, God does it all for us. Let us live that way by faith. ✉

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Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

What did the faith of the woman with the flow of blood hold on to?

< Luke 8:42b–48 >

"But as He went, the multitudes thronged Him. Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped. And Jesus said, 'Who touched Me?' When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, 'Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, "Who touched Me?"' But Jesus said, 'Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me.' Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. And He said to her, 'Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace.'"

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Twelve years of illness and one encounter

In the face of a problem that has gone unresolved for many years, it is hard to have hope merely from the fact that time passes. For the woman who suffered from a flow of blood, the twelve years were years she had lived through hoping that the illness would end, but those years did not heal the illness. Yet when she came to Jesus and touched the border of His garment, the illness stopped immediately. Only when we see the toil of the woman who endured for so long and the healing that took place on the spot as two different things can we know what saved her.

There were many people around Jesus as He was going to the house of Jairus. Among them, the one the Scriptures single out is the woman who appears in the word *"Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any" (Luke 8:43)*. Along with the explanation that she had suffered from the illness, the fact that she could not be healed by anyone is recorded. Since the illness still remained even as the days she lived added up, what the woman needed was not recognition for the years she had suffered, but the One who would actually heal the illness.

The woman came to Jesus, just as the word *"came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped" (Luke 8:44)* says. Here the words "twelve years" and "immediately" stand clearly face to face. The illness that had not been healed for so long stopped as soon as power went out from Jesus. The woman did not buy her healing by paying the price of her long suffering, nor did she receive a reward given to someone who had filled up twelve years. The cause of the healing lay with the Lord.

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The word that none of the people this woman went around to for twelve years could heal her illness makes us look back on the things we have gone to with the problem of sin. People try to control sin with remorse, resolutions, and religious zeal, but those things only cover sin for a while and cannot remove the sins already committed. Just as that woman needed the One who would heal her illness, we, too, need the Savior who will take upon Himself and resolve the sins we cannot remove by ourselves. If we have come to know the limits of our own strength, we must now set our hearts on Jesus, who will deliver us from sin.

The power that faith holds on to is in the Lord

When Jesus asked who had touched Him, Peter answered that the multitudes were surrounding and pressing Him. But Jesus said, *"Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me" (Luke 8:46)*. In Peter's eyes, the movements of many people were visible, but the Lord revealed what had happened to one person among them. In this conversation we see the fact that being near in body and obtaining salvation by relying on the Lord are not the same thing.

Copying exactly the method of touching the border of the garment cannot be the conclusion of this word. If the power that stopped the illness had come from the cloth itself, there would be no need to believe the word of the Lord; it would be enough just to grab hold of that object. But Jesus said that power had gone out from Himself, and at the end He spoke of the woman's faith. What we must look at closely is Jesus, on whom the woman relied, rather than the spot she touched or the form of her action.

What did the faith of the woman with the flow of blood hold on to?

The faith that receives the remission of sins must also know its object clearly. It is not that sin disappears if we firmly believe in anything whatsoever, nor does the experience of our hearts growing fervent while we call on the name of the Lord pay the price of sin. Only when we know who it is that took our sins upon Himself and how He bore the judgment do we not mistake our own zeal for the power of salvation. To believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit means to accept in our hearts the righteousness of Jesus, who accomplished that very work.

The Scriptures say, *"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 us and sent His Son, and Jesus received baptism from John and thereby had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The Lord knew our whole lifetime and took upon Himself all the sins that come out of us every day. The sin of the world that He took upon Himself at that time includes not only the sins of the days already lived but also all the sins yet to be committed. So it is not that Jesus must receive baptism again each time a sin is newly revealed; rather, we must believe the word that He has already taken even that sin upon Himself. A sin that was revealed to us belatedly is not, for that reason, a sin left out of the Lord's salvation.

Jesus, who bore sin in this way, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and thereby received in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive. His taking sin upon Himself with His baptism and His paying the price of that sin on the Cross are the work of the Lord that accomplishes one salvation. Jesus did not stop there but rose again from death and gave us life. Because it is not a salvation in which He left a portion for sinners to add with their own toil, a person who believes in the Lord's baptism,

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blood, and resurrection has no need to offer his own deeds as the price of the remission of sins.

The resolutions we make waver according to the circumstances of the day, but the sins Jesus bore do not come back according to our moods. Faith is not a heart that insists it has not sinned, but a heart that acknowledges that the salvation the Lord accomplished for us who have sinned is true. Precisely for this reason, a person who believes in the righteousness of the Lord can be sure of the remission of sins without hiding his own weakness. Saying that one has no sin and so needs no Savior is clearly different from confessing that the Savior has remitted all one's sins.

Peace comes from the word of the Lord

Now the woman comes forward before the people. It is written, *"Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately" (Luke 8:47)*. She told of her action and of her being healed, and Jesus heard her words and spoke to her. The fact that the illness had stopped did not remain the woman's own private experience but was revealed before the people, and through the word of the Lord the meaning of that event was also made clear.

The Lord said, *"Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace" (Luke 8:48)*. The woman fell down trembling, but the Lord told her to go in peace. Here we see that we cannot judge that there is no faith merely from the fact that there is trembling. The Lord did not say that the woman was saved because she was not afraid in the least. Because He

acknowledged her faith that relied on the power that is in Jesus, that woman could go in peace on the basis of the word of the Lord rather than of her own trembling heart.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, our hearts can waver when we meet difficulties in life. If at that time we think that the word of salvation is true only once our emotions have settled, we end up entrusting our peace to the state of our own hearts. Because the Lord who saved us has already borne our sins and finished the judgment, even in a wavering moment we can rely on that salvation and ask for help. Instead of forgetting the grace we have received and examining only our own strength again, we must live telling the difficulties of life, too, to the Lord who delivered us from sin.

The last word given to the woman who had not been healed though twelve years had passed was not a command to try harder and cure her illness. Because the Lord had already stopped the illness, He told her to go in peace. We, too, are not to count the past years of failure and calculate how much more we must strive before we can remove our sins. To the person who believes in the righteousness of Jesus, who remitted the sins of our whole lifetime, the Lord says today, just as on the day He stopped the twelve-year illness, to go in peace. ✉

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Sermon 11 by Paul C. Jong

Believe the word of the Lord even in the face of the news of death

< Luke 8:49–56 >

“While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house, saying to him, ‘Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher.’ But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, ‘Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well.’ When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl. Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, ‘Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping.’ And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, ‘Little girl, arise.’ Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat. And her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened.”

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The word that remains even after the news that she had died

While Jairus was on his way home with Jesus, someone came and told him of his daughter's death. When a person hears that it is already too late while he is seeking help, he easily loses even the reason to seek any further, and that person went so far as to say that he should not trouble the Teacher any more. In those words was the judgment that, since death had come, even having asked Jesus to come was now of no use. But since Jesus said, even after hearing that news, that the daughter would be saved, we must examine in this passage which of the two we are to believe: the conclusion of people or the promise of the Lord.

The person who came from the house said, *"Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher" (Luke 8:49)*. In addition to the news that the daughter had died, he also conveyed the judgment that there was no longer any need to ask. That judgment is understandable in that a dead child cannot be brought back to life by human strength. But if we conclude from the fact that man cannot do it that Jesus cannot do it either, we end up confining the power of the Lord within the limits of man.

When Jesus heard these words, He said, *"Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well" (Luke 8:50)*. This was not a word spoken without having heard the news of death. Since the Lord, who had heard that news, told Jairus to believe, this faith is not an attitude of pretending not to know the fact that the daughter had died. It is trusting Jesus, who said that the daughter would be saved even while knowing of her death.

Here we must not replace the basis of faith with our own optimistic thinking. Insisting that things will turn out well when there is no word at all is different from believing the promise the Lord has made. Jairus had the word of Jesus given to him right

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there on the spot. What we can hold on to even when the circumstances visible to our eyes do not permit hope is not the strength of our own hearts, but the fact that the One who promised can fulfill that word.

The voice that called the child in the house of wailing

When Jesus came into the house, He did not permit anyone to go in with Him except Peter, John, and James, and the child's parents. The people there were weeping and wailing for the child. When the Lord said that the child was sleeping, the people ridiculed Him on the grounds that they knew she was dead. They were actually looking at death, but they did not believe what Jesus, who was standing before that death, could do.

The Lord's saying that she was sleeping cannot be read to mean that the child had not really died. This is because the people knew that the child was dead, and the Scriptures go on to record that the child's spirit returned. The Lord's word did not come from a mistaken knowledge of the reality of death; it was the word of the One who had the power to raise the dead child. Therefore, the ridicule of the people could not be evidence that overturned the promise of the Lord.

What the Lord did at that time appears in the word *"He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, 'Little girl, arise'" (Luke 8:54)*. Since the child was dead, she could not add her own strength to carry out the Lord's command. It was Jesus who took her by the hand and called her, and it was also Jesus who gave the child the life she needed. He did not bring the child to life by demanding ability from the one who heard the word; He raised the child with the power that was in Himself.

This scene makes us look back on who it is that gives life to us who are under sin and death. A sinner is not someone who can come to the Savior only after removing his own sins and becoming clean. He is someone who needs the Savior because of the sins he cannot resolve by himself. If we had first become worthy people and opened the way to obtain life, salvation would be our achievement; but because the Lord Himself bore the sins of sinners, salvation is the grace of the Lord.

Live your remaining days by the grace that gave life

The result after the Lord called her is clear. It is written, *"Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat" (Luke 8:55)*. It was not that the hearts of the parents were merely lightened for a moment by hearing words of comfort; the spirit of the child who had died returned, and she actually got up. The word of the Lord did not stop at soothing people's sorrow but was fulfilled as the power that overcomes death.

Jesus' telling them to give her something to eat was also a command given for the child who had come back to life. He did not feed the child food and make her come back to life by that strength; He first brought her to life and then had her be given something to eat. We can clearly see the order of grace in this scene. Only when we do not reverse the living that follows receiving life and the cause that brought about life do we not attribute what we have received from the Lord to our own merit.

The child's parents were astonished, and the Lord charged them *"to tell no one" (Luke 8:56)* about that matter. What the parents saw in their own house was not a result produced by their

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own strength, but the power of Jesus, who fulfilled exactly the word He had spoken before the dead child. When we see the fact that the Lord who brought the child to life gave life back to that family, we, too, come out of the thinking that we must first do something sufficiently before we can obtain grace.

The order in which we receive the remission of sins and live is the same as this. It is not that we first completed a life of committing not a single sin and so earned the qualification for salvation. Jesus received baptism from John in order to save us who had sin, and at that time He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. Not only the sins we committed in the days gone by but also the sins we will commit throughout our whole lifetime until the day we die are included in that sin of the world. It is not a matter of testing and waiting to see how much the Lord will help us; we must know and believe even which sins He has already borne.

Because the Lord took sin upon Himself with His baptism, the judgment He received on the Cross was precisely the judgment for our sins. Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, bearing in our place the punishment we were to receive, and by rising again from death He saved us. Because the Lord accomplished the taking of sin upon Himself, the paying of the price of sin, and the overcoming of death and living again, we have the hope of life. We have weak bodies that will meet death in the future, but because we believe in the Savior who rose again from death, death cannot take away all our hope. This is because our salvation does not depend on the strength of people who are under death, but on Jesus, who overcame death.

We who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit set our hearts on the salvation that the Lord has completed in this way. Even the sins that come from weaknesses revealed belatedly are included in the sins of a whole lifetime that the

Lord bore. The word spoken to Jairus, *"Do not be afraid; only believe" (Luke 8:50),* sounds to us, too, with the same meaning. If there remained a portion that we had to add, fear could not cease; but because the Lord, who overcame even death, has fully accomplished salvation, we need only believe that word. On that faith, we come to serve the Lord, giving thanks every day for the grace we have received.

The person who came from the house of Jairus said not to ask any further since the daughter had died, but the word of Jesus did not end in the face of that death. The Lord raised the child just as He had promised. Let us, too, not close off hope in the face of sin and death by reckoning only the ability of people. Believing in Jesus, who delivered us from sin and death, let us live our remaining days relying on the grace of the Lord, who has already given us life. ✉

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Sermon 12 by Paul C. Jong

Follow the Lord by the grace He has already bestowed on you

< Luke 8:40–56 >

"So it was, when Jesus returned, that the multitude welcomed Him, for they were all waiting for Him. And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And he fell down at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But as He went, the multitudes thronged Him. Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped. And Jesus said, 'Who touched Me?' When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, 'Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, "Who touched Me?"' But Jesus said, 'Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me.' Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. And He

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said to her, 'Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace.' While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, 'Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher.' But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, 'Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well.' When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl. Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, 'Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, 'Little girl, arise.' Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat. And her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened."

Jairus's daughter, whose whole lifetime was twelve years

When we look at this passage, there is a part in which Jesus Christ heals the daughter of a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue. I would like to share grace together through this word. *"And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And he fell down at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying" (Luke 8:41–42).* Jesus healed this twelve-year-old daughter of Jairus. Here we see how He caused her spirit to return, brought the one who had died back to life, and made her live in this world again.

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We must truly know how thankful we ought to be for how much grace God has bestowed on us. If we had not met Jesus Christ, we would be nothing but people who, like Jairus's daughter, are sick and dying all our lives. Even now, when we think of the Lord's grace, we are truly thankful. What would we do, living our whole lives? We were people who, all our lives, could only live grieving over our own dying souls, crying out in anguish, living in sorrow, and then, because of our own disease, die in vain and in loneliness, just as the last remaining leaf falls in autumn.

We were such people, and we must see why God healed Jairus's twelve-year-old daughter. That daughter was only twelve years old. At an age when she should have been playing endearingly, she was wasting away with illness and dying, so how heartbroken Jairus must have been! So Jairus begged before Jesus. That daughter was twelve years old, but that was her whole lifetime. If one dies at twelve, twelve years becomes one's whole lifetime, and if one dies at thirteen, thirteen years becomes one's whole lifetime. Jairus's daughter had suffered from illness throughout her whole lifetime and was now placed at the point of dying.

But Jesus granted Jairus's request and went to her Himself. Jesus came to Jairus's daughter, who was like a corpse—her body had died from illness, she had fallen asleep, and now, even if someone came and touched her body, she could not get up and had no sensation at all—and He healed her. The Scripture says, *"'Little girl, arise.' Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat" (Luke 8:54–55).*

The disease of sin cannot be cured with any medicine

This passage speaks about Jairus's daughter, but in fact it is speaking about us human beings, who are dying of disease all our lives. Human beings die because of disease over the course of a whole lifetime. One may die spiritually because of the disease of sin, one may die because of a disease of the body, and one may die because of some disease of one's thoughts. But we were people who could only die of the disease of sin before God. Even if we tried to get out of the disease of sin, there was no way out. What medicine could we take to escape from it? What medicine could we take to escape from this disease that leads to death, and how could we cure it? The body might somehow be cured, but how could this disease of sin be cured? The disease of sin cannot be healed no matter how good the medicine we take.

How much medicine must Jairus's daughter, too, have taken when she was sick! Even though she took much medicine, she was not healed and closed her eyes at the age of twelve. As for the disease of our sin, too, no matter how good the medicine we take—whether we take the medicine of repentance, the medicine of good deeds, the medicine of mercy, the medicine of charity, or the medicine of merit—whatever medicine we use, it is impossible to escape from the disease of sin. We were human beings who could not get out of the disease of sin throughout our whole lives, and who had completely died of the disease of sin. For Jairus's daughter, twelve years was her whole lifetime. Just as Jairus's daughter had no way of escape throughout her whole lifetime, can we escape by our own strength from the sins we commit throughout our whole lives? But just as Jairus's daughter, who had lived out her whole lifetime and died, met

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Jesus Christ and rose at His word, *"Little girl, arise" (Luke 8:54)*, Jesus Christ bore all the sins we commit throughout our whole lives. By receiving baptism from John, He had the sins of our whole lives transferred to Him, and by bearing those sins, shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rising again from death, Jesus Christ resolved all those sins of our whole lives.

As we go on believing in Jesus Christ, there are times when we often become discouraged and disappointed, and at times our hearts are bound. But we must remember that our Lord has bestowed grace on us for our whole lives. He took away all our sins, all the sins we commit throughout our whole lives. We must know how great that is before God. When we think of the grace of God, that Jesus Christ took away all the sins we commit throughout our whole lives, healed us completely, and gave us life, we have hearts that are thankful and thankful again.

We often become shortsighted, seeing only what is in front of us and not seeing well what is far away, but when we think that God has bestowed eternal grace on such people as us, we truly become deeply thankful before God in our hearts. When we think that Jesus Christ took away all our sins, that He took away all the sins that you and I commit throughout our whole lives, we are truly thankful in our hearts, and we come to know that we are those who have received grace before God. Even as we follow the Lord, there are times when we are like this and times when we are like that, but still, just as our Lord, when He met Jairus's daughter, said, *"Little girl, arise" (Luke 8:54)*, and healed her of all disease and death, all of it at one time, so He has bestowed such grace on us as well, and I believe we must know this and give thanks.

He came to us though we had done nothing

It is not that Jairus's daughter came before Jesus, did some good deed, built up merit, and was somehow healed through her works. It was purely that her father made a request; Jairus's daughter truly did nothing for Jesus, yet Jesus came to her and delivered her from all disease and death. What is important is that Jesus Christ went to Jairus's daughter. He went to Jairus's daughter, healed her disease, delivered her from death, and told them to give her food. Our Lord also came to us. When did we ever go around looking for Jesus? We had only caught the disease that leads to death and tried in a fleshly way to somehow cure that disease, yet our Lord came to us and cured the disease of sin, brought our spirits back to life from spiritual death, brought our bodies back to life, and gave us something to eat. When we think of the grace God has given us, both in spirit and in body, we must think about how great and amazing a thing it is, and how much of God's grace we have received.

What we feel and think about how great a grace God has given us is very small, but when we think about how great a grace God came to us and bestowed on us, we become thankful. Truly, new strength arises before the Lord; even when we are discouraged, we become thankful before the Lord; even when we are frustrated, we gain courage; and even when we have no strength, strength springs up again. Amid the many hours and many days of this world, I cannot tell you how fortunate and thankful it is, and what a sigh of relief it brings, that we have received that eternal grace by which God came to us and resolved all the problems of our whole lives at one time. We change often and are very fickle, yet we come to think, how could God have loved us so much at one time like this, and how could He have bestowed so much grace on us at one time? And

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He lets us taste that grace as we live each day, and lets us taste it as we live on forever.

The grace He gave at one time, not little by little each day

Because God has bestowed eternal grace on us, we live today and we live tomorrow, and until now we have lived by the grace of God. If God had not bestowed eternal grace on us at one time but had bestowed it little by little each day, how impatient we would have felt, and how frustrated we would have felt! Since we would have had to receive grace every day, how frustrating it would have been! However, just as one deposits a great deal of money in the bank and withdraws it to use throughout one's whole life, we are living on in that grace, experiencing that God has bestowed eternal grace on us. When we think of that, I cannot tell you how thankful we are for the grace of our Lord. While Jairus's twelve-year-old daughter was sick and dying, she in fact died, just as someone came from the ruler of the synagogue's house and said, *"Your daughter is dead" (Luke 8:49)*. The people said she was dead, and when Jesus said, *"Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping" (Luke 8:52)*, it says, *"They ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead" (Luke 8:53)*. The people ridiculed Jesus, thinking that He did not even know that. When Jesus said, *"Little girl, arise" (Luke 8:54)*, the girl arose, and Jesus told them to give this girl something to eat.

Dear beloved saints, we must think about how abundant and how great the grace God has given us is. Because Jesus Christ bore even our future sins, we believe in Jesus, give thanks, gain strength, and live. If Jesus Christ had not bestowed on us eternal grace at one time, the grace of a whole lifetime, forever, how

could we come out at this hour, face the word, sing praises, and pray? As we live in this world, each of us has our own difficulties and each one's circumstances are all different, so how could we come out with joyful hearts and sing praises? It would be utterly impossible. As for the religions in the world, when one feels distressed, one comes out and prays; when one is at ease, one may not do it; and even when one is in pain, one may not do it—that is the religion of the world. But those who have received grace before God seek God and receive grace even when they are in pain, receive grace before God even when they are joyful, and seek God even when their bodies are sick and even when they have all kinds of worries. Those who are in God can come before Jesus Christ and sing praises at any time, whether they are in distress, in hardship, or in pain. It is because the Lord has bestowed grace on us for our whole lives that we can praise God like this and come before His word to worship and pray.

We believe that even our future sins have been resolved because, when Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all with the baptism He received from John, He also bore all the sins of our whole lives. Since Jesus, who received the judgment for those sins in our place, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again, has already accomplished the remission of sins, we who believe in that grace can live in thanksgiving today as well.

Because the Lord has given us the grace of a whole lifetime, we can live in thanksgiving today and tomorrow. How thankful Jairus's daughter must have been after she was healed! She had come back to life from death, after all. Our souls, too, have come back to life from spiritual death. How thankful we are! Jairus's daughter, for the rest of her life, could never have forgotten Jesus Christ, who raised her from the dead. As she lived on, there would have been pain, hardship, and suffering, and at times the

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thought might have arisen that it would have been better not to have come back to life then, but at any time she could never have forgotten Jesus Christ. Likewise, we also cannot forget Jesus Christ, who delivered us from spiritual death and raises us again from the death of the body. We cannot forget Him at any time. We cannot forget that Jesus Christ has given us grace for our whole lives, forever.

What makes us different from the people of the world is that He has bestowed eternal grace on us. Those who have received that grace are different from the people of the world. They speak the same way, but they are truly different. They are different because they have tasted the grace of God, because they have received grace. So they are those who have received grace that can overcome any suffering, difficulty, trial, or slander. Those who have been blessed by God are different in such things. The people of the world who have not received grace rejoice, grieve, and suffer because of temporary riches and visible things, and are destroyed because of sin; but Jairus's daughter, who received eternal grace, would always have been thankful that she was alive, because she had received the eternal grace of Jesus Christ, and she would have been different from the children of her age, because she had tasted the grace of Jesus Christ, who gave her new hope, who raised her body again and gives life to the spirit. God has bestowed such grace on us as well. Because we have received that grace, even though we live just like the people of the world, there is something different in us, and that is precisely because God has bestowed eternal grace on each one of us, and so we give thanks.

Not because He will bestow it, but because He has already bestowed it

Dear beloved saints, do you think of the fact that God has bestowed that eternal grace on you? I hope you will not forget it. When did God bestow that eternal grace on us? We received eternal grace when Jesus Christ came to us and removed all our sins. There are times when we do not think of the fact that God has bestowed that eternal grace on us. But as those who have received the eternal grace of God, we must live giving thanks every day. We must not be discouraged in any area, but must think of having received the eternal grace of God, give thanks as we think of the grace of that great One, and truly follow the Lord without denying Him in our actual lives. We have the strength to do so because Jesus Christ came to us and has already bestowed on us the grace we need for our whole lives. We do not follow the Lord because He will bestow grace; we follow the Lord because God has already bestowed grace on us for our whole lives. We do not follow because the Lord conditionally does something for us, nor because He will do something for us in the future, but because He has already done it.

One reason we do not deny the Lord, truly cannot betray the Lord, and cannot forget our Lord is that the Lord has already bestowed on us all the grace we need while we live our whole lives. That is why we are now living and following Him. Do you think so?

The grace of God is truly great. We laugh when things are a little good and sulk when things are a little bad, but God, He is great. So those who have once tasted that great grace He gave us at one time for our whole lives, though they are lacking, long for the Lord, believe in Him, serve Him, and follow Him. The Lord has abundantly given us the grace we need to follow Him as we

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live our whole lives, the grace to suffer for the Lord, and all the grace to be able to live for the Lord. Because of that eternal grace, we follow the Lord without denying Him. We follow Him today, we follow Him tomorrow, we follow Him the day after tomorrow, and we follow Him forever. We follow because, regardless of us, the Lord gave us at one time the grace we need for our whole lives, within eternal time.

If, when we are in pain, the Lord had not given us the grace we need for tomorrow, we might give up right away. If Jesus had not filled us with the grace of God that must be there for our future, if He had not given it to us at one time, we could only live trusting ourselves in our own way, saying, "I will live by my own strength." But because our Lord has already bestowed the grace of a lifetime on those who know Him, we follow the Lord, and we are able to follow Him.

As we live in this world, there are truly many things that do not go as we wish. Even when things do not go as we wish, there is no change in our serving the Lord; whether we like it or not, we believe in Jesus and follow Him in our own circumstances; and whether we like it or not, we can follow the Lord—this is because the Lord has bestowed on us the grace of a whole lifetime. That is why we can follow the Lord at any time and in any situation. The grace our Lord has given is truly great. A person's heart changes from morning to evening, yet when we see that He has given us the grace to follow the Lord until now, this is not by our own strength but because the Lord has given us at one time all the grace to follow Him for a whole lifetime, and because we are thankful for that grace, we follow the Lord without change. We do not follow by willpower for some reason; we follow because we liked the Lord, because we like the Lord.

Even Peter, with his fiery temper, followed the Lord

How great our Lord is! When I see that even someone like me can follow the Lord, I can know how great the Lord is. From the fact that Peter followed the Lord, we can know how great Jesus is, and from the fact that James was able to follow the Lord, we can know how great the Lord is. Both Peter and James had fiery tempers. James and John said, *"Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" (Luke 9:54)*. If someone said even a little against them, they could not bear it; they went so far as to ask that fire come down from heaven on the spot and burn those people up, saying that all He had to do was speak a single word, and asking that not even a trace of those people be left.

James and Peter, who had been so brutish, said after Jesus rose again, "Ah, let's just quit." Because their tempers were fiery, when they followed, they followed well, but when things went against their will, they did not follow. That is the problem. But Jesus came to Peter and said, *"Do you love Me?" (John 21:16)*, and Peter said, *"Yes, Lord; You know that I love You" (John 21:16)*. Peter, being hot-tempered, followed with burning zeal when he followed, but then, even though he knew full well that Jesus had risen again and would ascend to heaven, he thought it was now over. But Peter later came to know at the Sea of Tiberias that, although he had abandoned Jesus, Jesus had not abandoned him. Peter, too, followed the Lord his whole life, and even such a Peter was able to follow because God had bestowed on Peter, too, the eternal grace he needed for his whole life. James too, doubting Thomas too—the twelve disciples were able to follow Jesus because the grace God had given them was great. If the grace God has given us were not great, how could

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we follow God? Because the grace God has given us is truly great, we are able to follow the Lord. Though we may waver before people, we do not waver before God.

Whether you do small work or great work in the church, in fact there is nothing that we do. At most, praying and praising before the Lord is the greatest work before the Lord, and the reason a thankful heart toward the Lord arises in us even while we do such things is that the Lord gives us gladness, boldness, and joyful hearts within us, and looks on us as lovely and beautiful. He acknowledges us. Even if there is nothing that we do, our Lord looks on us with great favor. It is not a matter of whether we did work or not; we offer a little material goods, offer a little time, offer our hearts; those who go to work serve the Lord through their workplaces, and those who go to school serve the Lord while attending school; we serve with material goods and serve with prayer, serving the Lord in many forms—and the Lord looks on us with great favor. Through such things, too, we can give thanks before God, and when our hearts are in distress, we can give thanks for the love God has given to our hearts.

There is nothing more to ask for besides salvation

The Lord's healing of Jairus's daughter was His bestowing on that daughter the grace she needed for her whole life. Raising her from death was bestowing on her the grace needed for a whole lifetime. Jairus's daughter came back to life from death, and there would be nothing more to ask of Jesus besides that. She had escaped from that disease, from the curse, and had been saved; we must not think that Jairus's daughter abandoned the Lord because of other things as she lived out her whole life. Just

as Jairus's daughter died, we could only die all our lives from the disease of sin and the disease of our thoughts. But just as our Lord raised Jairus's daughter, He has raised us from the disease of death. The Lord gave us the grace we need for our whole lives and saved us from the disease of sin. We must not desire anything more from God besides that. We are to serve the Lord in thankfulness for that; but if we demand other things and set conditions, saying, "If You do not do this for me, I will not do it. If You do this for me, I will follow," then we can only be called those who have forgotten and do not remember that God has given us eternal grace. Just as God saved Jairus's daughter, He has saved us from sin and has given us the eternal grace we need while we live our whole lives; therefore we must praise and thank the Lord who gave us that salvation, and for the rest of our lives truly give thanks, love Him, serve Him, and follow Him.

I give thanks before the Lord. I give thanks for the grace He has given to you and me. If it were not for such grace, we would say that we follow the Lord because He does this for us, or that we follow the Lord because He does that for us, but we are not like that. We follow the Lord because He has saved us. Though we are lacking, we give thanks and glory before the Lord. ✉

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◇ About the Next Series

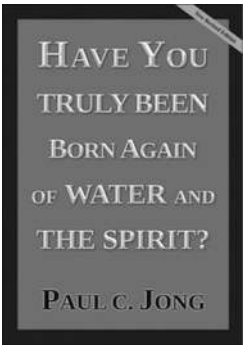
The ***'Biblical Exposition & Sermon Series from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit'*** will continue to be published following this book.

We sincerely hope that the books by Pastor Paul C. Jong, which will continue to be published, will serve as spiritual nourishment to strengthen your faith.

News about newly released books, as well as various ways to access them—including eBooks (PDF, EPUB), audiobooks (M4A, MP3), and online reading—can be found at **www.bjnewlife.org.**

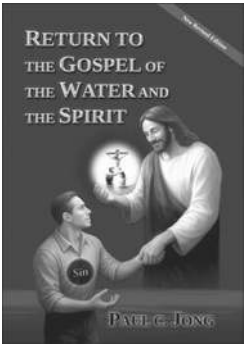
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

HAVE YOU TRULY BEEN BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT? [New Revised Edition]



Among many Christian books written about being born again, this is the first book of our time to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in strict accordance with the Scriptures. Man can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit. To be born again means that a sinner is saved from all his lifelong sins by believing in the baptism of Jesus and His blood of the Cross. Let's believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven as the righteous who have no sin.

RETURN TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT [New Revised Edition]



Let's return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Theology and doctrines themselves can't save us. However, many Christians still follow them, and consequently have not been born again yet. This book clearly tells us what mistakes theology and doctrines have made and how we can believe in Jesus in the most accurate and certain way.

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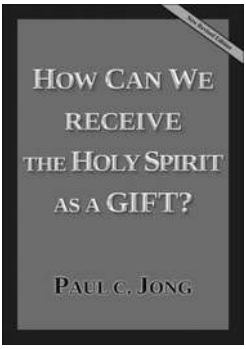
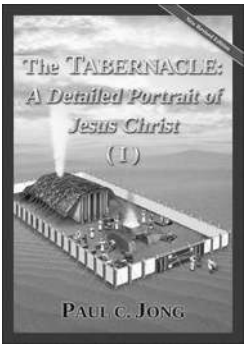
HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]



In Christianity, the most significantly discussed issue is salvation from sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However, few people have the exact knowledge of these two topics. Nevertheless, in reality people say that they believe in Jesus Christ while they are ignorant of true redemption and the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the true gospel that makes you receive the Holy Spirit? If you want to ask God for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then you must first know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and have faith in it. This book will certainly lead all Christians worldwide to receive the Holy Spirit through the washing away of all their sins.

The TABERNACLE : A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (I) [New Revised Edition]

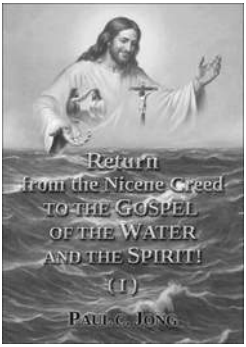


How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

In fact, the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen manifested in the gate of the Tabernacle's court show us the works of Jesus Christ in the New Testament's time that have saved the mankind. In this way, the Old Testament's Word of the Tabernacle and the Word of the New Testament are closely and definitely related to each other, like fine woven linen. But, unfortunately, this truth has been hidden for a long time to every truth seeker in Christianity.

Coming to this earth, Jesus Christ was baptized by John and shed His blood on the Cross. Without understanding and believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, none of us can ever find out the truth revealed in the Tabernacle. We must now learn this truth of the Tabernacle and believe in it. We all need to realize and believe in the truth manifested in the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen of the gate of the Tabernacle's court.

Return from the Nicene Creed TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT! (I)



-Why must we return from the Nicene Creed to the gospel of the water and the Spirit? –

The gospel that the early church preached was precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That gospel was the gospel that Jesus actually shouldered and washed away the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John.

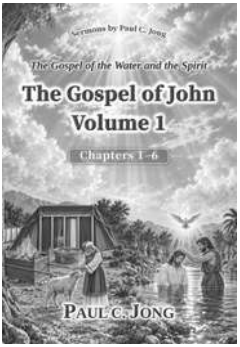
The baptism Jesus received from John was to fulfill the law of the sacrificial system found in Leviticus. That is, just as sin was transferred to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, the substance of that sacrificial law was fulfilled through Jesus's baptism.

However, in the process of the Nicene Creed's formation, the ministry of Jesus having the sin of the world transferred to Him by being baptized by John was deleted from the creed's contents. As a result, this truth has been passed down in a hidden state within Christianity for about 1,700 years, reaching the present day.

Today, many people are struggling to receive the removal of their sins without knowing when their sins were transferred to Jesus. Because of this, even while saying they believe in the gospel of the cross, they fail to reach true assurance of salvation and live amidst repetitive repentance and the pangs of conscience.

The reason we must return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit is clear. This is because only this gospel allows us to meet the Jesus who became the sacrificial offering as the sin of the world was transferred to His body, and thereby have assurance of salvation.

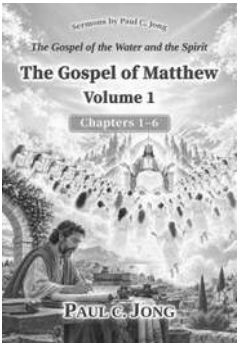
The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of John (3-Volume Series)



"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

John chapters 1–6 reveal who Jesus is. He is the Savior—the God who created all things, who Himself came in the flesh, received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, bore the sin of the world, received its judgment on the Cross, and rose from the dead, thereby saving us perfectly once and for all. The testimony of John the Baptist, the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus' words to Nicodemus about being born again, the Samaritan woman, the sick man at Bethesda, and the bread of life all point to the same One, and the Word is unfolded in light of the salvation accomplished by Christ Jesus. Those who believe in the work of salvation accomplished by Jesus, who is God, are born again of water and the Spirit and receive eternal life.

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Matthew (4-Volume Series)



The very first thing Jesus did as He began His public ministry was to receive baptism from John at the Jordan River. Through that baptism He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and after He was judged through the blood of the Cross, He rose again and fulfilled all righteousness. This book proclaims, in order, the baptism of Jesus, by which He fulfilled all righteousness; the promised salvation and the assurance of the remission of sins; Jesus, who called His disciples and gave the Sermon on the Mount; and a life lived by believing in the righteousness of God. Through the sermons of Pastor Paul C. Jong, which expound the genealogy and the birth, the worship of the wise men from the East, the temptation in the wilderness, the calling of the disciples, the Beatitudes, and the Lord's Prayer, it proclaims the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is the basis of the remission of sins, and the way of living by believing in that righteousness and praying to the Father.

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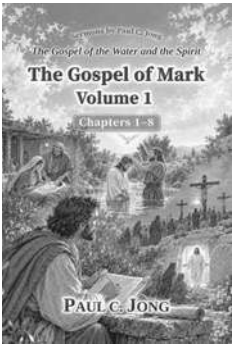
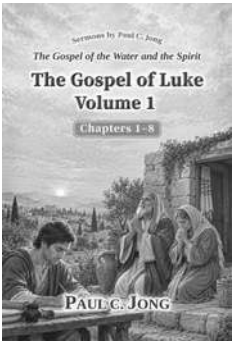
The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Mark (2-Volume Series)



Mark chapters 1–8 lead us to the confession, "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29). Christ means 'the Anointed One.' Jesus is the King who rules over us, the High Priest who remits sins, and the Prophet who preaches the truth of salvation. Jesus, the High Priest, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. I hope that, through the word of the Gospel of Mark, you will accept Jesus Christ, the Savior who is the King of kings, into your hearts.

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Luke (3-Volume Series)



Where does the assurance that we have received the remission of sins come from? This book, which follows Luke chapters 1–8, looks at the birth of the Savior and the beginning of His work, and finds the answer in the written word. Jesus, who called sinners, is the One who came to take those sins upon Himself. Because all the sins of the world were passed on once and for all to the body that received baptism from John, Jesus received the judgment for our sins on the Cross by shedding His blood, overcame death, rose again, and accomplished salvation. When we know and believe this work He did for us, the assurance that wavered according to the state of our hearts becomes grounded in the word.

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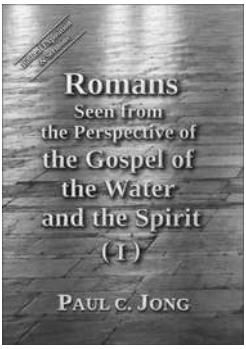
Paul C. Jong's Biblical Exposition & Sermons

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,

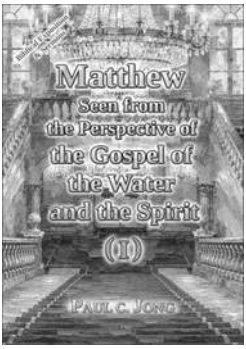
A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of 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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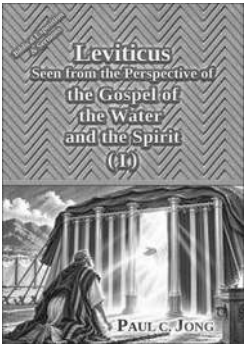
Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

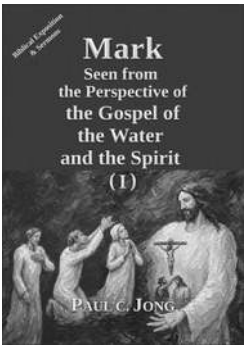


Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) examines how the Old Testament law of sacrifice prefigures the salvation of Jesus Christ, looking at the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering, as well as the 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.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

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.

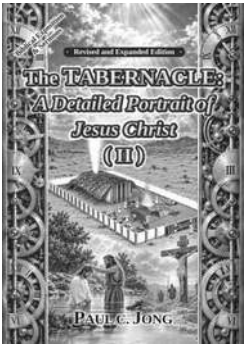
Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)

"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!

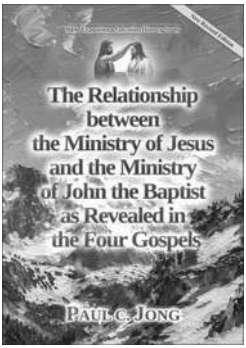
The TABERNACLE: A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (3-Volume Series)



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.

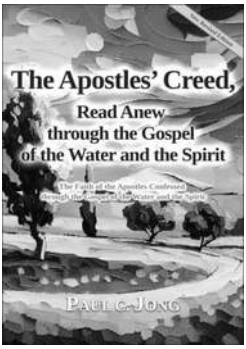
This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through 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]

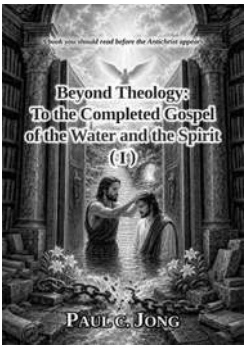


As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission 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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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.

Why did the woman who poured the fragrant oil love the Lord so much?

“When they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?” (Luke 7:42)

Through the story of two debtors, Jesus made clear the relationship between the remission of sins and love. Though the amounts of their debts differed, their situation of having nothing with which to repay was the same, so both of them needed the grace of having their debt canceled. We, too, cannot be at ease with the thought that we have committed fewer sins than others.

When Jesus received baptism from John to remit those sins, the sin of the whole world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, was passed on to Jesus once and for all. The Cross is the place where He received the judgment for all those sins in our place, and Jesus, who shed His blood and died there, rose again and became our Savior. The woman did not give the fragrant oil as payment to obtain the remission of sins; she showed through her love the grace she had received. If we believe this grace in our hearts, we, too, come to know why we love the Lord.

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