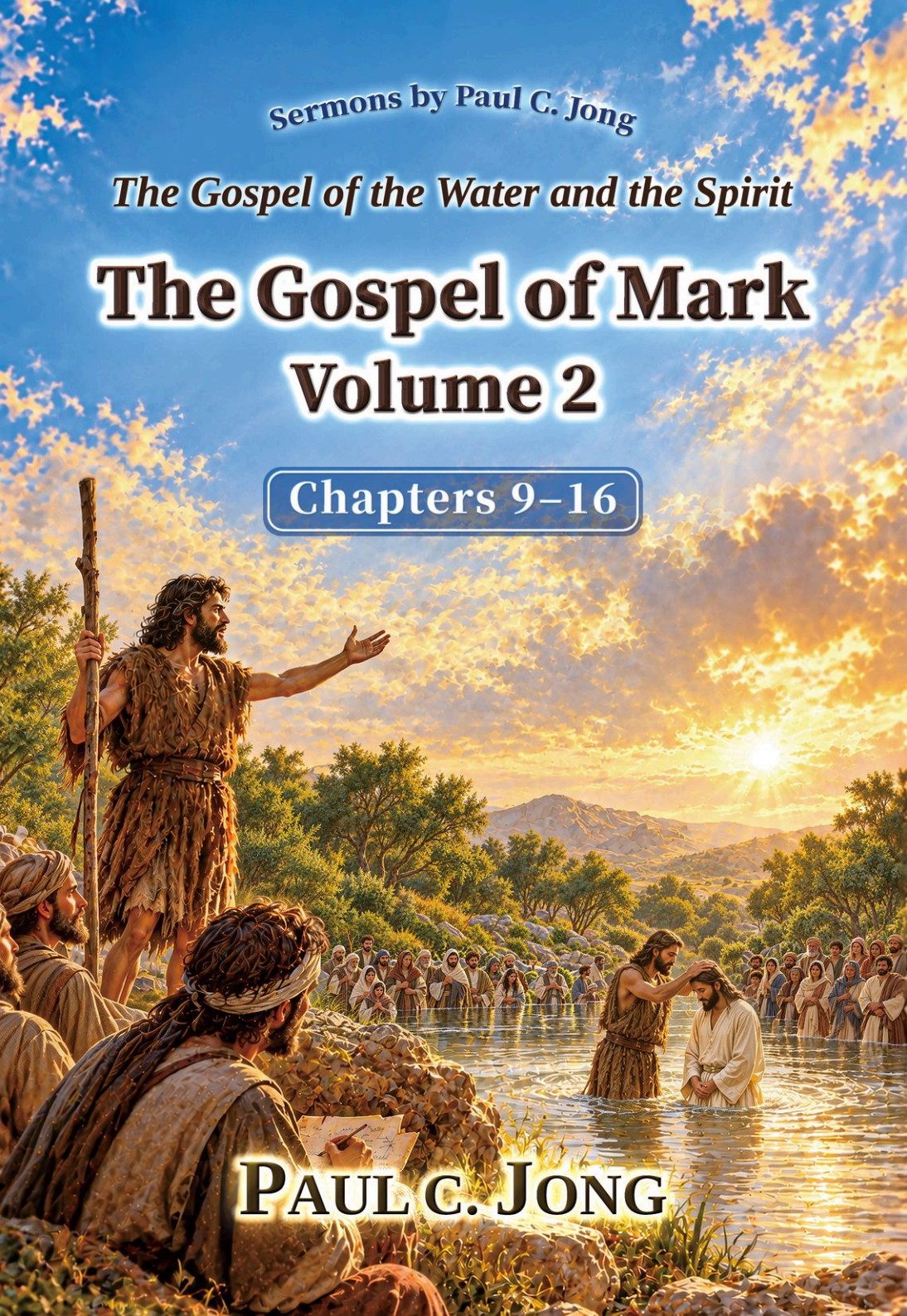
Sermons by Paul C. Jong

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

The Gospel of Mark
Volume 2

Chapters 9–16



PAUL C. JONG



“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45)

To the disciples who sought high positions, Jesus said that He would give His own life as a ransom. This means that He would pay the price of our sins in our place and save sinners. Through the baptism He received from John, the Lord had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, passed on to Him once and for all. Because He bore those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, being judged in our place, and He rose again from death. I hope that you will accept in your heart and believe that Jesus Christ, who came Himself as the ransom and as the sacrificial offering, has completely remitted all our sins and transgressions.

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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 Mark

Volume 2

Chapters 9–16

PAUL C. JONG

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

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The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Mark Volume 2
Copyright 2026 Hephzibah Publishing House
First Edition: 2026
Published: October 2026

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

ISBN 978-89-282-6355-4
Illustration: Young-ae Kim
Reviewed: Elizabeth
Translator: Elizabeth
Printed in South Korea
Cover art generated with AI and retouched

Hephzibah Publishing House
A Ministry of THE NEW LIFE MISSION
Seoul, Korea

♠ Website: https://www.bjnewlife.org
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

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

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

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

PAUL C. JONG

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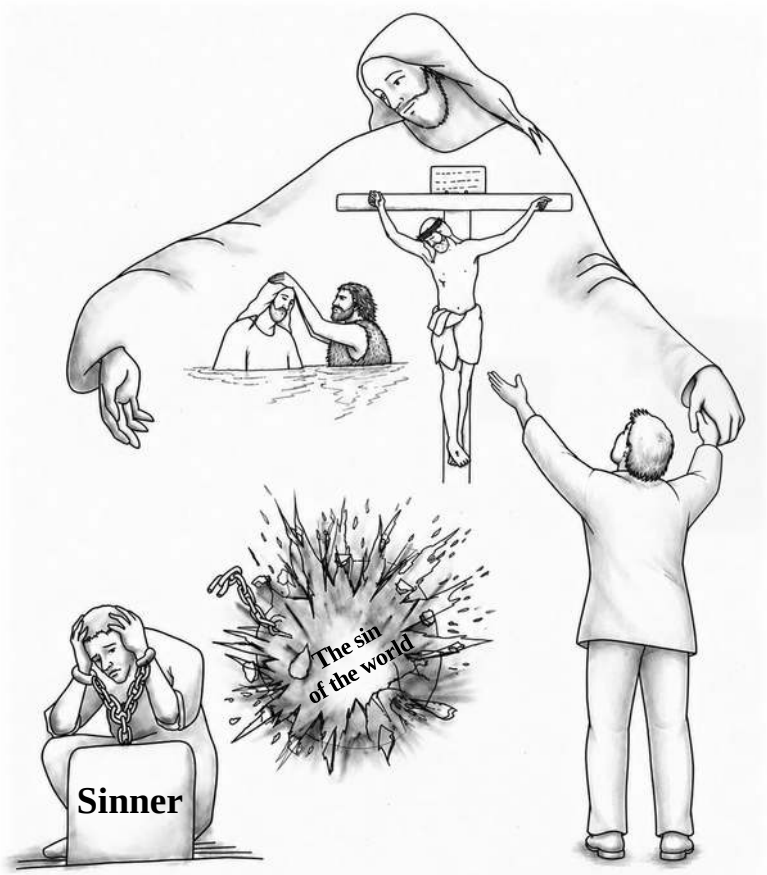

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Preface

Jesus, who came to serve and gave His life as a ransom

On the way going up to Jerusalem, Jesus told His disciples beforehand about the mockery, death, and resurrection He would undergo, but on that very way the disciples were seeking who would sit in the high places. At that time the Lord made clear the purpose for which He had come, as follows: *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45)*. The Lord's service was not a kindness bestowed from a high place; it was the act of giving His own life in order to save people who had to die because of sin. The word of Mark chapters 9 through 16 contained in this book tells of Jesus, who went this way to the very end, and of how a person who has been served by Him and has obtained life ought to live.

If so, in order to know the word about the ransom, we must first know how Jesus bore our sins. Jesus, who is God, came in the body of a man and received baptism from John, and through that baptism He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. The sins of a whole lifetime that we commit from birth until the day we die were also passed on to Jesus at that time. Because He bore those sins, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment that we had to receive, and He rose again from death and fully accomplished salvation. Therefore, we must not stop at feeling heartache as we think of the Lord's suffering, but must believe that He is the Savior who had our sins passed on to Him and was

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judged. This is because the person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart receives the remission of sins and new life.

Lay down the richness of your heart and receive salvation

A man who came running, seeking eternal life, answered that he had kept the commandments from his youth, but when he heard the word telling him to sell what he had, share it, and come and follow Him, *"he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Mark 10:22)*. However, it was not only his wealth that held him back. A heart full of the righteousness and rightness that he himself had kept, that is, the richness of heart, made him leave the Lord. So to the astonished disciples Jesus said, *"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27)*. Since God Himself has accomplished the salvation that man cannot achieve, we must cast away the heart that tries to pile up more of our own righteousness and believe in what God has done.

Blind Bartimaeus, whom He met on the same way, was different from that man. Even when people rebuked him and told him to be quiet, he *"cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'" (Mark 10:48)*. This is because a person who knows that he is pitiful seeks the Savior more than he cares about saving face. He threw aside his garment, came to the Lord, and his eyes were opened. The kingdom of God must be received like a little child. Those who enter it are people with poor hearts who seek the Lord's mercy rather than relying on their own righteousness.

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The disciples who followed the Lord also needed this poor heart. To them, who had seen the Lord's glory on the mountain, God said, *"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Mark 9:7)*. This is because the experience of having seen great things cannot take the place of the faith that hears the word of the Son. Peter, too, who had boldly declared that he would die with the Lord, denied the Lord three times that very night. If we make our own resolve the basis of salvation, on the day that resolve collapses we lose our hope along with it. Therefore, we must hear the word of the Lord, who knows even our weaknesses and bore all sins, and believe in the salvation He has already accomplished.

He received the judgment for our sins and opened the way to come to God

At the Passover table, Jesus said, *"This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many" (Mark 14:24)*. This promise was not given after He had confirmed the disciples' faithfulness to the end. Even though the Lord knew all about their betrayal, denial, and running away, He first made clear that He would give Himself up to save sinners. Therefore, we do not obtain the remission of sins by what we have offered; we receive salvation through the body and blood that the Lord gave up.

The Lord, who was deeply distressed in Gethsemane, accepted the cup of suffering according to the Father's will, and people condemned Him with false testimony. When Pilate released Barabbas and handed Jesus over to be crucified, the person who had sin was set free, and the One without sin went to the place of death. Human judgment was this unjust, but God did not simply let sin go by. Jesus, who had the sin of the world passed on to Him through His baptism, received the punishment

of that sin in our place. The reason He did not leave that place even at the mockery telling Him to come down from the Cross was also to pay the full price of our sins. So the reason we are saved freely is not that sin has no price, but that the Lord has paid that price in full.

When Jesus breathed His last, the word says, *"Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mark 15:38)*. It means that the Lord opened the way of coming to God, which had been blocked by sin, and that He did not leave it as a door we must open little by little by piling up good deeds. Therefore, we must not regard the price the Lord paid as insufficient just because we see our own faults. We should honestly acknowledge our wrongdoings, but we must place the basis of the remission of sins in the Savior, who was judged in our place.

The risen Savior gives rest and hope

The women who came to the tomb with spices heard the news, *"He is risen! He is not here" (Mark 16:6)*. The very Jesus who received the judgment for our sins on the Cross rose again from death. The promise He had given to the scattered disciples, *"But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee" (Mark 14:28)*, was also fulfilled just as it was; though the disciples' vows collapsed, the Lord's word did not collapse.

The risen Lord said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16)*. This is because what washed away our sins is the baptism that Jesus received from John, and the Cross was the punishment for those sins. When we believe this gospel, the heart that tried to wash away sins by endlessly making itself righteous finds rest. This is because the Lord has borne them all, even the sins I do not remember and the sins that will be revealed

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in the future. Just as the word says of what we ask for when we pray, *"Believe that you receive them" (Mark 11:24)*, we believe that we have received the salvation the Lord has already accomplished. And to the person who has received the remission of sins, God gives the Holy Spirit and makes him His child, so we can call God Father and tell Him even about today's difficulties.

"He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living" (Mark 12:27). One who is living before God is a person who has received the remission of sins and obtained new life, and this person has the hope that even his body will live again in the future. That is why, even when our flesh grows weak and we shed tears as we part from beloved saints, death is not our end. A person who knows this hope lives today's life preciously, yet does not regard the possessions and circumstances before his eyes as everything.

Serve the gospel with the life you have received

When He entered Jerusalem, the Lord had them untie and bring the colt that was tied, and told them to say, *"The Lord has need of it" (Mark 11:3)*. We, too, who had been bound in sin, have been set free like that colt and have become people who are used by the Lord. Because we know the grace of the Lord, who served us first, we can give up our own stubbornness and carry the Lord along. Like the Lord, who set a little child among the disciples who were arguing about who was the greatest and regarded the poor widow's two mites as precious, we, too, must regard the little ones as precious and preach the news of salvation to the souls that are still in sin.

People rebuked the woman who poured fragrant oil on Jesus' head, calling it a waste, but the Lord accepted it as a good work done in advance to prepare for His burial. To that woman, the Savior was more precious than the price of the fragrant oil. This is because, although the poor are always beside us, the time to serve the Lord is not always there. Therefore, we, too, must not put off serving until our circumstances become abundant, but must take part, with our hearts, prayers, time, and material possessions, in the work of the gospel being preached.

While teaching about the end of the world, the Lord said, *"And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations" (Mark 13:10)*. The rumors of wars and disasters are not the end but the beginning of disasters, so rather than having our hearts taken captive by those rumors, we must watch and carry out the work entrusted to us. This is the very work the risen Lord entrusted when He said, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15)*. We, who have been served by the Lord, who came to serve, now serve that gospel. I hope that everyone who reads these words will find rest through the remission of sins, rely on the living Lord in the hope of living again, and experience the joy of preaching this gospel to other souls. ✉

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CHAPTER

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Look to the kingdom that the Lord will show

< Mark 9:1 >

"And He said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.'"

The promise of the One who spoke of suffering

When we hear the word that there is suffering on the way of following Jesus, we come to ask where that way ends. Jesus had taught beforehand about His own death and His rising again, and He also said to His disciples, *"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34)*. However, the Lord did not leave His disciples standing before the word "suffering" and go away. He promised that among them there were some who would see the kingdom of God present with power before they died. Jesus, who allows suffering, also knows the glory that He will show His own people.

Following this promise, Peter, James, and John saw Jesus transfigured in glory on the mountain. It was not that they opened the door of heaven by their own strength; rather, Jesus took them up and caused them to see it. The kingdom of God is not a hope that people have made up, but the kingdom that Jesus Himself reveals. Therefore, our hope as those who follow the

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Lord is also not bound to the circumstances visible to our eyes now, but is based on who the Lord is and what He has promised.

Jesus promised, *"There are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power" (Mark 9:1)*. The disciples were not people who had already seen all the things that had not yet come to pass. Even so, having heard the promise the Lord made, they could wait for what He would reveal in the future. Faith has this waiting in it. It is not judging that only what is visible to us now is true, but trusting what the One who spoke will show.

The word that the kingdom of God comes with power cannot be turned into a promise that the disciples would gain power in the world. The way Jesus had taught beforehand was the way of denying oneself and following the Lord. The promise of glory does not cancel that way; rather, it makes us go that way to the end. The lowly place of serving the Lord's will is not a place where glory has been lost, but the place of believing in and following the Lord of salvation.

When suffering arises, we sometimes begin by doubting whether the way we first chose was wrong. Of course, difficulties that have arisen because of our own faults must be set right. But if we have met difficulty because we believe in and preach the gospel, we cannot abandon that faith merely because of the fact that there is difficulty. Only when we look to Jesus, who spoke of suffering and glory together, do we stop measuring the way of faith by today's loss alone.

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The power that washes away sins and the glory to be received in the future

As we look to that glory, what we must know first is how we enter that kingdom. Not everyone becomes a citizen of the kingdom of God merely on the grounds that the flesh is weak and toil is great. Our sins must be resolved before God. The law reveals sin, but making a greater resolution before the law that has revealed sin does not wash away that sin. We need the One who will save us, who are held captive by sin and death.

Jesus received baptism from John in order to accomplish that salvation. Through that baptism He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and the sins that each one of us commits throughout our whole lives are also included in all those sins. Jesus bore the sins that were passed on to Him, 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. The One who shows the glory of the kingdom of God is the Savior who, in this way, washes away sin from sinners and gives them life. A person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not obtain that kingdom by producing his own cleanness, but becomes a child of God through the righteousness that Jesus accomplished.

Therefore, the glory to be received in the future does not disappear because of our weakness today. Now our bodies grow weak, we toil, and at times we grow weary. But because Jesus has resolved the problem of sin and death, we who believe in this gospel have the hope of living together with the Lord. The glory He revealed on the mountain makes us look to the fact that a life of following the Lord does not end in futility. Our bodies and circumstances of today are not our eternal form. The Scriptures say, *"For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will*

be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:52). When the Lord comes, we will be changed in a moment and live in the Lord's kingdom with incorruptible bodies, spiritual bodies, whole bodies that do not get sick.

When we think of the glory the Lord has promised, we also come to see the limits of the flesh with different eyes. When we are tired we must rest, when we are sick we must receive care, and as we grow older we meet things we cannot do. We do not need to be ashamed of such limits and hide them, or push them into being evidence that we have no faith. The fact that our present bodies are weak and the promise that the Lord will give us glory in the future can be accepted together. Even today, as we live in weak bodies, our Savior does not change.

That we have received the remission of sins does not mean that all the toil of the body has already ended. We who believe in Jesus must also live on this earth, bump up against people, and work. Only, the heart that looks at toil has gained a new basis. Because the Lord has delivered us from sin and death, our present toil is not the whole of our existence, and the life we have received from the Lord continues even after this toil is over. This fact raises up the weary heart again.

The faith that waits for glory is also different from a heart that regards itself highly. Since the Lord will exalt us, there is no reason we must be exalted by others now in order to be satisfied. Rather than quarreling to be recognized first, we can regard as precious the toil of those who serve the gospel together with us. With the faith that we are people who will live with the Lord in the future, we can bear with one another's shortcomings and gratefully receive even small help.

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Believe the promise and walk today's path

This hope does not make trivial the work that must be done today. Rather, it becomes a reason to give our hearts again even to small toil. To a person who tries to complete the eternal kingdom by his own strength, every slow task looks like failure. But a person who believes in Jesus, who brings about that kingdom, asks the Lord for strength while carrying out the work entrusted to him. Even if the results are not great right away, there is no reason to give up the toil of serving the gospel.

How can we hold on to this hope in the place of daily life? Before we begin the work entrusted to us, we can look back on whether we are trying to prove ourselves by what we accomplish today, or trying to serve the grace we have received from the Lord. When we preach the gospel, too, we must not determine the value of our toil by the other person's immediate reaction alone, but must set our hearts on clearly making known to him the word that gives the remission of sins. This is because we regard as precious the work in which the Lord gives life to people.

Also, if you lack the strength to carry on today, tell that lack to the Lord and ask for the help you need. The Lord's promise is not a word to rely on only on days when strength overflows, but a word that holds us up on weary days as well. It is not that our faith is good only when we can do everything alone. When we acknowledge that we serve with the strength the Lord has given, we can work together with others and devote our whole hearts even to the small portion that we can do. A person who looks to the Lord's kingdom does not exaggerate his own ability, yet neither does he take lightly the work the Lord has entrusted to him.

Just as the disciples found it hard to hear when Jesus taught that *"the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31)*, we, too, easily forget our hope in the face of a hard path. At that time, remember today's promise. The Lord knows where He is leading His own people. Jesus, who delivered us from sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, leads us to the kingdom of glory. Let us walk the path given to us today with hearts that believe His promise. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Even if we have seen the glory, we must hear the word of the Son

< Mark 9:2–8 >

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!' Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves."

Peter, who tried to set up tabernacles

Peter saw the glory that appeared before his eyes and wanted to stay there. He said that he would build one tabernacle each for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. But the Scriptures make it clear,

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"Because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid" (Mark 9:6). The fact of having seen an amazing sight and having realized the meaning of that sight are different things. For us, too, the faith that hears the word of Jesus is needed before a heart that wants to treasure a special experience.

The word heard from the cloud turned the disciples' attention to the Son of God. From the cloud came a voice, saying, *"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Mark 9:7)*. God Himself declared that Jesus is His beloved Son and commanded them to hear Him. The appearance of Moses and Elijah was not a matter of setting Jesus up as one among many religious leaders. It was a matter of showing that the Savior whom the law and the Prophets had long pointed to is this very Son. So in the end, only Jesus was before the disciples. The Savior we must rely on is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

It was not that Jesus' clothes shone because the disciples praised Him. Jesus revealed before them the glory that He originally had. They could no longer confine the One who had usually gone about with them within the image of Him that they knew. We, too, may think of Jesus only as the One who answers our needs, and then try to fit His word to our own will. But to believe in the Lord is not to accept an image of Jesus that we ourselves have decided on, but to accept the Son of whom God has testified.

Seeing Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus, Peter proposed tabernacles for the three. But God did not command them to follow the words of the three alike; He told them to hear His beloved Son. The testimony of the law and the prophecy given in the Old Testament makes us recognize the Son of God. The representative of the law is Moses, and the mediator who connects the Old Testament and the New Testament between Moses and Jesus Christ is Elijah, that is, John the Baptist.

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Because John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus and passed the sin of the world on to Him, Elijah appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration together with Moses. If we say that we know much of that testimony and yet do not actually hear the salvation that Jesus accomplished, then even though we know the figures of the Bible, we have not reached the purpose of that word.

The record that the disciples were afraid also teaches us. In a fearful moment, we may try to steady our hearts by saying anything or starting some task. Peter, too, made the proposal to build tabernacles, but what was needed first was to listen. We, too, the more our hearts are shaken, must examine the word the Lord has spoken rather than hastily putting forward our own plans. Even zeal for the Lord needs time to learn His will first.

The Son washes away the sin that the law has revealed

The Gospel of John says, *"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17)*. The law given through Moses makes us know the holiness of God and our sins. When we set ourselves before the law, we cannot claim to be people who are clean even in heart. Nor does the problem end with knowing sin. To escape condemnation and draw near to God, we need the One who will actually wash away our sins. That is why the command God gave to hear the word of the Son points us to the way of life.

Jesus did not stop at being One who came to teach what more people must do in order to wash away their sins. When He began His public ministry, He received baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River, and through that baptism all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus once and for all. The sins that you

and I commit throughout our whole lives are included in that sin of the world. Jesus bore the sins He had thus taken upon Himself, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and thereby received the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. The gospel of the water and the Spirit conveys the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished to the person who trembled before the law that reveals sin. What we are to believe is not the degree of our own change, but this fact of salvation.

The whitened appearance of Jesus' clothes on the mountain was not a result that a person had produced by laundering. Likewise, the glory of the kingdom of God is not achieved by human ability. Nor is the remission of sins something we produce by polishing our own hearts ourselves. By believing in the salvation that Jesus accomplished, we have our sins washed as white as snow, become children of God, and look to the glory He will give. Because the Lord will also change our weak bodies, our present frailty does not become the end of our hope.

Only when we know the roles of the law and grace does the direction in which we hear the word also become clear. The law reveals our craving, falsehood, and hatred, and breaks down our claim to be righteous by ourselves. If at that time we try to hide again the sins that have been revealed, or to shrink them into small faults, we cannot rely on the Savior. Only when we acknowledge that there is no righteousness in us that can remove sin do we come to know why the salvation that Jesus accomplished is necessary. To know sin does not mean to stay in despair; it is what makes us seek the One who has washed away sin.

But if a person holds on only to the word that reveals sin and does not accept the word that accomplished salvation, he returns to the starting point every time he discovers a sin. He decides to resolve his sins one by one, but when another sin is revealed, he

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loses his assurance. Only when we believe the fact that Jesus bore all the sins of the world can we escape this repetition. We must know the scope of salvation, that the Lord bore even the sins we have not yet discovered.

To say that the Lord took sin upon Himself means something deeper than simply that He understands our wrongs. Because that sin was passed on to the Lord, the judgment of the Cross becomes the judgment in our place. Therefore, what matters more than whether our hearts are at ease today is what the Lord has accomplished. If we place the basis of the remission of sins on that fact, we do not deny our salvation even on days when our hearts are uneasy, and we can be corrected without hiding our wrongs.

Place the assurance of your heart in the word

God did not command the disciples to repeat the thrill on the mountain; He told them to hear the word of the Son. This is because even when the thrill fades and fear comes again, the salvation that Jesus accomplished does not change. Therefore, when your assurance of the remission of sins is shaken, rather than striving to revive your own feelings, accept the gospel of the water and the Spirit into your heart. That gospel clearly teaches us who resolved our sins and how.

Living by God's Word involves more than simply hearing it repeatedly. If we have heard that Jesus bore all our sins, we must accept in our hearts that the sins we actually commit, too, are included in that. This is because even one who can explain the gospel to others may be unable to believe it in the face of his own weakness. We must not set up a different condition of

salvation for ourselves alone, but must believe the fact that we, too, have had our sins washed away by the same grace.

When we look at those who live a life of faith together with us, too, we must take the same word as our standard. Just because shortcomings are visible in a person, we must not carelessly deny the remission of sins he has received from the Lord. We should give the exhortation that is needed, but remember that the ground that gives him life is the salvation of Jesus. Since none of us are people standing on our own righteousness, in the place where we preach the word, we must clearly make known the grace of the Savior rather than boasting of our own experience or maturity.

When we hear the word of the Son in this way, the heart that looks to glory also changes. Instead of considering that we are ahead of others because we have had a special experience, we come to give thanks to God, who has revealed the Savior to people who are lacking. The glory the Lord will grant is not a prize that makes us compete, but the hope that those who have been saved together look to. So even now we can take part with joy in helping one another and sharing the word.

After the cloud had lifted, it is written, *"Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves" (Mark 9:8).* What we need is not a tabernacle to stay in on the mountain, but the word we can hold on to anywhere. Let us hear the word of Jesus also in the place where we work and the place where we meet difficulties. Believe the word of the Savior who has made us clean, and look to the glory He will grant. The reason God has revealed the Son to us is so that we may know and believe in Jesus and live together with Him. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Can the Cross be rightly known without John's testimony?

< Mark 9:9–13 >

"Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. And they asked Him, saying, 'Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Then He answered and told them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.'"

The question that remained even after seeing the glory

To the disciples coming down from the mountain, Jesus gave the command that *"they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead" (Mark 9:9)*. The disciples had seen amazing glory, but they asked one

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another what it meant to rise from the dead. To know Jesus rightly, we must not remember only His radiant appearance, but must know why He would die and how He would rise again. Admiration that leaves out the content of salvation cannot deliver a person from sin.

The disciples also asked about the teaching that Elijah must come first. Jesus answered, *"Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt?" (Mark 9:12)*. God's promise cannot be accepted by picking out only the part about glory. Only when we know together the work of the servant whom God sent ahead of the Savior and the suffering the Savior would receive does the way of salvation become clear.

The silence Jesus set had a time limit. It was not that they were never to say anything forever; it was until He rose from the dead. The glory the disciples had seen had to be preached as the testimony of complete salvation after they came to know the Lord's death and resurrection. When we preach the work of Jesus, if we hold up only one scene prominently, people may see the power yet not know the way of the remission of sins. That is why we, too, must preach what the Savior did within that relationship.

The disciples kept the word they did not understand in their hearts and asked one another. The fact itself that there is something we do not know on the way of faith is not shameful. What matters is not to abandon the word by settling on an answer with our own thoughts. When we come to Jesus, ask, and hear His answer, we come to know the relationship between the word we heard first and the fact we are newly learning. When there are parts we do not understand as we hear the gospel, we, too, must learn by examining the written word together.

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The expectation that Elijah would come first and the record that the Son of Man would suffer were not two different plans. The witness whom God sent points to the Savior, and that Savior suffers for sinners. The fact that the witness who came first was not welcomed by people does not mean that the work of the Savior who came after him also fails. Jesus taught the disciples to understand the events according to God's promise rather than according to people's reactions.

The way of salvation that John the Baptist prepared

Speaking of John the Baptist, Jesus said, *"If you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14)*. The one who took on the work of Elijah who was to come is John the Baptist. John preached to people who had fallen into sin that they should turn back to God, and he testified of Jesus Christ. People who had come to know sin through the law of Moses needed the Savior who would resolve that sin. God sent John and prepared the way so that people would recognize and believe in Jesus. The word that Elijah comes first and restores all things refers to the work of completely changing a person who has fallen into sin, lost the image of God, and become a slave of the devil back into a child of God. God teaches us our sins through the law by means of Moses and causes those sins to be passed on to Jesus through John the Baptist, and Jesus bears those sins, dies on the Cross, and rises again, thereby saving us completely.

John's work did not end with crying out for repentance. As a descendant of Aaron the high priest, he gave baptism to Jesus in the Jordan River and thereby passed the sin of mankind on to Jesus, just as a priest of the Old Testament laid his hands on the

sacrificial offering and passed sin on to it. Through that baptism, Jesus bore all the sins of the world once and for all. Those sins include all the sins that each one of us commits from birth until death. Therefore, the suffering Jesus would undergo cannot be understood as the tragedy of one righteous man unrelated to sin. Because Jesus took our sins upon Himself, He receives the judgment for those sins in our place.

Jesus, who shed His blood and died on the Cross, accomplished that redemption and rose again from death. The very One who revealed glory on the mountain went the way of suffering in order to give life to sinners. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we hear and believe. When we know to whom John gave baptism and what Jesus received through that baptism, it becomes clear how the death on the Cross is connected to the remission of our sins.

Even when we know John's role, we must not switch the places of Jesus and John. John is not a man who himself bore the sin of the world in the place of others and died; he is a man who, following the work God entrusted to him, passed sin on to Jesus and testified of Him. Our faith reaches the Savior through the witness. The mediator between the Old Testament and the New Testament is John the Baptist, and without his role no one can know how Jesus had our sins passed on to Him. We must not stop at exalting the name or devotion of the witness, but must believe what Jesus, to whom he pointed, accomplished for us.

When we know that He received baptism from John, it becomes clear that the Cross of Jesus is an event that concerns us. If we think of Jesus only as One who died unjustly because of His righteous teaching, we may grieve in the face of that death, but we cannot know how our sins were resolved. But when we know that all our sins were passed on to Him, we come to believe that the judgment He received on the Cross is precisely the

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judgment in our place. Here is the reason we must know the baptism and the Cross together.

Furthermore, the resurrection does not leave this death as the end. Because Jesus received the judgment for sin in our place and rose again, we do not live a life of faith only with the heart of one who commemorates the dead. Today, too, we give thanks to the living Savior and rely on Him. Even when, because of sin, we are about to be bound to condemnation again, we can remember the fact that the One who saved us is alive, believe in the righteousness the Lord accomplished, and raise up our hearts.

Even if people reject it, the word is fulfilled

Jesus said, *"Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him" (Mark 9:13)*. That people did not welcome him does not make him not a servant sent by God. The fact that John was rejected is not a reason to throw away his testimony, but a reason to distinguish between people's evaluation and God's will. Jesus, too, would be treated with contempt, but through that suffering He saves us.

People's rejection also becomes a trial to the believing heart. When someone close to us ignores the gospel, or someone we have known for a long time does not understand, we may be shaken, wondering whether we have understood wrongly. At that time, we must remember the fact that the number of people cannot be the standard of truth. Even though people refused John's testimony, Jesus clearly acknowledged the work he had been entrusted with. We, too, must first examine the content of the word and place our faith in that word.

This does not mean, however, that we should hate everyone who opposes us and quarrel in a louder voice. Just as John's

work pointed to the Savior, we, too, must explain so that those who listen come to know Jesus. We can listen to what the other person does not know and what thinking he is stuck on, and clearly make known to him the basis of the remission of sins. A heart that firmly believes the truth and a heart that bears with people must go together. Because we believe in the One who gives salvation, we do not hastily try to make people submit.

Of John, the Scriptures say, *"This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe" (John 1:7)*. We ourselves who serve the gospel must also not forget our place as witnesses. If we consider that, because we have made it known, that person must follow our will, we end up binding to ourselves a soul that belongs to the Savior. Since Jesus saved that person through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, the purpose of our help must also lie in leading him to believe and follow the word of the Lord. When we keep this purpose, we do not lose the direction of our service by being shaken by people's reactions.

Therefore, we must not hold on only to pleasant words of glory, but must believe the fact of salvation that leads us to that glory. Acknowledge your own sins, and accept into your heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus, who received baptism from John, accomplished. Even after we have received the remission of sins, the basis on which we overcome our weakness is the same gospel. It is not keeping our hearts by establishing our own righteousness, but relying on the righteousness that Jesus actually accomplished. Do not take lightly the word of the witness whom God sent ahead, and stand by faith in Jesus Christ, to whom that testimony points. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Tell the Lord even about your heart that has no faith

< Mark 9:14–29 >

"And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. And He asked the scribes, 'What are you discussing with them?' Then one of the crowd answered and said, 'Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.' He answered him and said, 'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.' Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' And he said, 'From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.' Jesus said to him, 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with

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tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!' When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, 'Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!' Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, 'He is dead.' But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out?' So He said to them, 'This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.'"

The child who could not be raised up by argument

At the foot of the mountain there were a suffering child, disciples who had not been able to help him, and people who were disputing. The child's father said that he had brought his son to Jesus, but that the disciples could not cast out the demon. Many people had gathered and were talking, but the child's suffering continued. Jesus told them to bring the child to Him. It is the moment when it becomes clear to whom we must go when faced with a problem.

The father told Him that the child had suffered from childhood and had often been placed in danger of death. However, mixed into his words asking for help was a heart that doubted whether Jesus could do it. Jesus said, *"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23)*. It was not that Jesus could not solve it because His power was smaller than the father's circumstances. Jesus' word turned his eyes from his long-standing despair to the Savior.

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Jesus said, *"O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me" (Mark 9:19)*. What He did after rebuking them was to have the child brought to Him, so that rebuke did not end as words that drove the suffering person far away. Even while exposing their lack of faith, He opened the way for them to come to Him. We, too, when our shortcomings are pointed out by the word, must not hear that word only as a declaration of rejection. We must also hear His intention to make us lay down our wrong will and seek the Lord.

Even after he had come to Jesus, the child had severe convulsions. His coming before the Lord and the calming of the circumstances visible right before their eyes did not happen at the same moment. The father told the Lord his situation while still looking at the painful sight. We, too, while seeking help, easily judge that our coming to the Lord was in vain just because the difficulty keeps being seen. However, the more serious the circumstances become, the more we must see the Savior's authority as greater than those circumstances.

Jesus asked how long this had been happening, and the father spoke of what had been going on since childhood. The fact that the time of suffering had been long did not become a limit that the Lord could not solve. Concluding that there is no way to receive help because something has gone on for a long time is our own judgment. Just as the father did not hide his long-standing situation but told it, we, too, can tell the Lord the fears and failures that have long held us bound. The Lord is not One who demands a strength we have made up.

A plea that does not hide its lack

The father did not claim that his faith was sufficient. He cried out, *"I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)*. He did not come forward after examining his own heart and producing complete certainty; rather, he told even that lack to Jesus. Faith is not a matter of rating one's own heart highly, but of relying on the One who will help. We, too, must not make acknowledging our lack a reason for not coming to the Lord.

When Jesus commanded the demon, the demon came out. The child became like a dead person and many people said that he was dead, but Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up. People's judgment did not decide the child's end. The One who actually saved the child is Jesus. It was not that the father's cry produced some power; it was because the Jesus from whom he sought help had authority.

This distinction is needed in the matter of our sins as well. If, while acknowledging that sin is heavy, we try to erase it by our own resolve, our heart keeps being shaken. The One who solves sin is Jesus Christ. Jesus received baptism from John in the Jordan River at the age of thirty and bore all the sins of the world once and for all. The sins we commit throughout our whole lives were also passed on to Jesus at that time. Jesus, who bore those sins, received the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and He rose again from death. We receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is not boasting of the strength of our faith, but believing in the Savior who washed away our sins.

In the father's words asking for help with his lack of faith was contained the acknowledgment that by his own strength alone he could not fully rely on the Lord. He did not turn away, saying that he could go no further because he had doubts. He laid

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before the Lord the very heart that needed to receive help. This is different from the attitude of refusing the word with lack of faith as an excuse. It was a heart that, though lacking, sought help from the Lord and wanted to receive His word.

A person who hears of the remission of sins for the first time may also meet a similar difficulty. He hears that Jesus bore all sins, yet a sin that seems as if it will never be erased may come to his mind. At that time, rather than forcibly repeating the word "believe," he must examine the word to see whether there is any reason his sins should be left out of that sin of the world of which John the Baptist testified, saying, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*. If he knows the extent of the sins the Lord bore, he can believe, however heavy his own feelings may be, that his sins are not sins left outside the Lord's salvation.

The scene where He raised the child shows people's judgment and the Lord's doing together. In the place where many people said that he was dead, Jesus took the child's hand. We, too, may have our hearts bound by people's conclusions and fail to hear the Lord's word. Even if we have long heard that we cannot change and are useless, that cannot limit the authority of the Lord who gives the remission of sins. We must hear again, through the word of salvation, how the Lord has accepted us.

Rely on the Lord through prayer

The disciples asked why they had not been able to cast out the demon. Jesus taught them, *"This kind can come out by nothing but prayer" (Mark 9:29)*. The fact that they had long followed Him under the name of disciples did not take the place of faith that relies on the Lord. If we consider ourselves

sufficient when faced with the work entrusted to us, we no longer seek help. Prayer is acknowledging that God is the One we absolutely need, and actually seeking His help. We must humbly believe that we serve with the strength the Lord has given, and rather than our flesh working first, our heart must work.

The disciples' question shows what we must learn in the place of failure. They did not pass by as if nothing had happened, but asked why they had not been able to do it. When we are blocked while serving the Lord's work, we, too, need the same honesty. Rather than blaming someone and only saving our own face, we must examine whom we relied on and with what heart we worked. When we do not hide our failure but learn from it, our next service can begin from a place of relying on the Lord even more.

Prayer is not a method by which power is certain to come if we say certain words for a long time. Jesus led His disciples to rely on God. Knowing that we cannot change the heart of the person entrusted to us, we must ask God to help him realize the word of salvation. We can preach the gospel clearly, asking for the wisdom we need and also receiving the help of those who will serve together with us. A person who prays does not lean only on his own experience, but looks to the living Savior to work.

We must not be absorbed only in arguments when faced with a suffering person. Saying what is wrong is also necessary, but it must be followed by actually helping that person come to the Lord and hear the word. Listen to the other person's difficulties, pray together with him, and give him the help he needs. Since the One who raises people up is Jesus, we must labor to lead people to Him. This is the direction our service must learn from this passage.

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We, too, who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, cannot make our own strength the basis of salvation or the power for our work. We must rely on the righteousness Jesus accomplished and pray for the people and the work entrusted to us. Do not measure the Lord's power while gazing for a long time only at the difficulty before your eyes, but tell Him honestly what you lack. Just as the father told Him even about his heart that had no faith, we, too, can seek help from the Lord. Looking to Jesus, who raised the child up in the midst of the disputing crowd, let us ask for the faith and strength that we, too, need today. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The death and resurrection a disciple must learn first

< Mark 9:30–32 >

“Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. For He taught His disciples and said to them, ‘The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.’ But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.”

What He made known before the attention of the people

As Jesus passed through Galilee, He did not want to make His doings known. It was because He was teaching His disciples. More than gathering many people, there was a word that the disciples absolutely had to know now. It was the word He spoke: *“The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day” (Mark 9:31)*. Even the disciples, who had watched at His side Jesus doing marvelous works, needed to learn the meaning of that death and resurrection.

However, the Scripture records, *“They did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him” (Mark 9:32)*. The fact that they had long been at His side was not proof that they had understood every word. We, too, must examine whether we

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actually know and believe the words of the gospel that we are used to hearing. If we have heard the fact that Jesus died, we must clearly know for whose sins He died; and if we have heard the word that He rose again, we must clearly know whether we believe that He is our Savior. We must not bury the questions about salvation in our hearts and maintain only the outward appearance of faith.

This was not the first time Jesus taught about His death and resurrection. The disciples heard again the word they had heard before. This is because hearing something once does not mean that its meaning fully settles in the heart. In particular, a word that differs from one's own expectations can be heard with the ears while its meaning is not accepted. We, too, if we hold the thought that only the path we want will open if we believe in Jesus, find it hard to properly learn the work of the Lord, who accomplished salvation through suffering.

The fact that teaching the disciples came before gathering the attention of the people is also precious. Seeing a ministry that becomes known to many people, we easily think that it is the greatest success. However, the gospel does not become clear through an increase of disciples who do not know the Savior's will. Jesus made those who went about with Him know the salvation He would accomplish. We, too, must think of gathering many people and of rightly explaining the meaning of salvation to one soul as distinct things.

The disciples did not understand, yet they were afraid even to ask. The passage does not explain all the reasons they were afraid. It only shows that a word they did not understand remained in their hearts. We also have such moments. A person who has long lived a life of faith may hesitate over whether it is all right to ask such a thing, or may find it hard to ask again about something he has already said he knows. But knowing the facts

of salvation clearly is more important than appearing to people as someone who knows.

The one who teaches also has a responsibility. He must not think that the other person has understood everything just because he has preached a familiar word once. He must listen to what the other person has understood and where he feels difficulty. For instance, even if the listener has heard the explanation that the baptism Jesus received from John was the work of bearing the sin of the world, he may not know whether all his own sins are included in that sin. Even while speaking of the Cross, he may fail to connect that death to the judgment received in his place. The labor of explaining such things step by step is needed.

The judgment He received because He took our sins upon Himself

It was not because Jesus had sin that He was delivered into the hands of men. To save sinners, Jesus received baptism from John in the Jordan River at the beginning of His public ministry, and through that baptism He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. Here lies the reason John cried out when he saw Jesus, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*. The sins each one of us commits throughout our whole lives are also included in the sins Jesus took upon Himself at this time. Therefore, Jesus' death is not an event separate from our sins. He who bore our sins went to receive the judgment for sin in our place.

Jesus bore that judgment by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and He rose again from death just as He had said. People killed Jesus, but they could not bring down His work of

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salvation. Look at the fact that Jesus taught in advance not only His death but also His rising again. The Lord was not dragged away without knowing; He went knowing what He Himself would undertake in order to give us life. For those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, Jesus' atonement is the certain basis of the remission of sins.

In the words that He would be delivered into the hands of men is contained the actual suffering the Lord would receive. Jesus is not One who explained suffering from a distance and then told only the people to endure it; He is the One who spoke in advance of His own being killed. In the work of saving us there is the sacrifice the Lord Himself undertook. The fact that we receive the remission of sins freely does not mean that this salvation was accomplished as a light matter. We must know the weight of the judgment Jesus bore and give thanks.

Furthermore, the Lord did not stop at the word that He would be killed. He taught together with it that He would rise again in three days. Even at the moment when the disciples did not yet understand, the Savior spoke knowing what lay beyond death. Because He rose again as He promised, Jesus' death is not an event that ended in defeat. The Lord, who received the judgment for sin in our place, lives as the Savior of those who believe. Therefore, we must not look only at the scene of suffering and think that the Lord's power has vanished.

When we know the two facts of salvation together, our faith does not lean to one side. If we think only of the death, we may remain in sorrow and guilt; and if we speak only of the power of the resurrection without knowing the atonement, the basis on which our sins were solved becomes blurred. The Lord bore our sins and died, and He rose again from death. We must not pick only the parts of Jesus' work that we like, but believe the whole of the salvation He accomplished for us.

Therefore, our remission of sins does not depend on how strong a heart we have today. The object of faith is not our own resolve but the living Jesus Christ, who took our sins upon Himself through His baptism and received the judgment for those sins. Each time our weakness is exposed, we must know this salvation more clearly. This does not mean that we should take sin lightly; it means that when we condemn ourselves because of sin and draw back, we should return in faith to Jesus, who atoned even for that sin.

Lay down the heart that pretends to know, and learn

Even after learning the gospel, we need to hear that grace more clearly. It is not that the facts of salvation are lacking and need to be supplemented. It is because our hearts rely more on our own feelings and circumstances than on those facts. When we hear the word again after making mistakes and becoming discouraged, we come to know that the Lord's salvation is far wider and more complete than we had thought. Growth in faith lies not in boasting that we have become strong, but in relying on the Savior more clearly.

A heart that does not avoid questions also helps the relationships of those who live a life of faith together. When we honestly say what we do not know well, others, too, can lay down the burden of pretending to know. We are not people gathered to test one another's knowledge, but people who together enjoy the life we have received from the Lord. We must treasure the time of asking about the word, explaining it, and looking up again the parts we lack. When our faith regarding

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salvation becomes clear in this way, we can also preach the gospel accurately to others.

Ask yourself today. Is it clear in your heart when and how Jesus bore your sins, and who received the judgment for those sins? The answer does not lie in how well you will do from now on. It lies in Jesus, who received baptism from John, saying, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15),* and accomplished the atonement on the Cross. Because He rose again, I believe in the living Savior. It is important to receive as your own salvation the word the Lord repeatedly taught His disciples.

Let us, too, treasure the word Jesus taught His disciples privately. Do not pass over what you do not understand while pretending to know; hear the word and learn. The Lord makes the facts of salvation known to His own people. The faith that knows the Savior who died and rose again for us must stand at the center of our faith. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Whoever receives one little child receives the Lord

< Mark 9:33–37 >

"Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, 'What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?' But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.' Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, 'Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.'"

The silence of the disciples who sought to be exalted

When Jesus asked, *"What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" (Mark 9:33)*, the disciples kept silent. It was because they had argued with one another over who was the greatest. Jesus had taught about His death and resurrection, but the disciples were measuring who was great and who was

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small among themselves. Even into the steps of following Jesus, a heart that seeks to exalt itself can enter. Our craving does not disappear by itself just because we say that we are doing the Lord's work.

Jesus called the twelve disciples and said, *"If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35)*. He instead made the disciples, who had been looking for people to place beneath themselves, see the people they were to serve. What is precious in the kingdom of God is not the power to press others down, but the heart that cares for people according to the Lord's will. Therefore, the more a person has in office or experience, the more he must not make it grounds for being honored, but accept it as the responsibility to look after the people entrusted to him.

That the disciples kept silent means that it was hard for them to say before the Lord exactly what they had talked about. When they were talking with one another they regarded it as important, but when Jesus asked, that heart was exposed. We, too, hear again before the word the complaints and comparisons that we took for granted when exchanging them among people. At that time, rather than defending ourselves, we must listen to what the Lord is correcting. Through His question, the Lord gives us the opportunity to acknowledge our hidden craving and learn.

Jesus sat down, called the disciples, and taught them about serving. Instead of judging for them who was the furthest ahead, He changed the direction of the person who wanted to be first. With a heart that is satisfied only when there is someone lower than oneself, one cannot serve all people, and even when serving, one ends up weighing whether the other person acknowledges him. The Lord taught the responsibility of caring for people, free from that calculation. One cannot follow the Lord's will by merely attaching a religious name to the desire to be exalted.

Long experience of working in the church can be a precious help. It is because such a person knows what work is needed and can guide those who have newly come. However, if one makes experience a right that guarantees one's own position, one comes to regard those who are newly learning as a burden. One may find it bothersome when they ask questions, and may think that they are disregarding him when they do things differently from his way. The experience the Lord has given must be used not to press down the other person, but to help him stand in faith.

Only when we know the grace by which He first accepted us can we serve

If we understand this serving as a way to build up our own righteousness, it becomes yet another competition. This is because one can keep being exalted in heart while boasting of who has lowered himself more. We must first know what grace we have received. We were people who could not solve our sins, but Jesus Himself bore our sins in order to give us life. When John gave baptism to Jesus in the Jordan River, all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus once and for all, and the sins of our whole lives were also included in them.

Jesus, who bore all those sins, received the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and He rose again from death. We who have become children of God by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are not people who were accepted on our own qualifications. If we know that grace, we cannot push others away by demanding of them a perfection that we ourselves do not have. Treating a person the Lord has accepted as one who belongs to the Lord is the service worthy of the salvation we have received.

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Think about what the Savior saw when He accepted us. We were not saved because we sinned less than others. Because we had sins that we could not wash away by ourselves, the Lord Himself bore them. The promise He gave, *"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)*, was fulfilled not by our qualifications but by the Lord's work. If we forget this fact, before we know it we judge others with the thought that we are better than they are. However, if we remember the basis of our salvation, we come to know that we ourselves do not have the perfection we demand of others.

Knowing grace does not mean covering over everything that must be taught and corrected. A person who has received a child teaches him what is necessary and watches over him so that he does not go the wrong way. Only, the purpose of that labor does not lie in showing one's own authority. It lies in helping the other person believe the Lord's word and live by it. Even when the same words are spoken, if this purpose differs, the weight the listener receives differs. Even when rebuking, we must not lose the heart that seeks to give life to the soul.

The remission of sins the Lord has bestowed is not a share that we compete with one another to take. When one person enjoys more grace, the grace that goes to another does not decrease. Therefore, we can rejoice when another person realizes the word and takes part in serving. Without regarding his growth as something that threatens our position, we can accept it with the joy of gaining a fellow worker with whom to serve the Lord together. The heart that believes in grace changes the heart that contended for rank in this way.

Treasure one little child

Jesus set one little child in the midst of them and took him in His arms. And He said, *"Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me" (Mark 9:37)*. When the disciples were discussing their own rank, the Lord showed them one person they had to receive. Serving does not exist only in words that dream of great things. It is revealed in how we treat the small and weak person before us right now.

If we first look at how much the other person exalts us, we easily pass by a small person. But when we receive him in Jesus' name, we come to think of how the Lord regards him rather than of the gain we will get through him. That is why the labor of helping, teaching, and waiting for a person whose faith is young or who does his work clumsily is also precious. That is not a favor reluctantly granted to a person who lacks ability, but a matter of serving the Lord.

In the act of Jesus taking the child in His arms, actual receiving appears. He did not keep the child at a distance and merely say that he was important; He brought him near. We, too, may say that we treasure the small person, yet in reality keep putting it off on the grounds that we are busy. The labor of listening to him, explaining what he does not know, and preparing a place to be together with him is needed. Receiving is revealed in not leaving the other person pushed aside and alone in the place he has been given.

Furthermore, Jesus connected receiving one child with receiving Himself and the One who sent Him. This means that the attitude with which we treat a small person is not a trivial matter unrelated to the Lord. It is because our doing good to a brother or sister is exactly the same as our doing good to Christ.

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That brother or sister is one of the Lord's people, not a stranger. If we regard only conspicuous work as serving the Lord, we miss such words. The Lord also knows the hand that helps a weak person in a place where no one takes notice. If we have the faith that He receives it, we can serve even without people's praise.

Think about the people who have come into our gathering today. Have you not pushed someone to the back on the grounds that he does not speak well and is not used to expressing his faith? Have you not closed your heart because no one recognizes what you have done? Remembering the grace by which the Lord first accepted us, we can open our hearts to one person. In letting him hear the gospel he needs and giving him time to learn, we come to practice the service of the last place that the Lord taught.

We are not people gathered to gain the evaluation of being great. We are people who believe in and follow Jesus, who accepted us through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Lay down before the word the heart that pushed a brother away in order to keep your own position. Let us treasure and accept the small person the Lord has entrusted among us. Jesus receives the hand with which we serve him as something done to Himself. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another

< Mark 9:38–50 >

"Now John answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—where "Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched." For

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everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.'"

Look at the Lord's will rather than whether they follow us

The disciple John told Jesus that they had forbidden a man who did not follow them from casting out demons in the name of Jesus. Jesus said, *"Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me" (Mark 9:39)*. What the disciples saw first was whether someone followed their group, but Jesus did not let them rashly stop a person who was working in His name. When we deal with people, we, too, must not put how close they are to us ahead of the Lord's will.

We must remember this word also when we meet a person who does not yet fully know the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Acknowledging his insufficient understanding as right is different from giving him the opportunity to hear the truth and waiting. If we hastily turn even a person who does not oppose us into an enemy, our heart to preach the gospel to him also closes. A person who has learned the heart of the Savior preaches the truth clearly, and yet is patient for a long time so that that soul may hear the word.

Jesus remembers even a cup of water given to a person who belongs to Christ. Though it looks like a small help, it is because it was a deed done knowing to whom the person being helped belongs. Therefore, do not only count the shortcomings of a fellow believer, but first see the fact that he belongs to the Lord.

With a heart that values only those who do their work well, we cannot know the service of which the Lord spoke.

John may have spoken regarding what he had forbidden as a good deed, but Jesus' answer corrected that standard. It means that we must not judge a person to be one who opposes the Lord merely on the ground that he does not follow us. We, too, at times judge people by the standard of only the gatherings and ways we know. We must watch ourselves so that we do not put the order familiar to us ahead of what the Lord has said. Discerning the truth is necessary, but that discernment must not come from a heart that wants to enlarge its own side.

When we deal with a person who does not yet know the gospel, we must also remember the fact that he needs time to hear. We, too, were not people who knew everything from the beginning. Because someone explained the word and waited for us, we came to know the remission of sins. If we conclude that the other person is one who opposes us just because he asks questions or cannot accept it all at once, we ourselves narrow the way to preach the word of salvation. Thinking of how the Lord taught us, we must continue to give the explanation that is needed.

The weight of the sin that brings down a little one

The Lord sternly warned, *"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea" (Mark 9:42)*. While we rejoice that our words have won in an argument, the other person may fall from faith; therefore, even when there is something to exhort, we must have a heart that seeks to save him and set him upright. We must

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not regard an attitude that uses weakness to press down on or despise a person as a right of our office. Jesus does not take lightly the act of harming a little one who belongs to Him.

The word that follows about the hand, the foot, and the eye also does not let us take sin lightly. It is better to throw away one's own benefit and desires than to lose everlasting life while clinging to them. Yet this warning must not be turned into an act of harming the body. Here the hand is planning evil, the foot is putting that plan into action, and the eye is the heart. In our hearts, two kinds of thoughts always rise up, the thoughts of the Spirit and the thoughts of the flesh, and this word means that we should stop planning evil, moving along that way, and justifying the cravings of the heart, and should choose and follow the side that pleases God. The reason Jesus spoke of the fire that is not quenched is to make us fear that way of judgment and turn back.

A warning strong enough to speak of the hand, the foot, and the eye reveals what we must value. We now regard very highly the gain we hold in our hands, the way we want to go, and what looks good to our eyes. But if we refuse the word of God in order to keep them, we are turning away from the life that is more precious. The Lord places immediate satisfaction and eternal life side by side and clearly teaches what we must follow. We must not block the opportunity to turn our hearts with our own stubbornness.

Cutting off wrong thoughts must also be concrete in actual life. When a plan to use a person rises up, we must stop that plan instead of wrapping it in fine words. If we have repeated words that wound a fellow believer, we must acknowledge why we said those words and correct them rightly. Such turning back is not a way of harming the body or punishing oneself, but a matter of changing the direction of the heart and conduct that have gone

against the word. Because we value the life the Lord has given, we do not lightly follow the way of sin.

Do not make the grace that washed away sins an excuse for rebellion

Paul wrote, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23)*. The Lord did not give this warning because He wanted us to come to judgment. It was precisely to deliver us from that judgment for sin that Jesus received baptism from John. Because He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all through that baptism, the sins we commit throughout our whole lives with our hearts and conduct were also passed on to Jesus. By bearing those sins and shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, Jesus received the judgment in our place and rose again from death. The gospel of the water and the Spirit conveys the remission of sins that was actually accomplished in this way.

A person who believes in this grace returns to the gospel and is reconciled with God when his wrongs are exposed. But to put forward the claim that one has been saved and stubbornly insist on refusing the word of God to the end and following only evil desires is not faith that obeys that grace. The Lord warns against such obstinacy, and He said that He judges a person who does not turn back to the end according to the written word. Although we do not pay the price of sin with the amount of our good deeds, we cannot despise the warnings of the Savior while claiming to believe in Him who took our sins upon Himself. Acknowledging one's shortcomings and turning back is clearly different from claiming rebellion as if it were a right.

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Even after we receive the remission of sins, an evil heart still shows itself in our flesh. There is no reason to doubt the salvation the Lord accomplished because that heart has shown itself. It is because the Lord has already borne even that sin. Although the Lord died on the Cross only once and rose again only once, the efficacy of the baptism He received from John remains forever, so that whenever we do wrong as we live, it reaches even that sin. However, that does not mean that we can regard following that heart as a right of a saved person. A person to whom grace is clear does not hide the wrong that has been exposed, but acknowledges it and turns toward the word.

A person who examines himself rightly does not rashly become strong in the face of the weakness of others. It is because he knows the fact that he, too, stands by the same grace. When we point out a brother's wrong, we must examine whether we hope that he will stand again in faith before God, or whether we want to show that our words were right. The former leads him to hear the word together with us and find a way to recover, but the latter easily discourages the other person more deeply. We must learn the heart with which the Lord protects the little ones.

A person who has salt in his heart brings about peace

Before the word that everyone will be seasoned with fire, no one can act as if he were a person unrelated to the Lord's judgment. Jesus then said, *"Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another" (Mark 9:50)*. The role of salt is to keep things from rotting. Just as fish and vegetables do not rot when they are pickled in salt, our hearts and faith also do not rot when

they are pickled in the word of the Lord with the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Only when we keep that word in our hearts can we discern the thoughts that corrupt our hearts. Following everything that comes to mind is not freedom. Keeping the word of salvation in our hearts like salt and sifting our thoughts by that word is the life of faith.

Just as salt that has lost its flavor cannot do its role, if we push the word of salvation out of our hearts, our standard for dealing with people also easily becomes blurred. If we think only of our own benefit, we come to speak of peace while demanding concessions only from others. First we must remember Jesus, who bore the sins of all of us. When we know that the fact that we believe together in the grace He has given is greater than our disputes, we can listen first and acknowledge our wrongs. Peace is not a matter of hiding the truth, but a matter of setting our hearts right before the same word of salvation.

Let us turn our hearts with this gospel also when we deal with fellow believers. Since all of us are people who have had our sins washed away by the grace of the Lord, there is no reason to trample on one another's shortcomings. Correct wrongs before the word, help the weak, and give those who have not yet heard the opportunity to hear the gospel. Let us accept the warning the Lord gave us because He loves us, and live at peace with God and at peace with our brothers. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

The transformation that those washed as white as snow will receive

< Mark 9:1–50 >

"And He said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.' Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!' Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. And they asked Him, saying, 'Why do the

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scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Then He answered and told them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.' And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. And He asked the scribes, 'What are you discussing with them?' Then one of the crowd answered and said, 'Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.' He answered him and said, 'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.' Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' And he said, 'From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.' Jesus said to him, 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!' When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, 'Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!' Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came

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out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, 'He is dead.' But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out?' So He said to them, 'This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.' Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. For He taught His disciples and said to them, 'The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.' But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him. Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, 'What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?' But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.' Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, 'Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.' Now John answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around

his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—where "Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched." For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.'"

What He showed on the Mount of Transfiguration

Mark chapter 9 begins with the word that there are some standing here who will see the kingdom of God present with power. And after six days, Jesus took three disciples, went up on a high mountain, and was transfigured before them. His clothes became whiter than any launderer on earth could whiten them. People call this event the event of the Mount of Transfiguration. But this event does not end with the fact that Jesus alone was transfigured. As the word says, *"Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18)*, He showed that a person who believes in Jesus Christ has his sins washed away as white as snow and becomes a child of God, and that just as Jesus was transfigured, we, too, are transformed in the same way.

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Our bodies now are imperfect. They get sick, grow old, and decay. But when the Lord comes, we will be changed in a moment, and what is corruptible will put on what is incorruptible. We who have received the remission of sins will also live in the Lord's kingdom in such bodies in the future. Therefore, while looking at our present weak bodies, we must not belittle even the future that has been granted to us.

But how do we receive such a transformation? The disciples saw it with their eyes, but they did not yet know by what means one reaches that transformation. Peter said that they should build three tabernacles, but the Scripture makes clear that he was greatly afraid and did not know what to say. So, on the way down the mountain, the Lord taught the disciples about Elijah, who had appeared there. We are transformed through faith by knowing what Moses, Elijah, and Jesus did.

Moses, the representative of the law, and Elijah, the mediator

The representative of the Old Testament is Moses. Moses brought the people of Israel as far as the Jordan River, from where the land of Canaan could be seen, and had them look at that land, but he himself died without crossing the Jordan River. The law is the same. The law teaches us sin and works only up to the point of telling us that we therefore must go to Jesus Christ. When we do not examine our hearts, we think we live fairly rightly, but before the word of God we come to acknowledge the sin that is in our thoughts and deeds. But knowing sin does not mean that sin has been washed away. Moses cried out the law, but the result was that everyone fell into sin and had to suffer wrath. The law goes only that far.

Then why did Elijah appear together with Moses, and not Moses alone? The disciples, too, wondered about this and asked why the scribes said that Elijah must come first. Jesus said that Elijah had already come, but people did to him whatever they wished. In the Gospel of Matthew, He said that *"he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14)* and pointed to John the Baptist. The mediator who connects the law and Jesus Christ, the Old Testament and the New Testament, is none other than John the Baptist. After crying out to the people to return to God, he gave baptism to Jesus and passed the sin of mankind on to Him, and testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*. When he had finished all that work, he was martyred and departed.

John the Baptist is the one who passes the sin of mankind on by giving baptism, and Jesus is the One who came to have that sin passed on to Him. By receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all. The sins we commit throughout our whole lives are also within that sin of the world. Since the wages of sin is death, Jesus, who bore that sin, shed His blood and died on the Cross just as the sacrificial offering of the Old Testament was killed before the altar of burnt offering, and He rose again from death and is now at the right hand of God the Father. A person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit has his sins washed away as white as snow. To say that one simply believes without knowing what John the Baptist did to Jesus is not faith but superstition. Only when we know can we believe.

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Restoration is regaining the image of God

Jesus said that Elijah comes first and restores all things. Mankind was made in the image of God, but fell into sin, lost that image, and became servants of the devil. It is God who does the work of changing this back into the image of God. God gave the law through Moses to teach us our sins, passed the sin of mankind on to Jesus Christ through John the Baptist, and had Jesus Christ, who bore that sin, judged on the Cross. In this way He has completely transformed us and made us children of God. God did not do this work in secret so that no one would know it, but made it so that anyone who fears God and whose heart is prepared can know it. The transformation He showed on the Mount of Transfiguration is the result that this salvation will bring.

That is why, when coming down from the mountain, Jesus told them not to speak of what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead, and reminded them of what is written, that the Son of Man would suffer many things and be treated with contempt. The very One who had shown His glory spoke of suffering. That suffering is the judgment He receives because of the sin of the world that was passed on to Him through His baptism. The glory of the transformation and the suffering of the Cross are two sides of one salvation. Because He had sin passed on to Him, He died on the Cross, and because He rose again from death, He can transform us.

Just as people did to John the Baptist whatever they wished at that time, today, too, there are many who say they believe in Jesus without knowing what John the Baptist did. We who have received the remission of sins first are the ones who relay the gospel to them, like John the Baptist. When you preach the gospel, whether or not the other person understands, tell him

clearly what John the Baptist did, and look up the Bible verses beforehand and read them to him. It is doing the work entrusted to us with the heart with which John the Baptist said, *"He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30)*.

That is how precious it is to enter into eternal life

At the end of the chapter, Jesus said, *"It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched" (Mark 9:45)*. It means that the transformation we will put on in a moment when the Lord comes is so precious that it is worth losing even our hands and feet on this earth. He tells us not to leave as they are the hand that plans evil, the foot that puts it into action, and the eye that is that heart. The end of the way of living to the end only according to the desires of the flesh without believing what God has done is destruction. A person who has been washed as white as snow turns back from that way because he knows how precious it is to enter into eternal life.

We are people who, though lacking now, stand firm. We live like this now, but when the Lord comes, we will be transformed to be like the Lord. Therefore, let us humbly serve with the strength the Lord has given, preach the gospel by faith, and continue doing so until the end of the age. We who know sin through the law of Moses and believe that Jesus bore the sin John the Baptist passed on to Him, died, and rose again are those who have been washed as white as snow. Let us believe in the Lord, who showed us that transformation, and walk today's road. ✉

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Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

Do not despise a person whom the Savior has accepted

< Mark 9:1–50 >

"And He said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.' Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!' Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. And they asked Him, saying, 'Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Then He answered and told them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that

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He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.' And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. And He asked the scribes, 'What are you discussing with them?' Then one of the crowd answered and said, 'Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.' He answered him and said, 'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.' Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' And he said, 'From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.' Jesus said to him, 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!' When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, 'Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!' Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, 'He is dead.' But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when He had come into the house, His

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disciples asked Him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out?' So He said to them, 'This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.' Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. For He taught His disciples and said to them, 'The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.' But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him. Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, 'What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?' But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.' Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, 'Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.' Now John answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into

the fire that shall never be quenched—And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—where "Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched." For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.'"

Because the name of Christ is on him

People of the world treat others coldly if they bring them no benefit. But the Lord promised, *"For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward" (Mark 9:41)*. Ordinarily, anyone gives water. Even so, the reason He does not forget that cup of water is that it was given because the person belongs to Christ. It means that the Lord blesses a person who values the Lord's people, and punishes a person who despises and mistreats the Lord's people. In Mark chapter 9, there appear in turn the disciples who argued over who was the greatest, the little child set in their midst, the one who did not follow them, and the little ones who may stumble. How the Lord tells us to treat a person who has the name of Christ is the teaching of this chapter.

We quickly notice the shortcomings of other people. When we work together, mistakes show and the points where our thinking differs are revealed. At that time, there is something we

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must see first. It is whether that person is one who belongs to Christ, whether he has believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ gave and become one of God's people. If he is a person who belongs to Christ, we must not treat him rudely. That is because he is one of the Lord's people, not a stranger. As far as possible, we embrace him and do not make his heart weary, but if he goes out onto a wrong way, we exhort and correct him, and clearly teach what needs to be taught.

Our treating our brothers and sisters well is exactly the same as our treating Christ well. It means that because what we have done to that person is what we have done to the Lord, the Lord will surely repay it. If we see a brother as a person saved by Jesus, overlook his mistakes and shortcomings, and make up for what he lacks so that he can carry out the work entrusted to him, that too is something we do for the Lord. Therefore, do not stop serving on the ground that the other person does not appreciate it.

The disciples who argued over who was the greatest

While Jesus was teaching about His death and resurrection, the disciples argued with one another on the road. The Scripture conveys how they were when Jesus asked them after they arrived at the house: *"But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest" (Mark 9:34)*. The three disciples who had seen the Lord's glory with their eyes on the mountain were also together on that road. The fact of having been at the Lord's side for a long time and the heart that wants to put people beneath oneself can exist together

in one person. That is why we must always examine our hearts by the word.

Jesus said that if anyone desires to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all, and He set a little child in their midst and took him in His arms. He said that whoever receives one such little child in His name receives Him, and receives the One who sent Him. In the very place where they had been measuring one another's greatness, He taught them to accept the smallest person. Rather than thinking about whom we should stand above, we must turn our hearts toward the person the Lord values.

Everyone, when he looks back on his past, finds it full of shame, yet the Lord has accepted such people as us. The more we know that grace, the more we come to know that we have no righteousness of our own to put forward before others. The reason we know the word is not to press down on other people and keep our own place, but to help them with the word we have received from the Lord.

The salvation contained in calling one another brother and sister

The titles brother and sister came to us through Jesus Christ. The Lord said, *"Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11)*. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all. By bearing that sin and shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, He received in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. Without the baptism the Lord received, without the shedding of blood on the Cross and the resurrection, we cannot be saved. For

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a person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart, the Holy Spirit sets a seal on that heart.

So the words brother and sister mean that I, too, am a person of Christ, and you, too, are a person of Christ. A title is a position set up in order to do work, but brother and sister are what we call one another in faith because we have become Christ's. We call a person that in the sense that he is a man of God. In the world, calling someone by a title is regarded as a way of honoring him, but in the kingdom of God, calling someone brother or sister is the highest form of address. While calling a person that, we cannot despise him. We treat the other person well because the name of Christ is on him.

Do not forbid, but wait

John reported that they had forbidden a certain man who did not follow them because he was casting out demons in the Lord's name. The Lord told them not to forbid him and answered, *"For he who is not against us is on our side" (Mark 9:40)*. Today there are people who do believe in Jesus as their Savior but do not believe in and follow this gospel that we preach. Will we think of them as our enemies, or will we think of them as lost souls? This word does not tell us to accept them because their faith is right. It means that if they live for God and do not oppose the work we do, then even though their faith is lacking, we should wait for them and teach them the truth, and not treat them with hostility while they come to accept it. Some people we must be patient with for twenty years, and others we must be patient with even longer.

When those who are not born again hear the word that one has no sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit,

some are quite wary, and others listen attentively to what our faith is like and approach us with curiosity. So we must not judge hastily or treat them with hostility hastily. It is because the gospel of the water and the Spirit is planted in the heart only when it is heard from a person who has the Holy Spirit, and a person who has heard that gospel can receive the remission of sins, and we have been entrusted with that work.

Along with that, the Lord sternly warned against causing one of the little ones who believe in Him to stumble. To stumble is to trip and fall; it refers to falling from faith, just as one slips and falls off a cliff path. Even if a person is insignificant in the flesh, if he is one of the Lord's people who believes in the Lord, we must not treat him roughly, abuse him, and cause him to stumble. It means that if we lord it over someone and trample him because he seems easy to push around in the flesh, and so make that person fall from faith, He will surely judge us. Even when there is something to rebuke, we must have a heart that worries lest we go too far and that person go wrong.

That is why, at the end of the chapter, the Lord said, *"Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another."* If someone belongs to Christ, treat him as you would treat Christ. The brothers and sisters beside us today are people whom the Savior has accepted. Let us live treating them as preciously as we would treat Christ. ✉

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Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

A person who holds everlasting life precious casts off evil stubbornness

< Mark 9:1–50 >

“And He said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.’ Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah’—because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’ Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. And they asked Him, saying, ‘Why do the

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scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Then He answered and told them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.' And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. And He asked the scribes, 'What are you discussing with them?' Then one of the crowd answered and said, 'Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.' He answered him and said, 'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.' Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' And he said, 'From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.' Jesus said to him, 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!' When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, 'Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!' Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came

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out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, 'He is dead.' But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out?' So He said to them, 'This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.' Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. For He taught His disciples and said to them, 'The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.' But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him. Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, 'What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?' But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.' Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, 'Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.' Now John answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around

his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—where "Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched." For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.'"

Two kinds of thoughts always collide

In our hearts, two kinds of thoughts always arise: thoughts that please God and thoughts that do not please God. We cannot do anything about the fact itself that they arise in our hearts. But whether we follow them or not depends on our will. If we follow everything just as it arises in our hearts, that is not a life of faith. Choosing and following, out of the two, the side that pleases God is a life of faith. In Mark chapter 9, the Lord repeatedly contrasts entering into everlasting life with going into the fire that is never quenched, and He teaches us which thought we should follow.

The Apostle Paul also confessed in Romans chapter 7, *"For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice" (Romans 7:19).* This is the flesh of man. From the time he is born, man is a seed of evildoers, and so he always plans what is profitable to himself. Receiving the

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remission of sins does not mean that this flesh has changed. Therefore, we must discern by the word what we will follow.

In the disciples who argued on the road about who was the greatest, we see how the thoughts of the flesh arose. Jesus did not leave that thought as it was, but turned the direction of their thinking, telling them that whoever desires to be first must become last of all and serve. Turning back by the word when a wrong thought is revealed—this is what we must do every day.

The hand is planning, the foot is action, and the eye is the heart

Jesus said, *"If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—" (Mark 9:43)*. If we take this word in a fleshly way, none of our limbs would be left. The hand is the member that decides what to do and does the work. Choosing the bad side out of the two thoughts and devising and planning evil—that is the hand. The word that tells us to cut it off means not to make that plan but to throw it away. We must not hold on to it on the grounds that it is profitable to ourselves.

The foot is going to the place where one sins. If the hand is the plan, the foot is putting it into action. There are people who, even though they have had an evil thought, are pricked in their conscience, thinking, "I must not do this," and do not do that thing. But if one puts what one has thought into action, the harm reaches oneself and other people. And the eye is the heart. If we set our hearts toward the side that does not please God and put it into practice, we cannot follow the Lord's will. Therefore, we must manage our hearts well.

Jesus clearly spoke of its end, saying, *"Where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched'" (Mark 9:48)*. Hell is a place that actually exists. To say that there is no hell is the same as saying that there is no God. God has made the kingdom of heaven, and He has also made hell. The price paid by a person who does not believe what God has done and stubbornly persists to the end in planning and doing evil is to go into that fire. Why does the Lord keep speaking such fearful words? He is telling us not to come to that place, and to be reconciled while we are still on the way. This word is not a word to let pass by. We must at least know it.

That is why, when the Lord spoke of a person who causes one of the little ones who believe in Him to stumble, He said "whoever," and with that word He included us in it as well. To bring down someone weaker than oneself because of one's own craving while claiming to believe is an evil that the Lord hates. We must not stop at vaguely being afraid as we hear the word about the hand, the foot, and the eye; we must lay down before the word the plans and actions we are now stubbornly holding to.

The remission of sins has already been accomplished through the baptism

However, in the face of this warning, we must not go back to trying to wash away our sins by correcting our conduct. Elijah, whom Jesus taught about on the way down from the mountain, that is, John the Baptist, is the very person who passed the sin of mankind on to Jesus. Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and by receiving baptism from John, He bore, once and for all,

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all our sins that could only send us to hell—the sin we brought with us from birth and all the sins we committed in heart, in thought, and in deed. Bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death. The Lord's receiving baptism, dying on the Cross, and rising again happened only once, but the efficacy of that baptism lasts forever. Because through His baptism the Lord had this sin and that sin, every one of them in detail, passed on to Him, the efficacy of that baptism reaches even the sins we commit whenever we do wrong as we live our lives. That is how we become people without sin.

With the baptism that we receive, even if we received it a thousand or ten thousand times, our sins would not be washed away. The kingdom of heaven and hell are divided according to whether or not we believe in the baptism Jesus received from John. How do we solve the problem of sin? "Through the baptism the Lord received, my sins were passed on to Him at that time, so I have no sin"—this is wisdom. Our resolve does not pay the price of sin. Do not try to pay the penalty yourselves, saying that you will wash again the sins the Lord has already washed away. Because we believe in that grace, we can turn back from wrong thoughts and actions.

"Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another"

Salt keeps things from rotting. Fish and vegetables, too, do not rot when they are pickled in salt. Our hearts and our faith, too, do not rot when they are thoroughly pickled with faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, with the word of the Lord. Although we are not perfect and so two kinds of hearts arise in

us, if we believe that the word is the word of God and choose the good side and live, we do not rot. It is because the Lord has solved all our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The Lord said, *"If the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men" (Matthew 5:13)*. If we do not listen to the word of God and keep away from worship, our hearts become defiled and we end up following the flesh. Therefore, by faith, by the word, and with reverence, we must have our hearts corrected as much as needed, even during worship services. If there is something you have done wrong, have salt in your heart and be reconciled. Has the Lord not removed this sin as well? We solve the problem of sin by faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and no longer cling to it. With that faith we must be at peace with God, and brothers and sisters must also be at peace with one another.

The Lord loves us even now, and He will love us forever. That is why He awakens us with fearful words and exhorts us to choose the thoughts of the Spirit. When the two thoughts collide, incline your hearts toward the side that pleases God. Living at peace with Jesus, who saved us, is more blessed than carrying out our own stubbornness to the end. The time for the Lord to come is almost here. Let us cast off our evil plans and, with the salt placed within us, that is, the gospel we have already received, correct our hearts and follow the Lord's will. That very way is the way fitting for a person who holds everlasting life precious. ✉

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CHAPTER

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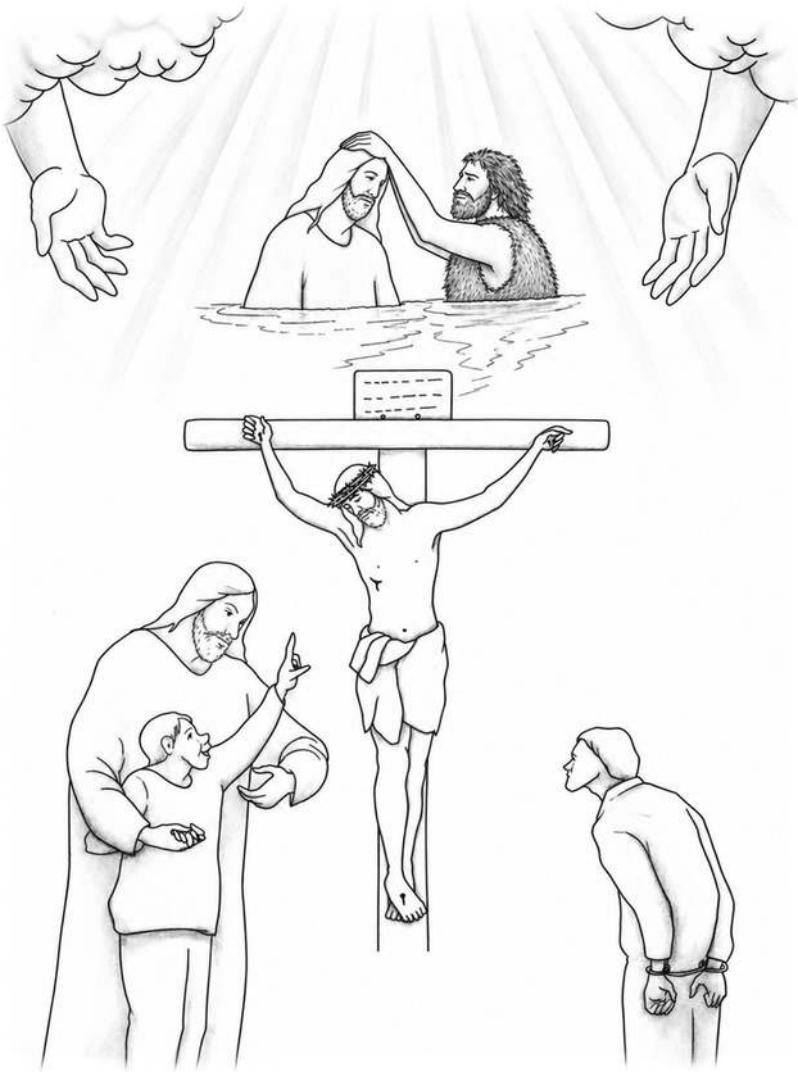

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Do not seek only permission, but hear the will behind one flesh

< Mark 10:1–12 >

“Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again. The Pharisees came and asked Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’ testing Him. And He answered and said to them, ‘What did Moses command you?’ They said, ‘Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.’ And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God “made them male and female.” “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.’ In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. So He said to them, ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.’”

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A question seeking permission and the will of creation

The Pharisees asked Jesus, *"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" (Mark 10:2)*. It was not a question asked in order to be taught, but a question meant to test Jesus. They answered that Moses had permitted a certificate of divorce, but Jesus made it clear that this regulation had been given because of the hardness of people's hearts. Looking for a clause that permits what we want is different from hearing what God wants.

Jesus went back to the word that at the creation God made male and female and caused the two to become one flesh. Since He said, *"Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mark 10:9)*, a married person is not a master who may easily cast off his or her spouse according to his or her own desires. Jesus taught that, for the husband and for the wife alike, to abandon one's spouse and marry another is adultery. He did not let anyone take lightly before God the act of putting one's own convenience first and abandoning one's spouse.

Our hearts, too, easily look first for a way to be permitted. Having met the regulation outwardly, we may consider ourselves righteous and turn away from how we actually treated the other person. But Jesus said, *"Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept" (Mark 10:5)*, and brought to light the heart hidden behind the formality. This word was not given so that we would find fault in others and gain a sense of superiority. It is a word that calls us to acknowledge our own hearts honestly before God.

The Pharisees came to the place where Jesus was teaching the multitude. Even in the same place where the same word is heard, the heart of one who wants to learn and the heart of one who wants to test can differ. We must examine whether, as we

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read the Bible, we are only looking for sentences that back up our own claims. If we bring up the word in order to defeat the other person, then even while claiming to know the meaning of the word, we end up avoiding having our own hearts corrected before that word. We must be honest, beginning with our purpose in approaching the word.

Jesus asked them what Moses had commanded. He did not disregard the word they knew, but taught them why that word had been given. If we do not know the reason a regulation was given and cling only to the expression of permission, we end up turning something that arose because of human hardness into the will that God delighted in from the beginning. This is why, when we read one part of the Bible, we must examine other clear words along with it. We cannot determine the will of God from only the passages that are advantageous to us.

The word “one flesh” corrects the heart that sees the other person as a tool for making our own lives comfortable. The pain and toil of the person who lives with us are not matters unrelated to us. The attitude of treasuring the other person only while he or she meets our expectations, and easily casting him or her off once he or she departs from them, is contrary to the will that established that relationship. We must examine what words we have spoken to the person the Lord has entrusted to us, and what responsibilities we have avoided. With a heart that speaks only of its own rights, we cannot learn the will of Him who made the two one flesh.

When the disciples asked again after they had gone into the house, Jesus spoke of the responsibility of the husband and the wife together. He did not make it a relationship in which only one side carries through its own will and the other side can say nothing at all. Because before the word of God we must take responsibility for how we act toward each other, we cannot cover

up our own hardness by speaking at length only about the other person's wrongs. The purpose of hearing this word does not stop at judging who did more wrong; it lies in each person looking at his own heart before God.

Cast off your own righteousness and live by the grace of the Savior

What we, who cannot boast of having fully accomplished the will of God, must receive first is the remission of sins. Sin does not disappear by explaining away our wrongs conveniently and drawing a conclusion that is advantageous to us. In order to save precisely such people as us, Jesus said, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15),* and received baptism from John. Through that baptism He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and the hardness and transgressions that appear throughout our whole lives are also included in those sins.

Jesus, bearing all the sins He had taken upon Himself, shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and He rose again from death. A person who has his sins washed away by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit is not one who obtains salvation by excusing himself to the very end, insisting that his own deeds were right, but one who acknowledges his own sins and accepts the righteousness that Jesus accomplished. That is why a heart that believes in grace can get free from hiding its wrongs and lay itself down before the word.

People sometimes feel that if they admit their wrongs they will lose everything. So they keep looking for reasons to explain the words and actions they did wrong. But if we believe the fact

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that the Lord has already borne our sins, we can get free from the fear that we can live only by dressing ourselves up as righteous. Because the righteousness Jesus has given is our righteousness, we have no need to insist that our conduct was always right. This is the reason a person who believes in grace can, rather, look at his own wrongs honestly.

Furthermore, the faith that has received the remission of sins rescues us from the thought that past failures block every hope for the rest of our lives. People cannot make what has already happened into something that never happened, but the Savior bore even that sin. Therefore, instead of hiding the past or remaining in a state of endlessly punishing ourselves, we must examine what we should do now before the word. If there is something for which we should apologize and take responsibility, we can walk that path relying on grace. As the word says, *"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1)*, for a saved person the way to live rightly again stands open.

We must also be careful when we preach this word to others. We cannot easily condemn a person, thinking that we know all of his circumstances. We should preach clearly the principle of sin that the passage reveals, but we must help that person to hear the grace of the Savior and examine his own responsibility before the word. The heart that digs up another person's failures in order to confirm its own superiority is also a heart that must be corrected before God. The gospel that has washed away sin is necessary for all of us.

Receiving that grace does not mean that the responsibilities of a relationship disappear. Rather, before the Savior who accepted us, we must correct the attitude with which we treated the other person carelessly. Humble the heart that seeks only to carry through its own claims, and look back on your own

responsibility in the relationships that God holds dear. The remission of sins is not a declaration that turns wrong into right, but the grace of the Savior who redeemed sinners. Because we believe in that grace, we have no need to justify sin.

Looking back on the responsibilities of a relationship begins not with grand declarations but with everyday words and attitudes. We can examine whether we listen to the other person to the end, whether we make excuses immediately when our wrongs are pointed out, and whether we are shifting the tasks entrusted to us onto the other person alone. If we only say that we will do better from now on, without acknowledging such concrete matters, the same conflicts are likely to be repeated. With a heart that believes in the grace received from the Lord, we must set our conduct right one thing at a time.

When your heart has hardened and you simply cannot understand the other person, do not strive only to manufacture good feelings by your own strength, but seek help from God. You can think of how long the Lord has been patient with you and led you with the word of salvation. Even when we remember that grace, some problems may still remain, but at least we can come out of the place where our own claims are everything. Hearing the word, receiving the help we need, and walking responsibly is the way to respond to grace.

Those who came to test Jesus asked whether something was permitted, but Jesus told them the will of God the Creator. Let us, too, not seek only words that will support our own will, but hear the word that God speaks. Let us humble our hearts before Jesus, who washed away our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and go forward into a life that holds dear the people and relationships the Lord has entrusted to us. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The faith that receives the kingdom of God like a little child

< Mark 10:13–16 >

“Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’ And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.”

The disciples who stopped the children coming to the Lord

The Scripture opens this scene with the words, “*Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them” (Mark 10:13)*. Those who brought the children were hoping for the grace of the Lord, but the disciples blocked their way. When Jesus saw this, He was greatly displeased. It is a scene that shows us that even those who claim to follow the Lord closely can, by their own judgment, block a person who is coming to the Lord.

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Jesus declared, *"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it" (Mark 10:14–15)*. He was not merely teaching manners toward little children. He made the disciples themselves learn with what kind of heart they must receive the kingdom of God.

The passage does not explain in detail why the disciples rebuked them, but there was no purity in the heart that regarded the children as a nuisance and tried to keep them at a distance. Above all, it is clear that their action differed from the will of Jesus. We must not think that because we serve the Lord at close range, our own judgment is always the same as the Lord's heart. Even while claiming to help someone, we can make the way for him to hear the word unnecessarily difficult. We must look back on whether we have set up standards that keep a person from coming before the gospel because of his age, his abilities, or the way he expresses himself.

The record that Jesus was greatly displeased tells us that receiving the children is no small matter of mere consideration. Blocking the way to come to the Lord does not accord with His will to bestow grace. We easily put off the needs of those who seem small, on the grounds that we are doing great things. But the Lord accepted the children so closely that He took them in His arms and blessed them. What it means to serve the Lord is shown in our likewise treating as precious the people whom He holds dear.

The statement that the kingdom of God belongs to such people points to the pure heart of a child who accepts things exactly as taught. Jesus taught with what kind of heart we must receive the kingdom of God. Before the grace of salvation, we need a heart that does not put forward our own position,

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knowledge, and merit, but receives what the Lord gives. For a person who thinks he is sufficient in himself, the room to receive grace grows narrow, but a person who knows he needs help opens his heart to the Lord.

Lay down your own calculations and receive the word

A heart like that of a little child is a heart that does not set up its own thoughts as a higher standard before the word of God. People hold on to what they know and what they have done, and try to evaluate even the grace that God gives. Even when the gospel clearly conveys the remission of sins, if they feel that sin still remains, they may push the word away. But to believe the word of God is not to accept it after revising it to fit our own thinking; it is to accept just as it is what God has accomplished.

Then what is the content of the salvation we are to accept? It is that Jesus, by receiving baptism from John, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The sins of our whole lives, too, were included in all those sins and were passed on to Jesus. Because of the sins thus passed on to Him, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and on the third day He rose again from death. To those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, God gives the remission of sins and gives the grace of becoming His children, as the word says: *"As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).*

It is not that we add some merit of our own and thereby open the door of the kingdom of God. It is that we hear and believe the word that Jesus has washed away our sins. Just as the little

children did not come out having qualified themselves, but were led by people and came to Jesus, so we, too, lay down our own righteousness and receive the grace of the Lord. Pure faith is not thoughtless ignorance, but the faith that regards what God has done as truer than our own judgment.

To receive the word purely does not mean to follow anyone's words without asking questions. The object of faith is the word that God has spoken. We can believe only when we hear what He has said and know its meaning. However, even after we have come to know the meaning of the word, we must not place our own thoughts above it and try to revise it. We should examine people's explanations by the Scriptures, but the salvation of God that has been confirmed must be accepted with the heart. Childlike faith is to accept just as it is, believe, and follow the word God has spoken, without hearing it with a twisted mind.

Even when people hear the gospel, they try to add on the calculations familiar to them. They may think that to receive so great a remission of sins they must offer just as much themselves, or they may suppose that only after becoming righteous to some degree do they have the qualification to believe. But if He had waited for our qualification, no sinner in need of salvation could ever have come to the Lord. The Lord accomplished salvation for sinners. To accept that fact is faith; preparing our own merit first is not faith.

Even after the words of the gospel have become familiar, our own thoughts can hide grace. We may say that all the sins of others have been washed away, while feeling that sin still remains in us. At such a time, rather than treating our sensitive heart as evidence of humility, we must look again at the range of sins the Lord bore. We must accept the word just as it is: that our sins, too, are included in all the sins of the world. Not setting

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up our own feelings as a verdict higher than the word is pure faith.

The Lord, who took the children in His arms, also holds our salvation

Jesus did not stop at the word that the children should be received. As the record says, *"And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them" (Mark 10:16)*, He embraced them Himself. The very children whom the disciples had blocked, the Lord accepted and drew close to Himself. In this scene we must see clearly who it is that gives grace. We are able to come to Jesus not because we have sufficient ability to benefit Him, but because the Lord bestows grace.

The sight of Jesus holding the children in His arms shows what the one who receives grace is leaning on. Not the children's ability, but the hand of the Lord who receives them is the center. Our salvation, too, leans on the righteousness that the Savior accomplished. Therefore, even on days when our own strength has diminished, we need not think that we have lost the grace we received from the Lord. We must get out of the life of coming to the Lord only when we can do well and hiding when we fall short, and at any time renew our hearts with the gospel the Lord has given.

This faith also changes the calculations of our service. It is necessary to examine whether we can handle a task and to prepare for it, but if we say we will follow the Lord only when there is no loss at all, it is hard to learn the way of relying on grace. If what pleases the Lord is clear, we can take a step forward, asking for the strength and wisdom we need. Faith that

the Lord who saved us helps us comes before the confidence that we will finish everything by our own ability alone.

We must also give a person who is hearing the gospel for the first time the time to receive it. Do not treat him as if he had to know every expression already before he could join you, but help him so that he can ask about what he is curious about. Explaining the word without finding simple questions bothersome is also a service that opens the way to come to the Lord. Since we, too, received grace and became children of God, it is fitting that, rather than first demanding of others the level of our own experience, we help them to hear the same word of salvation together with us.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, listen to the word with this heart. If we put forward only our own calculation of whether serving the Lord is a loss or a gain, we miss the blessing of life that the Lord gives. The One who saved us also gives us strength and uses us in the work of saving people. Believing in that grace, let us accept the word and follow the Lord. When others come to the Lord, too, let us not block them by our own standards, but help them to hear together with us the gospel that Jesus gives. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Why did the man who sought eternal life go away sorrowful?

< Mark 10:17–22 >

“Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’ So Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not bear false witness,” “Do not defraud,” “Honor your father and your mother.”’ And he answered and said to Him, ‘Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.’ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.’ But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”

The answer that he had kept the commandments

A man came running, knelt before Jesus, and asked what he should do to inherit eternal life. He was interested in eternal life, and he also showed an attitude of respect toward Jesus. But his

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question contained the thought that if he did some further work, he could obtain eternal life. Jesus told him the commandments he knew.

The man answered, *"Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth" (Mark 10:20)*. Before the commandments, rather than seeing his own sins, he put forward the deeds he had kept. But the word of God is not a standard for comparing a few outwardly visible deeds with other people. When we hold even our hearts up to the light before God, we cannot claim that we are perfect. If we speak of our own righteousness in the place where we should realize our sins, then even though we have come to the Savior to receive grace, our hearts still rely on ourselves.

The word Jesus spoke, *"No one is good but One, that is, God" (Mark 10:18)*, makes us reconsider the weight of the word "good" that the man used. By a standard that calls a person good because one has received a good impression, we cannot know the righteousness that stands before God. If we ask the way to eternal life, we must first know that the standard of goodness does not lie in ourselves. If we think of Jesus only as a respectable teacher and regard ourselves, too, as good people to some degree, it is hard to have the heart to receive grace from the Savior.

His saying that he had kept the commandments listed from his youth shows how he saw himself. He may have compared himself with people who murder or steal and considered himself fine. But what the commandments reveal is not only the crimes that can be confirmed outwardly. Before the will of God that says not to deceive people and not to harm one's neighbor, there is no one who can say that he has been perfect even in his heart. If we set only the range that is advantageous to us and say we

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have kept the commandments, we miss the opportunity to know our sins.

There is no need to disregard this man's zeal. He came running, he knelt, and he asked about eternal life. Only, such an attitude could not become the basis of salvation. We, too, must not confuse the fact that we have listened eagerly and shown courtesy with the fact of having believed in the gospel. What matters is whether, before the word of salvation, we have laid down our own righteousness and accepted the righteousness that Jesus accomplished. Even with a devout attitude, the master of the heart can still be oneself.

The one thing lacking, revealed in love

Jesus looked at him and loved him. With that love He made it plain, saying, *"One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me" (Mark 10:21)*. Then, because he had great possessions, he went away sorrowful. The man who had said he had kept all the commandments turned away before the word of Jesus. It was revealed that there was something he held on to and could not let go of more than Jesus.

At this point we must not look only at the man's possessions, but also at our own hearts. Whether it is material things, deeds we boast of, or a reputation long built up, if we refuse the word of the Lord because we cannot lose it, then that thing is acting as our master. Jesus does not soothe such a heart and tell it that it is right. Even while regarding him with approval, the Lord told him to cast off not only his property but also his own rightness and excellence, all of it, and follow Him. When the word makes

our hearts uncomfortable, what matters is whether we will avoid that fact and leave, or acknowledge our own lack.

After the words that Jesus loved him, a hard command to him follows. Because the love of the Lord is not shown in a way that tells us only what we want to hear, Jesus revealed what was binding that man. We, too, when the word touches a painful spot, must not refuse it first, but examine why the Lord is speaking that word to us.

The word to sell what he had and give to the poor reveals that he was loving riches more than God. Though he had said he kept all the commandments, he could not accept his own possessions going to other people. In him, the desire to obtain eternal life and the desire to keep his riches intact existed together. But before the word to follow Jesus, what he valued more was revealed by his choice. It shows us that what one wants with the mouth and what one actually relies on can be different.

When we apply this word to all people, we must not merely count the amount of property. Even one who has little can hold on to it as the guarantee of his own life, and one can regard the deeds or knowledge he can show off to others as great riches. A heart full of its own things relies more on what it has than on the grace it must receive from the Lord. That is why the mere fact of having become materially poor does not change that heart by itself. We must acknowledge that what we relied on cannot save us, and believe in the Savior.

Receive the righteousness the Lord gives

The righteousness that we could not keep by ourselves, Jesus accomplished. Jesus received baptism from John and thereby had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all.

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The pride of that man who said he had kept all the commandments, and the sins that each of us commits throughout our whole lives, are also included in all those sins. Because He had the sins passed on to Him, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for those sins in our place, and He rose again from death and became the Savior who gives eternal life. The basis on which we receive eternal life is this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The way for us to obtain eternal life is not to pay the price of sin by the act of getting rid of our property. It is to acknowledge that we cannot live by our own righteousness, and to believe in the salvation that Jesus Christ accomplished. It is exactly as the word says: *"He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life –ASV" (John 3:36)*. When we follow the Lord with such faith, the reason to place riches above the Lord disappears. This is because the life received from the Lord is more precious than the possessions of the world. Faith and following are not separated from each other. Because we have received salvation by grace, we hold the word of the Savior dear and can offer to the will of the Lord even what we hold in our hands.

Eternal life is not a wage we will receive if we finally accomplish one more thing. It is that a person who needs the remission of sins receives the salvation that the Savior accomplished. For that reason, the more anyone tries to put forward his own righteousness, the harder it becomes for him to hear grace. If we set our hearts on having what we have done recognized, the word telling us to lay that down sounds like a loss. But when we know the fact that the righteousness the Lord gives is more perfect than our own deeds, we come to realize that letting go of our own righteousness is not a loss but a matter of receiving grace.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, we must learn from the Word the right heart toward possessions. Riches are necessary for living, but they cannot save us from sin or bring us to life from death. When we have the faith that the life the Lord has given is more precious, we can use riches where they are needed. We can also set our hearts on helping those in difficulty and preaching the gospel. Instead of exalting ourselves by the amount we give, we come to ask how the Lord who saved us wants us to use what He has entrusted to us.

Looking at the last sight of the man who went away sorrowful, we must think about our own next step. When you hear the word and the attachment of your heart is exposed, do not avoid the word the Lord has spoken because of that discomfort. You can honestly acknowledge even the heart you cannot lay down by your own strength, and seek help from the Lord. When we place our faith in the Savior who washed away our sins, we come to know a grace greater than what we hold in our hands. The way to follow the Lord opens in the place where that grace is received.

The man in the passage went away with a sad countenance. We, too, must not become people who speak of eternal life yet in the end hold on more to what is our own. When the Lord brings our lack to light, instead of words defending yourself, believe in the Savior who washed away your sins. For a person who has received the righteousness Jesus gives, there is no reason to boast of himself, and there is reason to give thanks to the Lord. Since even one who has received grace can leave like this man if he does not cast off what is his own, we must, even after being saved, lay down our own righteousness and follow the Lord to the end. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Those who are rich in heart go to hell

< Mark 10:17–27 >

“Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’ So Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not bear false witness,” “Do not defraud,” “Honor your father and your mother.”’ And he answered and said to Him, ‘Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.’ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.’ But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!’ And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, ‘Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’ And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With men it

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is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.'"

Those who are rich in heart cannot enter the kingdom of God

God dislikes those who are rich in heart. It means that among the things God dislikes are those who are rich in heart. Looking at this passage, when Jesus was going along the road, a man came running, knelt down, and said, *"Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17)*. So Jesus asked him, "No one is good but God, so why do you call Me good? You know the commandments of God, but have you kept the commandments? Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not bear false witness. Have you kept these things?" The young man answered, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth." Jesus said to the young man, "There is one thing you lack: Sell all the possessions you have and give to the poor. Then you will have treasure in heaven." That is what He said. It is written that at this one word, telling him to sell all his possessions, distribute them to the poor, and follow Him, the young man who was rich in heart changed countenance and left. Jesus went on to say that it is very hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. He said that it is so hard to enter the kingdom of God that it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. So when the disciples asked who could enter the kingdom of God, Jesus said, *"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27)*.

Through this passage, we must learn why God dislikes those who are rich in heart. We should know what Jesus said—why

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He said that it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle—and I hope that we truly desire to become poor in heart and become those who enter the kingdom of God by faith. What our Lord says is that a rich man cannot enter the kingdom of God. This word means that a person who is rich in heart, whose own heart is rich, cannot enter the kingdom of God. To be rich in heart means that a person who has much greatness of his own finds it hard to enter the kingdom of heaven. He said to sell all one's possessions and distribute them to the poor, and then one would have treasure in heaven. If a person is rich in heart, it is impossible for him to enter the kingdom of God. It means that it is impossible for those who are rich in heart, those who have much that is great about them, to enter the kingdom of God. Dear fellow believers, you know what a camel is, don't you? A camel is an animal with a small head and a large body, good for people to ride, with a hump on its back, and absolutely necessary for carrying loads in the desert. Do you know what the eye of a needle is? Could a camel go into the eye of a sewing needle, the place where the thread goes in? Even a slim leopard could not go in. No matter how much it squeezes itself and pushes its head into the eye of the needle, can it go in? For a camel it is all the more impossible. The question is whether a person who has much that is great about him can enter the kingdom of God. Some people say, "I have not murdered, I have not stolen, I have not committed adultery, and my conduct is upright." They even boast loudly, "If there is anyone who lives as well as I do, let him come out and show himself." Such people are all rich in heart. They are people who have many riches in their hearts.

Cast away not your possessions but the richness of your heart

Our Lord told the rich young man to sell all his possessions, distribute them to the poor, and follow Him. What the Lord is saying is not that we should throw away all our possessions. It means that we should cast away the riches of the heart, the self-importance of the heart. Do you know how much people act as if they are great? There is much richness of heart. There are a great many people who have many riches in their hearts. There are many who are rich in heart in this world. Boasting that one can drink a lot of alcohol is also richness of heart. There are even people who boast, "I drank two whole cases of beer yesterday." This, too, is boasting of the riches of the heart. There are also people who show off, saying, "I studied music at a famous music school." Can those who are rich in heart go to the kingdom of God? One can go to the kingdom of God only if one lacks something; if one lacks nothing, if one is rich in heart, is there anything more that one needs? Only if there is something one needs would one look to the kingdom of God and think about the kingdom of God, but such a person has no need of the kingdom of God at all. When one is rich and satisfied on this earth, why would the kingdom of God come to mind? It does not come to mind.

Our Lord spoke this word to all people, that is, to you and me. Would a person who actually has many possessions on this earth and is rich in heart think about the kingdom of God? It means that a person who thinks he is great does not think about it. In fact, there is nothing great about people. People are rich in heart, but when you look closely, there is nothing great about them, and they are poor. All people are poor. Do you have learning? Even a person of much learning, once he has finished

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graduate school, thinks that he must start learning again from the beginning. People say that when they graduate from college, they have completed the highest learning. They are rich in heart. After graduating from college, one must not say that one has finished all one's studies, and after graduating from graduate school, one must know one's own lack—that now one must learn again from the beginning. It means that one comes to know that one's learning is lacking, and the more one studies, the more one knows how much one does not know. One knows that.

As for having much money, too, a person may be called one of the richest in a country, but put before the world, he is not even a great rich man. Dear fellow believers, if you can say that you have no worries about making a living, you have great wealth. One can say such a thing only if one still has something left even after losing one's fortune and going bankrupt several times. Look at big corporations going bankrupt. Even a big company goes bankrupt because it cannot cover a small debt. That is not even having possessions. Do we have the richness of heart that says, "I am great, I am good-looking, I have much, I am better than others"? It means that if we have such a heart, we can never go to the kingdom of God. When we truly look at ourselves, there is nothing great about us.

There is nothing great about anyone

The young man asked Jesus, "*What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"* and when our Lord said, "You should know the commandments of God; have you kept them all?" the young man said, "I have kept all these things since I was a child." These words the young man spoke show that his heart was exceedingly rich. If the young man had said, "I do keep them, but I fall a little

short, and compared with my neighbors I may be a little better," Jesus could have understood when He looked at him, but when our Lord asked whether he had kept all the commandments—do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother—the young man answered, "Yes, I have kept all such things since I was a child." How arrogant a heart that is! Are you and I really people who keep the word of God well? Do we count among those who keep the written word of God well? There is no one who keeps all the word of God; everyone falls short and cannot keep it. Saying, "I have kept all the word of God," or "I only fall a little short," comes from not knowing the word of God. The word of the Ten Commandments that says not to murder teaches that even if we happen to hate our brother, it can become the sin of murder. In the Book of James it is written, *"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10)*. If we truly knew the word of God, would we say that we fall a little short now, or that we have kept it all since childhood? The more we try to keep it, the more we fail to keep it. We cannot do it. That is why we are people who fall short, poor people, and in the end we become sinners. Also, is there anything great about us? When we look at each thing one by one, it is only greatness in one's own eyes; compared with others, there is nothing great. So, since there is nothing great about us, there is nothing we can claim to be great about before God. We cannot even say to the person next to us that we are great in this one thing. People are all the same. They are all about the same; it is not that there are outstanding people and lowly people. If there is a difference between a high person and a low person, it is the difference of whether one is rich or poor in heart. There is no one who is great. People are merely rich in heart. It means that we, too, have the mistakes that person has, and that person's

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weaknesses are in us, too. No one can say that he is great. Moreover, before God, all human beings have nothing. People say of a person who thinks he is great that he has strong pride. Having nothing yet having pride, they talk that way. It is that their pride is strong; there is nothing great about the person. Which person has stronger pride? Have you subdued your pride? Have you cast it off? Have you learned early that no matter how much you try to assert your pride, it is nothing? Otherwise, people talk of being great or worthless, but there is nothing great. So is there anyone who could obtain eternal life before God by his deeds? Are you confident? Is there anything great about you? When we know that there is nothing great about us, we come to hope for the kingdom of God. Our spiritual eyes are opened. So we turn our eyes toward the kingdom of God, knowing that this earth is not everything. When God speaks of the kingdom of God, when He speaks of eternal life, when He speaks of the kingdom of heaven, at that word that it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, we come to pay attention to the kingdom of God.

He saved the poor through His baptism and the Cross

We have nothing great about us before God. Nor before people. In any field, there is nothing great about us. The person God dislikes most among people is precisely the one who is rich in heart. Our Lord said, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)*. Having many material things in the world is not in itself a problem before Jesus. But for those who are rich in heart, hell is theirs. But He said that for the poor in spirit, the kingdom of heaven is theirs. A person

must be poor in heart. One must be able to see one's own soul, one's own self. So one must be poor in heart. He spoke to us who have nothing great about us: *"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27)*. Our Lord came to this earth to save those who have nothing great about them, to save sinners. About two thousand years ago, the Lord came to a small town called Bethlehem in Israel. Then He lived in a town called Nazareth, and when He turned thirty, He went out to John, who was giving baptism at the Jordan River, bowed His head, and received the baptism of water from John. It means that He received from John a baptism that was the same as the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, and at that time the heart of Jesus must have been like this: "You, give Me baptism. It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness in this way. This is the work of saving the poor, those who have no righteousness of their own, those who fall short, those who are bound for hell. It is My mission to receive baptism from you, to bear the sins of those who fall short, to make them sinless, and to take them to the kingdom of heaven. It is what I must do. So say nothing and give Me baptism." At the Jordan River, He received baptism from a servant of God named John, the last priest of the Old Testament, the representative of mankind. So our Lord received baptism from John and had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him. He bore all the sins of the world. It means that in order to save those who have no satisfaction in their hearts, those who have no richness, those like you and me who all fall short before God and cannot but go to hell, Jesus had all the sin of mankind transferred onto His head by receiving baptism from John. Our Lord said that with men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. A camel cannot go through the eye of a needle, but it means that with God all things are possible. In order to save you and me, the Lord came to this earth,

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received baptism from John, had all the sin of the world transferred to Him, shed His blood on the Cross and gave up His own life, and thereby saved those who are truly poor, those who fall short. He enabled them to go to the kingdom of heaven. He enabled them to enter the kingdom of God. He enabled them to obtain eternal life. He enabled them to become children of God. He enabled them to become righteous. He saved all of us, all mankind, from destruction, from the power of darkness, from our own self-importance, from the place of destruction. With men it is impossible, but God did it all. When did we ever think about the kingdom of God? Did we think about eternal life? We thought about eating, drinking, and pleasure right in front of us, but when were we ever interested in who God is, in what kind of kingdom He lives in, and in what the level of that kingdom is like? People say that the world is wide and there is much to do, when they have not even seen everything there is on this earth, so when were we ever interested in the kingdom of God? But the reason we came to be interested in the kingdom of God is that when we came to know that we were poor, we came to have the grace of God and the hope of the kingdom of God. Our Lord bore all the sins of you and me through the baptism He received from John. How did He bear them? He bore them in this way. He bore them by receiving baptism from John. The Lord came to this earth to save us in the most fitting and most appropriate way, that is, in the same way that all sins were passed on to the lamb by the laying on of hands when sacrifices were offered in the Old Testament, and He saved you and me. So you and I have come to enter the kingdom of God and have obtained eternal life. We have also become righteous and have been saved from destruction. Now we are no longer children of the earth, of darkness, but children of God. *"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1)*. He made us

alive, who had lived crushed under the power of darkness. Our Lord has saved us from all sins. We are the poor, those who know our own lack. We are those who have nothing great about us. We were those who were to be destroyed. You and I were those who were to be destroyed. Our Lord came. With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. God has saved us completely. He has done it all. If Jesus had not come to this earth, received baptism from John, and died on the Cross, could we enter the kingdom of God? Our Lord came to this earth, received baptism from John, shed His blood on the Cross, and saved us. Because we believe this, we have obtained eternal life. The word says that He has given eternal life to those who believe. As it is said, *"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).*

We believe in Jesus because we are poor

Why must we believe in the Lord? If we were rich in heart, would there be any need to believe in the Lord? We believe in the Lord because we are not rich in heart. We look to and believe in Jesus Christ, who has made us, who fall short, complete. Because we are poor, we believe in Jesus in order to obtain the righteousness of God. If one has much that is great about him, what Jesus did to save us is not needed. Because we have nothing great about us, we go to the kingdom of God by believing that God has saved us. If one has much that is great about him, one cannot believe in Jesus. We believe in Jesus because we have nothing great about us and are not rich in heart. Where does the reason we must believe in Jesus lie? We believe in Jesus because we have nothing great about us, because we want to go to the

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kingdom of God, because we do not want to go to hell, because we want to enter that kingdom, obtain eternal life, and obtain that kingdom. A person who thinks he is great does not believe in the gospel of the water and the blood of Jesus. A person who has no cleverness of his own says, "Thank you." If someone gives a hungry beggar rice cooked from coarse grain, would the beggar refuse it? Even though he is starving to death, would he say, "Why do you give me cold rice on such a fine day?" A beggar with a full stomach may dump out cold rice, but a hungry beggar, even if he is given stale rice on a fine day, receives it in his bowl and eats it with his hands. Dear fellow believers, look at how a truly hungry beggar asks even for leftover food, puts it in his bowl, mixes it, and eats it with relish. The food a beggar mixes in his bowl and eats looks far more delicious than the delicacies a rich man lays out and eats. To a hungry beggar, any rice is good. The reason you and I must believe in Jesus is that we are people who fall so short that we cannot but go to hell. If it were according to the law of God, where would you and I go? We are those who cannot but go to hell. When Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and saved us, is there anything for us to quibble about? When He took away all our sins, can we say that He took away only original sin, or ask why He took away all our future sins without permission? Those who are rich in heart, even though they believe in Jesus, believe that Jesus took away only original sin and did not take away actual sins and future sins. Even if we have received the remission of sins, if Jesus did not take away the sins we commit tomorrow, we would have to repent of those sins and receive the remission of sins, but since we cannot remember them all, we could not help going to hell. How many sins are there that we do not remember committing? Did Jesus take away original sin, but as for actual sins, only if we say before going to sleep, "God,

today I committed such and such sins. Please remit them," does Jesus say, "All right, I will wash them clean"? Is that how it is? Jesus made the heavens and the earth and all things in six days. On the seventh day He rested. The kingdom of heaven is a place of rest. It is a place where there is music and angels and every kind of food and every good thing. It is resting. Our God came to this earth and removed all our sins. Our Lord made the universe and all things in six days and rested on the seventh day. But if every day, every time we sin, we repent and He says, "All right," and Jesus remits our sins every day, could Jesus ever rest?

Does it make sense to say we have been saved, are being saved, and will be saved?

Jesus came into this world like us human beings, received baptism from John at the Jordan River, bore all sins, and died on the Cross. And He rose again in three days. He came back to life. And He became our true Savior. He became our Savior. Our Lord is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Because He has accomplished the work of salvation completely, He no longer does the work of washing away sins. The poor in heart believe everything Jesus Christ did, all His word. Those who are rich in heart do not believe. For a rich person, entering the kingdom of heaven is harder than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. A person who is rich in heart can never go. Which kingdom is it that the rich cannot go to? It is the kingdom of God. Which kingdom is it that the poor enter? It is the kingdom of God. No ticket is needed either. One goes simply by believing that He has saved us with the water, the blood, and the Spirit.

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We were saved by becoming poor in heart. Those who are rich in heart cannot go. There are so many people in this world who believe in Jesus, but are there many who believe in Jesus as their own Savior? How many people have fully received the remission of sins? Some people say, "Original sin has been remitted, and actual sins are remitted by praying prayers of repentance every day, and Jesus cannot take away the sins that have not yet been committed." Others say, "Jesus took away all sins, but we have been saved, are being saved, and will be saved." Does that make sense? The words are backwards. These are words that came out of muddled thinking. "I came to church, am coming to church, and will come to church." Does that make sense? "I ate a meal, am eating a meal, and will eat a meal." Dear fellow believers, this is like finishing lunch, saying you are full, and then, after the table has been cleared, asking why you are not being given a meal. It is like saying you have not eaten while grains of rice are still stuck to your mouth. "I ate a meal, am eating a meal, and will eat a meal." These are words that do not add up.

People believe in Jesus. Among you and me, too, there are many who believe in Jesus but seem to be rich in heart. What could we possibly do? Does God give us eternal life and send us to the kingdom of heaven only if we do something? Is there anything we can do? What can we do? Our Lord is saying this to us: "You say you have kept the law? Have you never lied? Have you never murdered?" That is nonsense. People say that they cannot kill even a single fly. What are they talking about? They must recognize their own hypocrisy in saying that they cannot kill even a single fly while always buying and eating meat. It means that they know far too little. Our Lord dislikes those who are rich in heart. In the kingdom of heaven there are no people who are rich in heart. In the kingdom of heaven there are

those who enter by believing in the water and the blood of Jesus Christ even though they were rich in the flesh on this earth, but there is no one who is rich in heart. There is no one there who says that he is greater and smarter than everyone else, has everything, and knows much.

The kingdom that the poor in heart enter

Dear fellow believers, God has brought you and me into the kingdom of heaven. We could not do it, but our Lord saved us, met us, and gave us the word of salvation so that we might receive the remission of sins by faith. We are not people who are greater than ordinary people. There is only one thing: we are people who acknowledge God as God and acknowledge our own lack before the word of God. We did not have even a speck of greatness, nor righteousness, nor any loftiness of our own, nor any riches of our own. We only acknowledged the word of God, accepted the heart of God, and accepted into our hearts that work by which He accomplished our salvation on this earth, that salvation. We did nothing but believe. Nevertheless, the Lord saved us, who fall short. Remembering once again that we were saved because we were poor in heart, because we had nothing great about us, we give thanks before God and believe in God. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

We are saved by believing in what God has done

< Mark 10:23–31 >

“Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!’ And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, ‘Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’ And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.’ Then Peter began to say to Him, ‘See, we have left all and followed You.’ So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.’”

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"Who then can be saved?"

After the man with great possessions left, Jesus 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" (Mark 10:25)*. The disciples were astonished and asked who could be saved. The way of thinking that regarded a person's qualifications as the power of salvation collapses before this word. No matter how many possessions or works or how much fame one has, one cannot get past the judgment for sin. It is not only those who merely have much money who cannot enter; those who are rich in heart, with much rightness, greatness, and stubbornness of their own, cannot enter either.

Jesus did not demand that people produce greater power. Rather, He said, *"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27)*. This is the way of salvation opened in the midst of despair. We cannot find in ourselves any righteousness that can wash away sin, but God accomplishes the work of saving sinners. Acknowledging one's own lack is not giving up on salvation but turning one's eyes to the Savior.

Just as a camel cannot go through the eye of a needle, a person cannot remove even one of his sins, but Jesus, the Son of God, received baptism from John and had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The sins of our whole lifetime, too, were included in all those sins and were passed on to Jesus. Jesus bore the sins that were transferred to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and thereby received the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is the actual content of how God accomplished the salvation that man cannot accomplish. We receive the remission of sins by believing in that salvation.

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The record that the disciples were greatly astonished shows how greatly the standard by which they had thought about salvation was shaken. If the conditions that seem advantageous to a person cannot become the ability to enter the kingdom of God, who would have hope? Jesus did not resolve that question by comparing people with one another. He did not say that a person who is a little poorer and a little more diligent could make it; rather, He shifted their gaze with the word that God can do it. Only when the subject of salvation is changed does the question find its answer.

While listening to the word about the camel and the eye of the needle, we must not look for a small gap that we can pass through by our own strength. When we acknowledge the fact that we cannot wash away our sins by ourselves, the salvation of God is heard as complete grace. Because there is One who has accomplished what we cannot do, we can receive the remission of sins by faith.

The word that God can do all things must not remain merely as a vague optimism that everything will turn out well. The event in which Jesus actually took our sins upon Himself and was judged shows that power. Since He bore the sins of our whole lifetime without leaving out a single one, there is no need to think that we must settle some sin separately on our own. When we receive the salvation the Lord accomplished as a whole, our hearts rest. Faith is moving the ground of salvation from man to God.

What we must let go of for the sake of the Lord and the gospel

Peter said to Him, *"See, we have left all and followed You" (Mark 10:28)*. Jesus promised that He would repay abundantly those who had to leave house, family, and lands for the sake of the Lord and the gospel. Salvation is received by the grace of God, but on the road of following that Savior, there come things that we actually have to give up. When possessions and relationships block the way of believing in and serving the gospel, it is revealed what we regard as more precious.

While listening to this word, we must not try to buy salvation with the amount of what we have given up. First there is the Lord who has given us life, and because we follow Him, there come things we lay down. What this word teaches is the choice of faith that we cannot abandon the gospel even when there is opposition from those we love. Jesus is not unaware of that pain, nor does He regard as trivial what has been lost for the Lord's sake.

What Peter said about having left all and followed is connected with the event of the man with great possessions leaving. The disciples, too, had a life and relationships they had left behind. The Lord did not regard their labor as if it had never happened. However, the word He promised clearly contains the purpose of being for the Lord and the gospel. One cannot exalt oneself merely by the fact of having given something up; what matters is what one has laid down in order to follow whom.

We must keep this purpose in our relationships with family as well. When we are opposed because we believe the gospel, we cannot abandon the word of salvation in order to gain people's approval. That said, hating family members who oppose us is not the attitude of following the Lord well. We must preach the word to them, hoping that they, too, will come to

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know the grace we have received, and faithfully fulfill the responsibilities we must fulfill. There is no need to make keeping our faith in the Lord and acting honestly toward our family seem to be opposed to each other.

When something arises that we must lay down in order to follow the Lord, there may be pain in our hearts. Leaving a familiar place or changing a long-cherished plan is not a light matter. Feeling that pain does not mean that we have no faith. What matters is to discern through the word what is more precious, and not to let go of the salvation we have received from the Lord. Because we believe His promise, we can refrain from judging our whole life by the loss right in front of us alone.

Believe in the Lord's reward even in the midst of persecution

Jesus said, *"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)*. On the road of following the Lord there are provision and comfort, and at the same time there are also opposition and difficulties. The fact that there is persecution is not evidence that the Lord's promise has failed, because the Lord promised to care for His people while speaking even of those difficulties. The care and unity we enjoy together with brothers and sisters who believe the same gospel are also precious grace received on this road.

If we turn the word about receiving a hundredfold into a calculation of getting back the possessions we put in with a fixed profit added, the purpose of following the Lord returns to possessions again. Rather, we must see the grace by which He

cares for us, lets us be together with new brothers and sisters, and gives us a place to serve the gospel. Rather than attaching conditions to the Lord about the way He must repay us, we must believe in His faithfulness.

The care we receive in the midst of difficulties lets us know the Lord's promise in actual life. When fellow believers give the help that is needed and raise up a discouraged heart with the word, we learn that we are not people left alone. A person who has received that grace can in turn look after other brothers and sisters. The faith that the Lord cares for us does not end in a heart that only waits to receive help, but leads to service that shares what we have received from the Lord.

Finally, Jesus warned, *"But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Mark 10:31)*. Neither the number of years one has believed nor the boast of what one gave up in the past can take the place of the faith that follows the Lord today. We must not pile up even the labor of following the Lord like riches with which to exalt ourselves. We must believe today, too, in Jesus, who saved us, and respond to the word.

The warning about the first and the last makes us examine our hearts even now. Even if we served greatly yesterday, we must still hear the word today all the same. A person who came to believe the gospel late can also follow the Lord truthfully, relying on the grace he has received. Instead of counting one another's years and sacrifices to set a ranking, we must look back at what kind of faith we are responding to the Lord's word with today. Then we can remember even our past labor not as riches to boast of ourselves with, but as grace in which the Lord was with us.

The Lord, who accomplished the salvation that man cannot, does not leave the life of following Him in vain either. Do not step back from the Savior's side, calculating only your losses.

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There is something the Lord gives to those who know the grace they have received and walk on for the sake of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even in the midst of persecution, let us believe that promise and follow the Lord with thanksgiving. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible

< Mark 10:23–31 >

“Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!’ And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, ‘Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’ And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.’ Then Peter began to say to Him, ‘See, we have left all and followed You.’ So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.’”

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The word at which the disciples were astonished twice

In Mark chapter 10, Jesus said to His disciples, *"How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:23)*. Looking at the preceding passage, a man came to Jesus and said that he had kept all the commandments from his youth. But when Jesus told him to sell all that he had, give to the poor, and come and follow the Lord, it says, *"But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Mark 10:22)*. Because he had many possessions, he could not follow the Lord and could not obey. So the Lord said that it is very hard for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God.

At this word the disciples were startled twice. They were startled, thinking, "If one has money, one cannot enter? So the rich cannot go to the kingdom of heaven. Then we would have to become poor." If one has much money in this world and has to throw all of it away in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, would that not be something to be startled at? Then, to the disciples who were startled, wondering whether the rich could not enter, Jesus again 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" (Mark 10:25)*. It is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. So the disciples were greatly astonished. Startled, thinking, "It is utterly impossible. To enter the kingdom of heaven, one must have no money," they said to one another, *"Who then can be saved?" (Mark 10:26)*. Then Jesus looked at the disciples and said, *"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27)*.

What does this word mean? If God does it, it is done. We cannot do it, but if God, who sends us to the kingdom of heaven and removes our sins, does it, it is done.

Not only riches but also one's own rightness and stubbornness block the kingdom of heaven

It is not that one cannot enter only because one has much money. It does not work if one has much rightness of one's own, nor does it work if one is very stubborn. He said that if one has much that is human, one cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Then there is no one who can enter. A person who has lived uprightly by ethics and morals cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, a person with much money cannot enter, and a stubborn person cannot enter. It means that there is no one who can enter.

"With God all things are possible"

Nevertheless, with God all things are possible. God clothed His own Son in human flesh and sent Him to this earth, and passed all the sin of mankind on to that Son through John the Baptist. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him once and for all. Also, that Son, bearing all the sin of mankind, went to the Cross, received the judgment, and died for us, and having died, He rose again and became the Savior of mankind. So it means that making it so that whoever simply believes obtains salvation was the work God did. That with men it is impossible but with God all things are possible means precisely this word. God can do the work of making us enter the kingdom of heaven, and He actually did it.

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Do you believe that God has made us enter the kingdom of heaven?

The gospel is that with God all things are possible. No one obtains salvation unless he believes in what God has done. We come to the conclusion that we must believe in what God has done. We are saved by believing in what God has done, not by our doing something to obtain salvation. Then what is it that God has done? It is that He passed our sins on to His own Son, had that Son receive the judgment, and had Him rise again from death and become our Savior. We obtain salvation through the faith that believes in the work Jesus did when He came to this earth, bore our sins, received the judgment for us, and saved us. Believing in what God has done—this we can do. This is a tremendously important truth.

With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. God Himself put on human flesh, came to this earth, and saved us. That is what God did. Making us the people of God, making us sinless, making us the workers of God, enabling us to enter and live in the kingdom of heaven in the future—all of this God has done for us.

Cast away your own rightness and believe in what God has done

Is there even one person excluded from this salvation? If there is someone who is excluded, it is because he did not open the door of his heart and did not accept into his heart what God can do and what God has done. That is why he is excluded from salvation now. That problem lies with the person who does not believe, not with God.

If by chance you cannot accept this truth, it is because, like that man who said he had kept all the commandments, you have not cast away ethics and morals, your own greatness, and your stubbornness. What use is being great? What is having lived well ethically? What is having much money? Some people, when they have a little money, think they are great rich men. But can they share that money with others? If one lives only for oneself, one is a beggar. What is the difference between a rich person and a poor person? It is whether one shares or does not share. Even a poor person who shares is rich, and no matter how rich a person is, if he does not share, he is poor. Then what do we have? Do we have money? Are we not merely stubborn? Whoever does not believe in what God has done because of that stubbornness goes to hell.

Therefore, only those who cast all that away and believe in what God has done, what God can do, and the work by which God saved us are saved. Those who believe have obtained salvation. The Holy Spirit comes upon that word, and we come to give thanks as we live our whole lives. With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. I hope that by all means you will believe in what God has done, be saved, and live your whole life giving thanks. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The road He went ahead on, foretelling the spitting, the scourging, and death

< Mark 10:32–34 >

"Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.'"

The road to Jerusalem, on which He went ahead of the fearful disciples

The Scripture depicts that road, saying, *"Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid" (Mark 10:32)*. At that time, Jesus called the twelve disciples again and let them know the things that He would suffer. Even while going to the place where He would be killed,

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He did not act like someone who did not know about it. On the contrary, He revealed to the disciples what was going to happen. The initiative on this road belonged to Jesus.

Jesus made it known in advance, saying, *"The Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles" (Mark 10:33)*. Jesus also said that the Gentiles would mock Him, spit on Him, scourge Him, and kill Him. Jesus did not hide all these things behind a vague word like suffering, for He knew concretely the contempt and the death that He would receive. How heavy must the heart of the Lord have been as He spoke this word with the Cross before Him! When we look upon Jesus, who went ahead even though He knew all those things, we cannot speak lightly of the love of the Savior. The Lord chose this road in order to save us.

The record that Jesus went ahead of them must be read together with the fear of the disciples. Even while the hearts of those who followed were shaken, the Lord knew the road He would go. We, too, easily think that only people of strong faith can follow the Lord, but in this passage there are people who follow behind even while afraid. Our faith, too, must first look to the Lord.

The Lord did not tell the fearful disciples that there would be no hardship ahead. Rather, He let them know more concretely what He would suffer. This is because faith is not an optimism gained by hiding the facts. He caused them to believe in the salvation that God would accomplish within the suffering, even while they knew what that suffering was. If we, too, pick out only pleasant words and make them the grounds of our faith, we are easily shaken when real hardship comes. We must listen to the end to the word the Lord spoke.

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The fact that the judgment of the chief priests and the scribes appears is also weighty. Jesus said that people holding religious authority would decide to kill Him. However, their decision does not become evidence that Jesus had sin. Not every judgment is true just because a person's position is high. Even if the disciples later saw people condemning Jesus, they had to remember the word the Lord had spoken in advance. We, too, must keep our faith by the standard of the word of salvation rather than by the authority of people.

He goes to receive the judgment for sin in our place

The fact alone that Jesus knew He would suffer does not fully explain the will of salvation. We must know why He had to die for us. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. Just as on the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament the high priest Aaron would *"lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat" (Leviticus 16:21)* and thus pass them on, that baptism was the laying on of hands that passed sins on. The sins of our whole lives are also included in that sin of the world that Jesus took upon Himself. Because the One who had no sin took upon Himself the sins of sinners, He goes to receive the judgment in our place.

Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, and so bore the price of those sins. And just as He had taught in advance, He rose again from death in three days. The wicked hands of people killed Jesus, but what decided the end of salvation was not their

wickedness. Jesus overcame sin and death and became our Savior. A person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit does not try to pay back his sins with better deeds, but believes in the redemption of Jesus and receives the remission of sins.

The mocking, the spitting, and the scourging that Jesus would receive reveal the wickedness of people who did not know His honor. The Lord did not leave that contempt merely as an example of patient endurance; He actually received that suffering on the road of redemption that saves sinners. Therefore, we must not stop at being moved in heart by words describing the suffering, but must know whose sins He took upon Himself. Then sorrow leads on to gratitude and faith for the remission of sins.

If we do not know the fact that our sins were passed on to Jesus, even while looking at the Cross we keep trying to solve those sins within ourselves. We may think that if we repent more and are tormented longer, they will be washed away. However, the judgment of sin does not end with the size of our emotions. Because the Lord shed His blood and died for the sins He took upon Himself, redemption was accomplished. The heart that hates sin and turns from it must also come from the place of believing this fact. Our own pain cannot take the place of the price of salvation.

Jesus foretold not only that He would die but even that He would rise again in three days. The Lord knew the work by which He would accomplish salvation, and He also knew that He would rise again. People handed Jesus over and killed Him with a wicked intent, but the Lord's salvation is greater than their wicked intent. We must not fix our eyes only on the people in the event, but must see the salvation of God accomplished in the

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midst of it. Only then is our faith in the Cross not bound to the evaluations of people.

This fact of salvation also becomes a clear ground for our fearful hearts. The Savior took upon Himself our sins without leaving any behind, and He Himself received that judgment. Therefore, when our shortcomings are exposed, we have no need to draw back, doubting whether the Lord's grace reaches even us. We must believe in the One who, even while knowing our weakness, went ahead on the road of suffering. Holding fast to what the Lord has done is faith.

Listen to the promise of the resurrection to the end

At the end of the word of suffering that Jesus spoke, *"And they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again" (Mark 10:34)*, there is the resurrection. If the disciples were gripped only by the fear of death, they would miss the last word. We, too, must not forget the promise the Lord gave because of the hardships before our eyes. Jesus did not comfort them by saying there would be no suffering. He taught that He would rise again after passing through the suffering.

The resurrection must not be heard as a short comfort added on at the end. Because the Lord rose again, the One who saved us is alive even now. The life of us who have received the remission of sins does not stop at the death of the Savior but continues on into new life. Because the One who bore our sins and the One who overcame death are the same Jesus, we do not think that our salvation is an event that belongs only to the past. Today also we ask the living Lord for help and believe His word.

When we feel fear while following the Lord, rather than striving to hide the fear itself, we must examine what we are looking at that makes us afraid. We can tell the Lord whether it is the reactions of people, the loss we will have to bear ahead, or our own insufficient ability. And before all of those things, we must remember the One who went to save us. It is not that we must newly open the way of life by our own strength, but that we follow the Savior who has already opened the way. This fact makes us take the next step even in the midst of fear.

We must also learn this heart of the Savior when dealing with those who serve together with us. If we drive someone into a corner as a person without faith just because he is afraid, even his heart to listen to the word may be closed. Just as the Lord explained to the disciples what He would suffer and the resurrection, we, too, can let the other person know once again the grounds and the promise of salvation. It is to examine the word together about how the Lord helps, without hiding the hardship. Faith grows more when a clear gospel is heard than when a person is pushed with strong words.

Let us give thanks to Jesus, who went ahead for us. Even when the road of following the Lord becomes hard, remember who it is that saved us. The Savior who gave us the remission of sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit is alive. A person who relies on Him can walk according to the word of the Lord rather than being dragged along by fear. Believe that at the end of that road He went ahead on there is the resurrection, and follow behind without fear. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

Have a spiritual desire the size of a mustard seed

< Mark 10:35–52 >

"Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, 'Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.' And He said to them, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' They said to Him, 'Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.' But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So Jesus said to them, 'You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared.' And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.' Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging.

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And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.' And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. So Jesus answered and said to him, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' The blind man said to Him, 'Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your faith has made you well.' And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road."

The desire of the two disciples who asked for the seats on the right and the left

When we look at this passage, there are two kinds of desires. One desire was the desire of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who asked, "In Your glory, grant us the two highest seats, one on Your left and one on Your right." These disciples had one desire and hope while following Jesus around, and it was the desire that, when the Lord took hold of royal power on this earth, Jesus would become King and they would be seated in the seats on the King's right and left. In human terms, one might think that could be so, but seen spiritually, it was a desire far too removed from the will of Jesus.

While Jesus was on this earth, especially during the three years, He also healed many sick people and dying people. For that reason, I think it is only natural, seen from the flesh, that the disciples had such thoughts. However, Jesus spoke as follows: *"But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you ask. Are*

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you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So Jesus said to them, 'You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared'" (Mark 10:38–40). Our Lord did not come to gain something, but came to give Himself. The disciples followed Him around in order to gain authority. But when Jesus said, "Are you able to receive the baptism that I receive? Are you able to bear all the sins of the world and die for them—can you do that?" the disciples said, "We are able." Jesus said that sitting on His right and left is not something they decide as they please, but comes about as the Father has prepared. It means that if the disciples receive the baptism the Lord received, they receive a reward. Jesus conclusively settles what the two apostles James and John were demanding as follows: *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45)*. And then Jesus said to them, "Should you not also become like that?" and said that what position one occupies in the kingdom of heaven comes about as the Father has prepared it, and He concluded this exchange by saying, *"Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all" (Mark 10:43–44)*. And He spoke this word after calling even the ten disciples who were displeased with the two disciples.

Do you follow the Lord in order to gain authority?

The disciples were very much interested in the part about our Lord taking hold of royal power, the part about the Lord's

kingdom being established on this earth. This was because at that time Israel was under the rule of Rome, and it had no king of its own nation as the people longed for, and it was poor. In such a nation there was Jesus, who had performed the miracle of the five loaves and two fish. For that reason, many people thought of serving Jesus as king. The disciples of Jesus were the same. The disciples of Jesus also thought that Jesus would someday become king. It is the same in the world. Even someone who is not special sometimes becomes the leader of a nation if he speaks well or has a lot of money. The disciples of Jesus, too, when they looked at their Teacher, thought that He could easily become one, and that in their eyes the only person who could become king in the nation of Israel was Jesus. When Jesus had the power to feed five thousand people with one person's lunch and have some left over once He gave thanks, who could be more popular than Jesus? Jesus was the most popular of all. So among those who followed Jesus there were the sick, there were the hungry, there were those who hoped for power—anyway, all those who had something they hoped for followed Him. Jesus was, at any rate, very popular indeed.

Jesus is the Savior who received baptism from John to save us, gave His own body on the Cross, and rose again, but even seen only in human flesh, He was a great person. It seems the authority of Jesus was truly great. The disciples of Jesus wanted to wield authority, and that is why they worked. It is a laughable thing, but even in this present age there are people like James and John among those who follow Jesus. There are many who follow in order to wield authority, who follow in order to prosper in the flesh, and who follow in order to live securely. There are many people who believe in Jesus and try to grasp authority in the flesh. If we, too, say that we want to prosper in the flesh, we are no different from James and John. Up to this point, James

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and John had in fact followed Him in the flesh. If that is so, we, too, while believing in Jesus and being in the church, are no different from those who follow on the premise that if they believe in Jesus, this and that will happen. We must have a pure heart.

Jesus came to this earth to save us. We, too, must work with a pure heart to save souls, abandoning the honor of the world, in order to preach the gospel to souls and save them. We must desire to have the pure heart that removes the dregs from our hearts and preaches the gospel to souls so that they receive the remission of sins, even if we cannot enjoy great wealth and glory throughout our whole lives. Just as the disciples of Jesus also had many dregs of the flesh, we, too, have many. The disciples of Jesus, while following Him in that way, were only trying to make Jesus king and gain power, but how many dregs of the flesh are there in your hearts and mine? How much is there that is not a spiritual desire but a desire to prosper in the flesh? Each of us knows it well. When we meet with some matter, there are things we truly desire only in the flesh. It means that we have a heart that wants only the flesh to prosper. The flesh must live, too, but first of all the soul must prosper. And it is right that we must grow well in faith in Christ and prosper in faith. It means that we must become saints, and servants, who have such a spiritual desire. It means that we must desire not only what is of the flesh but what is spiritual. If we have no spiritual heart, we are the same as the two disciples of Jesus. We must truly have a desire; we must have a longing in our hearts.

The desire to open the eyes of the blind

In the word, it says, *"Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging" (Mark 10:46)*. Just look at this man's desire. If you ask what kind of desire the desire of this beggar Bartimaeus was, it was the desire to see. It means that he longed for his eyes, his blind eyes, to be opened so that he could truly see Jesus, and he longed to see the beautiful world that God had made. In a certain sense, a beggar has little to worry about. A beggar has nothing to lose, so he has no anxieties either, and that is why he does not try to leave the place of a beggar. If one has nothing at all, one has no anxiety and little insecurity.

The fact that the beggar Bartimaeus desired to have his eyes opened may be, seen from the flesh, exactly the same as the fleshly desires of other people. But what kind of desire should we who are born again have? It means that at the very least we must desire not the wealth and glory of the earth, but that the eyes of the blind be opened. It means that we must have such a heart. How can we open the eyes of the blind? How can we preach the gospel to people who have not received the remission of sins so that they can go to the kingdom of heaven? It means that we must have a heart with such a longing. There are desires of the flesh, there are spiritual desires, there is everything, but at the very least, as we live on, we must have the heart that asks how we can open the eyes of the blind. If we do not have such a heart, it is a problem. That is to have lost one's office and lost one's goal. If we say we have been born again, at the very least we must do the work of opening the spiritual eyes of people like the beggar Bartimaeus. Jesus said, *"'Go your way; your faith has made you well.' And immediately he received his sight and*

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followed Jesus on the road" (Mark 10:52). It means that at the very least we must have the desire to open the eyes of people who have not been born again.

It is a truly laughable thing for us to say among ourselves that this one is superior and that one is worthless. People make a great fuss about being superior if they have even the smallest point of superiority. If one has a little that is superior, one wants to show off, and such a person cannot do much work. He only talks with his mouth and cannot do the work. Like a fig tree thick only with leaves and without fruit, he cannot do much work. If at the very least we have a heart the size of a mustard seed, just the one heart that wants to open the eyes of the blind, we can truly preach the gospel and become precious servants of God who live for the gospel throughout our whole lives. It is because we do not have that heart that we cannot do spiritual work throughout our whole lives. If we have just one desire the size of a mustard seed, that one faith does great work. It brings many people to the right way and causes many people to receive the remission of sins. It means that we must have a spiritual heart rather than showing off in the flesh. It means that we must do this and do that for the Lord in that way.

A spiritual desire like a single mustard seed

I have one hope: I want us to have just one desire of the heart, as small as a mustard seed, the desire to open the eyes of the blind. Dear fellow believers, do you know how small a mustard seed is? They say that if you put that seed on the palm of your hand, you can hardly see it. They say it is that small and light. That is why the Bible speaks by taking up the mustard seed among many seeds. I hope that you have one very small seed the

size of a mustard seed. If we have just this one, we live preaching the gospel throughout our whole lives as God permits. The servants of God, too, did not become servants because they had something great. It means that one desire the size of a mustard seed preaches the gospel to the people around them and saves those who would go to hell. Because of that one heart we become preachers of the gospel, and by that one heart we become disciples of the Lord. It is because we do not have one small desire the size of a mustard seed that we fail to become disciples of Jesus Christ. Even if the flesh is 99% and the spiritual heart is only 1%, we can become disciples of Jesus Christ.

There are these two men, James and John, the disciples of Jesus. In fact, Jesus had twelve disciples, but the disciples He always took along with Him were Peter, James, and John. Jesus bestowed the greatest love on those three disciples and cherished them. In the important scenes, John appears, James appears, and Peter appears. It seems He loved them very much in human terms.

I hope that we have this kind of heart. God wants us to have this kind of heart. We must have a desire in our hearts. We must have the desire that souls receive the remission of sins. Only when we have this desire can we do the work. This desire makes us work even without great faith. It makes us do spiritual work. It makes us serve the Lord. It means that a person who has this desire, though he also has what is of the flesh, does not pursue only the flesh. It means that because of one very small desire, a person who used to pursue the flesh comes to pursue what is spiritual as well. In the end, the 1% spiritual heart catches hold of all of the 99% fleshly heart. When a single mustard seed is planted, life rises up from the smallest seed. It comes up like a vegetable, but as time passes it grows up like a great tree, and it grows into a tree under which birds sing and people can rest. It

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means that if we have a small spiritual desire, that desire devours all of our fleshly heart and we are changed into spiritual people. So do not regard lightly the one small spiritual heart within you. I hope you know the fact that that one heart devours all of your fleshly heart. In the hearts of people who have received the remission of sins, this spiritual heart is present in every one of them. Only, are you not burying it in the ground and pressing it down with a heavy stone so that it cannot come up? Though it is but one small desire, I hope that you make the spiritual desire blossom and follow it well.

Do not build a house on the ruins of Jericho

Dear fellow believers, at the very least, the born-again must have such a heart. What is the purpose for which we live? Our Lord brought down the city of Jericho through Joshua. He told them to march around it seven times on the last day, and when they shouted and the priests blew the trumpets, the walls of Jericho began to collapse inside and out. The city of Jericho fell, and Joshua saved the family of Rahab the harlot. And after that, Joshua said, *"Cursed be the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates" (Joshua 6:26)*. It means that if a person who has received salvation lives for the world, trying to build up again the world that God has torn down, God causes him to be ruined in the world. That word is real.

Dear fellow believers, how much do we think before we reach a conclusion, just to say a single word? We do not do everything just as we feel; we think over many things, weigh them, make a decision, and act, and so on. The reason we, the

born-again, think and weigh things like this is that if we lay a foundation and build a house toward the world, we are ruined. If it seemed we would do well by building a house toward the world, we could live that way, but it is not so. Still, a born-again person, at the very least, is ruined in this world if he does not live for the gospel. To parents, a child is a treasure. But like the man who rebuilt the city of Jericho, no matter how much money one earns, what use is it if one loses one's child? There is a reason why we must live spiritually. Though it is difficult and hard, there is a reason why we must live like this. If we have one small desire of the heart, a right desire, that one heart that opens the eyes of the blind, with that heart we make a good profit with what we have received from the Lord; and a person who does not have such a heart should desire to have it; and we must live with this desire.

We preach the gospel because we are insufficient

We, the born-again, seem spiritual and seem quite holy, but frankly, once the flesh is taken away, there is nothing left. If a person has money, he has honor too, and then even an ugly person looks handsome. But is a well-fed person with a lot of money spiritual? In a person himself there is nothing spiritual. Do you perhaps think that a person is 100% spiritual? It is not so. Look at yourselves. We are 99% flesh. Only the one word by which we received the remission of sins is spiritual. It is because of the Holy Spirit within us that we live serving the Lord according to the desire of the Spirit. All the rest is flesh. We show off quite a bit, talk quite a bit, pretend to have much righteousness, and pretend to be upright, but inside there is nothing. We must not be deceived by ourselves either. If there is

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just one desire in our hearts, it is simply that we live our whole lives with the desire to open the eyes of the blind.

When we have just received the remission of sins, we have a lot of our own righteousness. Our not committing sins is also a great boast. Our living uprightly is also a boast. But as the years go by, see whether our own righteousness is that perfect until we die. Job was a tremendous man at first, but when he met with affliction, he cursed the day he was born: Why did his mother nurse him? Why did the knees receive him? Why did the sun shine on that day? It would have been good if it had been dark and pitch-black, with no light shining, and he had died. Complaining like that, he later came to complain against God, asking why God had made the light shine on that day. So later God asked Job, "Were you there when I made the universe and all things? Were you there when I set the constellation of the Great Bear in the heavens? Do you know why the world I made turns so wondrously according to the four seasons? You should acknowledge that you are insufficient and weak, so how can you complain against Me and complain about the day you were born?" In the end, Job's own righteousness is broken. Job confessed, "God, I truly did it without knowing, and I am truly a worthless man." God accepted Job. How superior can we human beings be, even at our best?

Dear fellow believers, I think about the saints and the servants of God. Even if we think it over until we die, there is nothing superior about us. We may have lived in a superior way up to now, but when we think of the days we have yet to live, everything we have called superior up to now is broken as well. There is nothing superior. We must simply, in the midst of our insufficiency, praise the righteousness of the Lord and spread the Lord's gospel, the Lord's salvation. We must boast not of our own superiority but of the perfection of the Lord. Truly, it is

because we saints are insufficient that we preach the gospel of the Lord. A superior person can never preach the gospel. Just as we received salvation because we are insufficient, the faith arises that that person, too, can receive salvation because he is insufficient, and so we preach the gospel; if we were perfect, we would not even deal with those people. All of us are insufficient. Because we are insufficient, we have become workers. Because we are insufficient, we are in the church and serve the gospel. Our Lord entrusted us with the work of preaching the gospel to all nations because we are insufficient. Our Lord wants us to preach the gospel to the blind, to the lame, to the hot-tempered, to the poor, to the rich, and to those who hold power, and He wants us, who are insufficient and have received grace, to clothe the insufficient with the grace of God. We received salvation because we are insufficient. We are insufficient people. Because we received salvation as insufficient people, we serve the Lord. If we were perfect, we could not serve the Lord because we would be showing off. Because we are insufficient, we pray to the Lord. Because we are insufficient, we believe in the Lord and work. If we were not insufficient, we would need no faith, we would need no prayer, and we would need no God. Do you acknowledge that you are an insufficient person? It means that because we are insufficient, God takes hold of us and works.

Workers who build the kingdom of God

We have the kingdom of God. We have the kingdom of heaven. It is not visible to fleshly eyes, but it is visible to spiritual eyes. God has prepared a kingdom for us, has prepared the kingdom of heaven, and waits for us to enter that land. God hopes that while we live on this earth, we open the spiritual eyes

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of many people and preach the gospel to them. This world is not everything. It means that those who believe in God have the kingdom of God.

That kingdom is none other than the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom God has prepared for the born-again, and those who are not born again go into the fire that is not quenched. The born-again live in the new heaven and new earth, and at the final judgment of the great white throne God gathers all those who are in Hades and judges them. The born-again go to the kingdom of heaven, and those who are not born again go into the fire that is not quenched. That is the final judgment.

Those who have not received the remission of sins are in Hades. God keeps them in a bottomless pit, and when the last time comes, He drags them out, judges them, and throws them into the fire. So because there is the kingdom of God, our Lord came to this earth to build the kingdom of God. We, too, are building the kingdom of God on this earth. Though we live on this earth, we are building the kingdom of God. We are recruiting people who will go and live in the kingdom of God. This is the spread of the gospel.

We must prepare people so that they can enter the kingdom of God, and we must become workers in building the kingdom of God. All the saints must be faithful to the duty entrusted to them. That is the work God has entrusted to us. You and I have the kingdom of God. The earth is not everything. We give thanks before God, who has made us, insufficient as we are, workers of the kingdom of God. And we give thanks that He has placed in us the heart that opens spiritual eyes, even if it is a very small heart, a faith the size of a mustard seed. I want us to become saints and servants of God who keep this heart, make a good

profit with what we have received from the Lord through that desire, and offer many things before God. ✉

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Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

To give His life a ransom for many

< Mark 10:35–45 >

"Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, 'Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.' And He said to them, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' They said to Him, 'Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.' But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So Jesus said to them, 'You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared.' And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'"

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The two disciples who did not know what they asked

James and John asked that when Jesus received glory, one of them might sit on His right and the other on His left. Jesus had been teaching about the suffering He would receive, but they sought the seats they would occupy in glory.

Jesus asked, *"You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mark 10:38)*. The two disciples answered that they were able, but they did not know that the baptism the Lord was to receive was the work of receiving baptism from John, bearing all the sins of the world, and dying because of those sins. Even while saying that they would come to share in that way, Jesus did not guarantee the seats on His right and left as they demanded. No one can decide by his own craving what God has prepared.

The other ten disciples became angry at the two. Jesus called them all and distinguished between the way the powerful of the world dominate people and the way of His disciples. The position the Lord entrusts to us is not a position where we gain the right to push through our own words, but a position where we serve so as to bring people to life.

The two disciples said that they wanted Him to do for them whatever they asked. Jesus asked them what the content of that wish was. This is because not every act of asking comes from right faith. We, too, while praying, may only ask the Lord to accomplish the plans we have already decided on, rather than trying to learn His will. It is necessary for us to see clearly before the word what we are wanting.

The seats the two wanted were seats close to the Lord's glory. Judging by their words alone, it sounds like a wish to be with the

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Lord. However, while trying to share in the glory the Lord would receive, they did not properly know the way of service and sacrifice that He was going. We, too, when we cherish the wish to do great things in the Lord's name, must look back at whether we hope for that name to be exalted or for our own names to be known.

The confidence of the disciples who answered that they were able does not mean that they fully understood the depth of the suffering the Lord would receive. There are times when a person easily promises that he can manage by his own strength, but on the actual road his insufficiency is revealed. Therefore, even when we speak of dedication, we must guard against a heart that trusts in ourselves. The faith that says we will follow the way the Lord entrusts to us and the boast that we will overcome any suffering by our own strength are different from each other.

After the ten disciples became angry, Jesus called not only the two but all of them and taught them. Criticizing another person's craving does not mean that one's own heart is already full of service. If one's heart is bound to who gets the better seat, one may be running the same race from a different side. The Lord told all of them to come out of the way of dominating people arbitrarily.

The reason the Son of Man came was to serve and to give a ransom

As the basis of this teaching, Jesus revealed the purpose for which He came, saying, *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).* A ransom is bearing, in the sinner's place, the price that the sinner must pay. Because we could not escape the

judgment of sin by ourselves, Jesus took that sin upon Himself and gave up His own life.

Jesus, who came to give a ransom, first said to John, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and received baptism, and so had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The craving of the disciples who sought the seats on His right and left, and the sins of our whole lives as well, were included in all those sins and were passed on to Jesus. The reason Jesus, who had no sin, shed His blood and died on the Cross was to receive in our place the judgment for the sins He had thus taken upon Himself. Jesus accomplished that ransom and rose again from death. A person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not pay his own sacrifice as the price of salvation, but receives the remission of sins by believing in the Savior's ransom.

The word that the disciples, too, would receive the baptism the Lord received means that the Father gives the reward He has prepared to those who suffer for the gospel. However, the Savior who washes away sins is Jesus Christ alone. We receive the life He has given, follow Him, and bear the toil and difficulties on the way of serving the gospel. The fact that Jesus gave Himself first is the basis of our service.

To know the ransom of Jesus is to know how great a debt we have been released from. We could not repay the judgment of sin with our ability or our religious zeal, but the Lord Himself gave His own life. Therefore, a saved person no longer has any reason to use another person's soul in order to prove his own worth. Because the grace that brought us to life is sufficient, even if another person does not recognize our names, we can rejoice that he hears the gospel and comes to life.

The word to be slave of all does not mean to grant every demand of people without any thought. The service of Jesus had

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the clear purpose of saving sinners. We, too, must not stop at giving only what seems necessary to a person, but must preach to him the word of salvation that his soul needs. To a wrong demand, we show the right way with the word; to weakness, we give help; and we serve so that he may believe in the Lord and live.

In such service there is much toil that is not easily seen. There are times when we explain again to someone who does not understand the word, listen to the story of someone who is discouraged, and help with the share that a fellow worker lacks. If we regard such things only as small matters, the wish to do great things from a high position easily becomes empty. Since the Lord gave up even His own life, a person who has received that grace cannot speak of service while turning away from the toil he can bear right now.

Since you have received the grace of the ransom, be slave of all

If gaining a high position is the goal, even another person's growth looks like competition. But a person who has been brought to life by the ransom of Jesus hopes that others, too, will come to know that grace. Preaching the gospel to those who do not yet know the remission of sins, helping those who are learning the word, and sharing the hardships of those who serve together become precious. The strength once spent on exalting oneself is spent on the work of a servant who brings people to life.

Let us examine in our lives the word that says, *"Whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all" (Mark 10:44)*. We can look back at whether we seek opportunities to preach the

word so that a person may clearly know and believe in the remission of sins, whether we are giving the help needed to those who serve with us, or whether our hearts are more set on how people evaluate us. It is to move the heart that used to think about how great we would become toward how we will help the souls the Lord has entrusted to us to hear the gospel.

While serving, the craving to be recognized may rise up again. At that time, rather than being discouraged as if all our toil so far had been false, we must turn our hearts back by the grace of the ransom. Because the Lord bore even our sins and our pride, we can acknowledge that fact without hiding it. Remember again that the souls the Lord has entrusted to us are more precious than our honor, and keep serving in what is needed. As we rely repeatedly on the Savior's grace, our hearts and attitudes that wished for seats are shaped to fit the word.

Let us not hide the fact that we have the cravings of the flesh. Rather than following the Lord as those cravings dictate, we must turn our hearts to Jesus, who brought us to life. Because the Lord gave up His own life, we have received life. Now, valuing people more than seats, serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That is the way of a disciple who follows the Lord who ransomed us. ✉

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Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

Even when told to be quiet, cry out all the more and call on the Lord

< Mark 10:46–52 >

“Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.’ And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. So Jesus answered and said to him, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ The blind man said to Him, ‘Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.”

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The mercy he sought even among the rebuking crowd

Bartimaeus could not see Jesus, but he heard that Jesus was passing by. He cried out, *"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:47)*. Many people rebuked him, telling him to be quiet, but he shouted all the louder. This was because he valued the Savior's mercy, which he needed, more than the crowd's evaluation. A person who knows his own condition and knows who it is that can help him does not shut his mouth because of people's rebukes.

Jesus stopped walking and had him called; so people's rebukes did not express the will of Jesus. The Lord opened for Bartimaeus the way that had seemed blocked. Bartimaeus threw aside his garment, rose, and went to Jesus. He did not stay with the news he had heard, but went forward before Jesus, who was calling him.

Bartimaeus called Jesus the Son of David. He did not simply ask a passerby for pity, but cried out toward the Savior who would help him. As important as the earnestness with which one seeks help is whom one asks. We, too, when our hardship is deep, want to grasp at anything, but the One who solves the problem of sin and death is Jesus. Knowing the Savior and asking Him for mercy is the direction of faith.

The fact that many people rebuked him shows that there was a real obstacle to the heart that was going to the Lord. Bartimaeus could have listened to what people said and hidden his need, but he called out all the louder. This was because he could not miss the One who could solve his condition. We, too, even when we have the heart that wants to hear the gospel, may step back because of other people's evaluation. At that time we

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must first think about what our souls need, rather than how we will look to others.

When Jesus told them to call him, the people conveyed to Bartimaeus, *"Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you" (Mark 10:49)*. From among the crowd that had been silencing him, the Lord's call was now conveyed. The reason Bartimaeus was able to go to Jesus was not that people's attitude had changed, but that the Lord stopped and called him. We, too, when we help someone, must listen to what the Lord says rather than putting our own judgment first. We must take on the role of preaching the Lord's grace to those who are to hear the gospel.

The faith that wants to receive sight

When Jesus asked what he wanted, Bartimaeus answered, *"Rabboni, that I may receive my sight" (Mark 10:51)*. Earlier, the two disciples had asked for high seats, but he asked for his eyes to be opened. Jesus spoke of his faith and sent him away, and he immediately received his sight. The Lord accepted that faith, which did not keep silent out of fear of people but relied on Jesus, yet the power that opened his eyes belonged to Jesus.

We, too, need to see our own spiritual condition rightly. This story of the blind man receiving his sight actually tells us how we receive the remission of sins. If, even though there is sin in our hearts, we regard ourselves as all right because we are accustomed to religious life, we do not seek the remission of sins. When we acknowledge the fact that we cannot wash away our sins by ourselves, we come to listen earnestly to the salvation that Jesus accomplished. Just as what Bartimaeus needed was clear, what our souls need is to know and believe in the Savior who has solved our sins.

Jesus, who came as the Son of David, received baptism from John and had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The sins of our whole lives were included in all those sins and were passed on to Jesus, and Jesus, bearing those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and so received the judgment for sins in our place. And He rose again from death and became our living Savior. A person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit comes to know that Jesus has thus washed away his sins. The remission of sins is not a matter of vaguely gaining a bright feeling, but of being saved from the sin in one's heart by believing in what the Savior has accomplished.

The Scripture says, *"And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus" (Mark 10:50)*. To a blind beggar, his garment was his most precious possession, yet he threw it aside. The heart that sought help from the Lord did not stay at words, but led to steps going forward before Jesus. We, too, when an opportunity to hear the word has opened, must set our hearts on the place where the word of salvation is heard, rather than endlessly making our own circumstances an excuse.

Jesus' asking what he wanted Him to do for him resembles the question He had asked James and John earlier. But the answers were different. The two disciples asked for high seats, and Bartimaeus asked to see. What we ask of the same Lord reveals our hearts. We must look back at whether we are trying to exalt ourselves by using the Lord's power, or acknowledging what we lack and trying to receive grace.

Seeing the gospel rightly does not stop at knowing more religious information. It is knowing the fact that what Jesus did has to do with our own sins. Even if we know the statement that Jesus received baptism from John, if we do not believe that all our sins were passed on at that time, we may hold on to the sins

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of the heart even while looking at the Cross. Only when we accept what the Lord accomplished as our own salvation does the remission of sins become clear. Then the gospel becomes not a distant story, but the grace that has brought us to life.

Follow the Lord by the grace of having your eyes opened

After Bartimaeus received his sight, he followed Jesus on the road. The grace he received from the Lord changed his steps. The man who had sat by the road asking for help now follows the One who healed him. We, too, if we have had our sins washed away through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, must not leave that grace only as a memory of the past. Today, too, we must believe in the righteousness the Lord has given and live following Him.

The reason Jesus said, *"Go your way; your faith has made you well" (Mark 10:52)*, was that this faith was directed toward the Savior who came as the Son of David. Casting aside his concern for appearances and calling out all the more was his faith shown outwardly, and the power that opened his eyes belonged to the Son of David, whom he called upon. Our remission of sins, too, depends not on the size of our faith, but on what was accomplished by Jesus, who received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again. When the object of our faith stands rightly, that faith saves us.

Bartimaeus immediately received his sight and followed Jesus on the road. We must think about why his steps after his eyes were opened were recorded together with this. The grace he received did not remain merely as the memory that one problem of his had been solved. It led to a life together with the

One who healed him. We, too, if we have received the remission of sins, must now decide concretely in our hearts whose word we will live by.

In a life of following the Lord, if we forget the grace we first received, we come to see only our own shortcomings again. The fact that our hearts are weak and our service is clumsy does not mean that our salvation is uncertain. Just as the power that made Bartimaeus see belonged to Jesus, the salvation that washed away our sins also belongs to Jesus. While believing in that grace, we can learn what is needed. Rather than spending our strength on doubting the life we have already received, we must listen to the word about how to respond to the living Savior.

In dealing with other people, too, we need the attitude of one who has met the Savior. Do not try to silence someone because he asks a question unfamiliar to you or because his voice asking for help is loud. We can listen to what his soul needs and help him with the word of the gospel. We are not the master who saves him, but we can be those who help him come to Jesus. Like the call Bartimaeus heard, the news of salvation must also be clearly preached to others through our mouths.

The Lord who called Bartimaeus also knows our shortcomings. Do not hide your condition, but open your heart to the Savior. We who have received grace can also help those who do not yet know the remission of sins to hear the gospel. Let us come out of the attitude of the crowd that silenced people, and become those who help others come to Jesus. ✉

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Sermon 11 by Paul C. Jong

They came to Jericho

< Mark 10:46–52 >

“Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.’ And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. So Jesus answered and said to him, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ The blind man said to Him, ‘Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.”

The inconvenience of living as a blind man

In *“Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’” (Mark 10:46–47)*, Bartimaeus appears. In this world there are many blind people, those who are called the blind. When people say someone is

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blind, they call a person who cannot see in front of him blind. When you look at how a blind man lives, how much hardship he goes through! Let us look at the inconvenience of living as a blind man. First, a blind man lives without seeing the beauty of nature in this world. And he cannot see the beauty of nature and praise God. When I see blind people who cannot see the blue of that high autumn sky, who cannot see the green pine trees, the blue sea, the beautiful flowers, and the detailed, dainty, and natural world that God has made, I feel sorry for them. How inconvenienced a blind man must be! To live without seeing is unfortunate. If a blind man lives without seeing the truly beautiful world, then what does a blind man live by? A blind man lives by his sense of touch. Instead of seeing, his sense of touch is keen. He knows everything by touch. It means that as he walks along the road, feeling his way with a cane, he knows the sidewalk, the roadway, and the houses by his senses. Not being able to see with the eyes is indescribably inconvenient and unfortunate. If one sees with the eyes, one can see what is ahead and prepare in advance, but since these people live by touch, how inconvenient it is! However developed blind people may have become in living by touch, still they are not as comfortable as those whose eyes are open. Those people live by what they know through touch, but if the surroundings change even a little, they cannot know what it is and can only make mistakes. In such respects, blind people are truly inconvenienced.

Because we actually feel a sense of kinship only when we have an inconvenience of the flesh ourselves, we may look at Bartimaeus and think of it as merely a story of Bartimaeus having his eyes opened. But within the Bible, God speaks of many things. For the beggar Bartimaeus to live by touch is pitiful and unfortunate. That we can see things is a blessing, and seeing, and using our perception to judge, to realize, and to deal with

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things in advance—these are the most precious of the blessings our God has given us. Give thanks that we were not born blind. If we had been born blind in the flesh, there would have been very much inconvenience, so when we think about physical blindness and spiritual blindness, first of all we must give thanks before God that we were not born blind in the flesh. Let us imagine that we had really been born blind in the body. If this word were preached to blind people, they would listen with their whole hearts. They would be listening with all their strength, hoping that if they listened well to the word, perhaps their eyes might be opened. Since your eyes are open, it may not feel real to you, but blind people take boundless interest in this word. We, too, need to take interest in it.

Jericho, encountered on the way to Jerusalem

This word is about something that happened while Jesus and His disciples were going up to Jerusalem. On the way up to Jerusalem, the Lord was saying, *"The Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again" (Mark 10:33–34)*. The words *"they came to Jericho" (Mark 10:46)* mean that the Lord was now heading toward Jerusalem. He was saying that He would go to Jerusalem and be nailed to the Cross, and that He would rise from the dead on the third day, but the interest of the disciples was in James and John coming to the Lord and saying, *"Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask" (Mark 10:35)*, *"Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory" (Mark 10:37)*. While

talking with the Lord like this, the disciples ask who is the greater, and ask Him to let them sit in the Lord's glory. Though the disciples of Jesus were traveling together with Him, their interests were each entirely separate. How heavy-hearted Jesus must have been as He spoke of going up to Jerusalem, being delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, being delivered to the Gentiles, being nailed to the Cross and dying, and rising again on the third day! Yet the disciples, who had been saying nothing, suddenly said, "Lord, give us what we ask," and when Jesus said, "What shall I give you?" they said, "Grant us that one of us may sit on Your right hand and the other on Your left." One the high seat on the right, the other the high seat on the left. As for who said this, it was James and John who said it. James and John were chief disciples among the disciples of Jesus. They were disciples who were said to have good faith. There were disciples He took along with Him especially, and they were Peter, James, and John. Fortunately, Peter was not in on this; Peter was probably thinking about something else. But James and John got into a competition. They must have thought, "Let us make our request to Jesus early on; let us ask Him to do so for us when we come into the kingdom of Jesus."

As for where Jesus had arrived, He had come to the region of Jericho. Jericho symbolizes the world. Dear fellow believers, do you know the event that took place at Jericho in the Old Testament? Do you know the city of Jericho? Who received the remission of sins here? Rahab the harlot received the remission of sins at Jericho. What did Rahab do? She was a harlot, but at any rate she received the remission of sins. Dear fellow believers, the name Jericho is sometimes interpreted to mean fragrance. The world is a place where people eat, drink, and enjoy themselves, and pursue pleasure and the enjoyment of the flesh. Up on the mountain is the city of Jerusalem, and the low region

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below it is Jericho. Jerusalem is not that far away. As He was passing through that region, who was there? The beggar Bartimaeus was there. The beggar Bartimaeus was living there, sitting by the road begging. While he was doing so, the news that Jesus was passing by reached the ears of the beggar Bartimaeus. After Bartimaeus heard that news, the word says, "*When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'" (Mark 10:47).*

Bartimaeus, who cried out all the more

Here it says that he cried out. If at this time Jesus Christ had passed on by—that is, if the beggar Bartimaeus had not cried out and had not asked Him to have mercy on him, if he had not uttered the words, "My wish is to receive my sight"—then the only record left of the beggar Bartimaeus would have been that he begged for the rest of his life, ate and drank, and died. But the beggar Bartimaeus hears that Jesus Christ is passing by, comes out before Jesus, and has his eyes opened. The story of the beggar Bartimaeus having his eyes opened tells us something tremendous. What would have happened if the beggar Bartimaeus had not had his eyes opened? And if the beggar Bartimaeus had been keeping up appearances, could he have had his eyes opened? Dear fellow believers, imagine what Bartimaeus would have been doing. Bartimaeus would have shouted, "Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Would Bartimaeus have received much schooling? Since there was no school for the blind, he made his appeal just as it came out of his nature, out of his heart. Usually, educated people refer to Jesus as Jesus of Nazareth. But this man left out the name of the region, Nazareth, and said, "Jesus, Son of David," so we can see that

this man had a view different from that of ordinary people. People knew about Jesus as one who had grown up in the small region called Nazareth, but the beggar Bartimaeus knew that the Scriptures say the Christ would be born through the seed of David, that is, the seed of Abraham. The Bible says that kings are born continually through the descendants of Judah among the twelve sons of Jacob. So among the children of Israel, the descendants of Judah are the highest tribe of the people of Israel. The tribe of Judah is the foremost among the tribes of Israel. The one who was born from there is David. The One who was born through the descendants of David is Jesus. Now, God had promised through the prophets that there was One who would be born through the royal lineage, and that He was the very One who would come as the Savior. But this beggar Bartimaeus had not read the Bible; he had heard it secondhand. He had always heard it said that the servants of God had promised that the Messiah would come to this earth, and then, while begging, the beggar Bartimaeus heard the news that Jesus was really passing by. And Bartimaeus believed in his heart that Jesus, who came as the Son of David, was the Messiah. We see that as this man believed and called on Jesus, the blind man had his eyes opened. Truly, when we look at this man's great courage and at his having his eyes opened, for many people to have their eyes opened spiritually, courage like this man's is needed, and truly throwing aside one's garment is needed. When this man, who had been asking for a penny by the roadside, called on Jesus, many people must have rebuked him, telling him to be quiet, asking why a mere beggar's voice was so loud. But what did that man do? It says that he cried out all the more. He had great boldness indeed. Dear fellow believers, to receive help, one must be at least this much. If you are cowed and keep quiet just because someone says something, then there is no hope of your

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meeting Jesus. He cried out all the more. Bartimaeus must have had the heart, "I am about to meet the Son of David now, so why are you getting in the way?" Since the blind man could not see ahead, he went before Jesus crying out. So Jesus heard that cry, stood still, and told them to call him. So the disciples called the blind man. *"Then they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.' And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus" (Mark 10:49–50)*. Jesus said, "What do you want? Do you want to receive your sight?" and said, *"Go your way; your faith has made you well" (Mark 10:52)*, and he immediately received his sight.

Throwing aside his garment and wanting to receive his sight

Dear fellow believers, truly, to a blind man his garment is his number one possession. To us it is something we can do without, but to a beggar even his begging bowl is property. Without a begging bowl, he cannot get food to eat. A beggar has to beg wrapped in his garment, but it seems that when Bartimaeus heard the news that Jesus was calling him, he threw aside his garment, his begging bowl, his money, everything, and went. This man is truly a remarkable man. If we truly want to meet Jesus, we must be like this man. It means that unless we are like this man, we cannot meet Jesus. Today many people want to meet Jesus. They truly want to meet Him, but when they go out to meet Jesus, when they say, "Son of David, have mercy on me," there are many people who block them, telling them to be quiet. Mark chapter 2 also tells that when the paralytic was going before Jesus, many people blocked the way. They were blocking it so thickly that there was no room to set foot, and if that paralytic or

the four men had given up, there would have been no hope of meeting Jesus, and he would have lived on like that without ever being healed of his disease, and died. But it tells us that the four men got past those people, let the paralytic down from the roof, and he met Jesus and was healed of his paralysis. Countless people blocked Bartimaeus. And the many multitudes following Jesus rebuked him, telling a mere beggar to be quiet. So he cried out all the more. So, as Bartimaeus shouted as if yelling into a loudspeaker, Jesus stopped on His way and looked, and many people were blocking his way, keeping him from coming. Jesus told them to bring him. Then the blind man threw away his begging bowl, his garment, everything, and came before Jesus. Jesus asked, "What do you want Me to do for you?" Bartimaeus answered, "I want to receive my sight." The blind man clearly did not go before Jesus and ask for money, nor for a coat, nor for a house; he truly wanted to receive his sight before Jesus, the Son of David. Dear fellow believers, it was truly the right request. If a blind man receives his sight, makes a living, sees the beautiful world, and then dies and goes to the kingdom of God, how good that is! Before Jesus, Bartimaeus did not make some other wish; he wanted to receive his sight. This man was a man who wanted to meet Jesus Christ, and a man who met Him. Many people are seeking Jesus, but if, like those who blocked Bartimaeus, someone had blocked them and they had not gone out, or if, even after going before Jesus, they had asked for something else, Jesus would have simply sent them away. But when the blind man said before Jesus, "I want to receive my sight," Jesus said, "Your faith has made you well; go your way." It means that Jesus opened the eyes of the blind man.

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There is no sin in this world

Dear beloved saints, all people have their eyes open. We, too, have our eyes open, so we live seeing one another. At that time many people were watching Jesus pass by. But the blind man could not see Jesus Christ passing by. He knew it by hearing the sound, and he truly wanted to receive his sight before Jesus, and it was done as he wished. Truly, telling this kind of story, the story of a spiritually blind man having his eyes opened, is in reality telling how one receives the remission of sins. Because Jesus received baptism from John and died on the Cross, and so removed the sin of the world, I want you to know the fact that, whether one believes or does not yet believe, there is no sin left in this world. Dear fellow believers, because Jesus bore all the sin of the world, people have no sin. Just as many people live with their eyes open, in this world from which Jesus has removed the sin of the world there is in fact no sin. Although there is no sin, there are people who are born blind, as if there were sin. Dear fellow believers, since Jesus has taken away all the sin of the world, it means that there is no sin on this earth. This kind of talk may meet with fierce opposition from many people, but we can say it by faith. People think that in this world there are only blind people with open eyes who do not know the world of God, that is, sinners, but in the text the blind man is Bartimaeus alone, and all those around him are people whose eyes are open.

There is the fact that He has removed sin: because Jesus received baptism from John and had the sin of the world transferred to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again, sin has disappeared from this world through Jesus. In a state without sin, we are living in a bright and radiant world. Yet countless people, like the blind man, live without having

their eyes opened, in a state of having sin, in a gloomy state. How dark, how pitch-black, and how unhappy are those who believe that they have sin! In how much frustration do those who believe that there is sin in this world live! How great a difference there is between a person who lives in this world with his eyes open and a person who lives without his eyes open! A person who lives with his eyes open lives regarding this as a bright and beautiful world. I cannot tell you how beautiful and good a world this is. A person whose eyes are truly open knows that this world is beautiful and good. But a person whose eyes are spiritually closed must find living in this world tedious.

A person whose eyes are spiritually open knows the fact that Jesus Christ has removed our sins, and is sure in his heart of the fact that he has no sin. A person who has no sin in his heart lives in the world joyfully, gladly, and lightly. But how frustrated, uncomfortable, gloomy, and heavy is the life of a person who believes that there is sin in his heart! Truly, a person without sin—in this world there is no sin. We who live in a world without sin have no sin. When I am talking with someone and that person asks, “Then, Pastor, do you have no sin?” I answer, “Yes, I have no sin.” Then, because I say it so naturally, from that moment the person shows some kind of resistance. “Do you not commit sin?” “I do commit sin. But since Jesus took away even that sin through the baptism He received from John, I have no sin.” Because I have no sin, I can laugh even in all kinds of difficult situations, and I have songs of praise. That is how I live.

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One whose eyes have been opened sees the world as beautiful

When the beggar Bartimaeus was blind, how painfully he lived! But the beggar Bartimaeus, who in the darkness had worried about falling every time he walked and had to grope around to find where the food was even when he ate—did he still have such inconveniences after his eyes were opened? He did not. After we received the remission of sins, we had no such inconveniences. Gloom and darkness are Satan the devil deceiving us. At times when we feel gloomy, dim, pitch-dark, and stifled as if living in a basement, are we in reality such people, or are we not? We must often realize the fact that we are not such people. We are not such people. Dear fellow believers, we are people whose eyes have been opened. We are righteous. I cannot tell you how beautiful it is, after our eyes have been opened, to live in this world walking with the Lord and living for the Lord. So, because living in this world is itself joyful and beautiful, Bartimaeus, too, after his eyes were opened, must have lived his whole life joyfully.

Just because our eyes have been opened spiritually does not mean that the circumstances of the rest of our lives change. Only the angle from which we see changes. In the past we groped and knew that it was a flower, but now we see with our eyes and know that it is a flower. Dear fellow believers, even though the nature God made does not change, and even though people do not change, a change has come to our own hearts. Because our eyes have been opened, it is not bleak; rather, with just a little effort we can live beautifully in this world as much as we like, lead many people before Jesus Christ, and live worthwhile lives. It means that such a life was realized for the beggar Bartimaeus.

As we live in this world, when we know the fact that there is no sin in this world, how brightly and cheerfully we can live in a bright and radiant light! When we know and believe that there is no sin, this world is a truly bright, clean, and beautiful world. If in our hearts we take this world to be a lump of sin, then as we live it is dark, gloomy, dirty, and hard to live. It means that there is such a difference in our hearts. For those who have not received the remission of sins, living in this world is tedious. But for those who have received the remission of sins, those whose eyes are open, the world is beautiful because they know that there is no sin in this world. How beautiful is this world, where under a bright sky all things are green, flowers bloom, and fruit is borne! It means that our way of seeing must change in that way.

The reason those who have received the remission of sins live painfully in this world is that, although there is no sin in their hearts, they still believe that there is sin in the world. It is because, just as one felt by touch when one was blind, they only feel the feeling of having received the remission of sins, and do not see the beauty of this world after their eyes have been opened. It is because they do not live in a spiritually bright world. We must know how beautiful and how good a world we live in. But if we think that there is sin in this world, how dirty it is! Dear fellow believers, when you look at another person, if you say that that person has sin, how bleak it is. That person does not have sin now; he is being deceived by the devil. There is no sin. There is no sin in this world. But people are being deceived by the devil. Although there is no sin, the devil is covering their eyes, so they are blind. There is a difference between being blind and there being no sin in this world. The state of heart of a person who knows and believes the fact that there is no sin in this world and that of a person who believes that this world is riddled with

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sin are different. I want you to know that there is an infinite difference between a person who lives by faith and a person who does not live by faith, between a person who lives with his eyes open and a person who lives with his eyes closed. I want you to believe.

When the beggar Bartimaeus lived as a blind man, how miserably he lived! How miserably are many people now living without their spiritual eyes opened! They just earn money to eat and live, and know nothing beyond that. Looking at what they do, there is no beauty in their hearts. After eating, they live for the fun of gossiping about this person and that. It means that in their hearts there are no eyes to look at the true world. There is no beauty. But how beautiful this world is! How beautifully the Lord has made this world! How happy He has made it! It is not that the things of the world are in themselves joyful and beautiful; it is beautiful because God made this world beautifully and also made the world to come beautifully. Within eternal time, God made all the worlds of the heavens and the earth of the universe beautifully. Just as Bartimaeus, who lived in a dismal and gloomy world when he did not know the truth, had his eyes opened and saw the beautiful world, we, too, must not look only pessimistically at the world God has made beautifully, but must look at it positively, and the fact that there is no sin because Jesus has removed the sin of the world is the truth. That one was blind and then had his eyes opened is the truth. Although we did not close our physical eyes, spiritually we were blind. It means that after our eyes have been opened, we must not look at this world as we did when our eyes were closed. After our eyes have been opened, we must see it as a beautiful and clean world. When we deal with people, too, we must know the fact that that person has no sin, and shine light on that part. Shining forth the fact that we are clear and clean people, and that there is no sin in this world,

is the light of the world. The conclusion is that because Jesus has removed all the sin of the world, there is no sin in this world.

Do not live as if you had closed your eyes again

We have received the remission of sins. As we live, there are times when we are gloomy. When something does not go well, there are times when we are gloomy. Why can we not live happily in this world? Why do we fail to build happiness beautifully, and grope as if passing through a dark tunnel, when there is a bright road? Why can we not live joyfully and beautifully? We have been born again spiritually, but we must open the eyes of our thinking in our hearts again. Only when we open them again can we know that this world is beautiful. If we do not open them, we can only see everything negatively.

When we preach the gospel, we must not look at the other person negatively. When we hold an evangelistic meeting, we must not think, "How could these people receive the remission of sins?" People say that they have sin because they are spiritually blind, but since Jesus has taken away all that sin, they have no sin. It is because they have no sin that we hold the meeting. Whatever anyone says, we must call them with a smile and remove the scales from their eyes. When we remove the scales, they say, "So this is what believing in Jesus is." When they say, "Ah! Now I have no sin," it means that their eyes have been opened. Even after their eyes have been opened, they think that their eyes are closed and go off somewhere else for a while, and then they come back. Many people, even after receiving the remission of sins, think that their eyes are closed and still live the old life. That must not be. We who have received the remission of sins must not live that way.

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When I look ahead, I believe that a tremendously beautiful and vast world lies open. In my life there are surely only beautiful and happy things; there is no curse or gloom in my life. If you, too, look with the eyes of faith and look in the light, only truly blessed things lie open in your lives. Yet there are many people who do not see that, and though their eyes have been opened, they close them again and live the old way. We must not be like that. I want you to break free.

Countless people receive the remission of sins. Countless people come into the light, and the church becomes beautiful. We must believe the fact that God fills what is needed in the church, that our lives are cheerful, glad, and joyful in God, that all the old things have passed away, and that our lives are made so. It was for this that our Lord saved us, yet there are many who, even after receiving the remission of sins, live gloomily, bound to the past. Then flowers cannot bloom in our lives. Not living by faith is like trembling, living with the mindset of those who lived in Egypt, without taking possession of the vast land of Canaan, the beautiful world, even though God has opened it up. Our hearts are being stolen away by the world; if we fight the spiritual fight for the Lord, we come to dwell before the Lord, and we have weak flesh that can only fall into the world if we do not fight the spiritual fight. That is why we must fight the spiritual fight, eat the food God gives, and live in the Lord. We must break free. We must break free just as the beggar Bartimaeus broke free.

Enjoy by faith what He has already given

Dear beloved saints, we must think about how blessed God has made our lives, and think, in faith, about whether or not there

is sin in this world. I want you to think that you live in a world without sin, and I want you to testify of the light and build up families of light in the world without sin, and, in faith in the Lord who has made for us working lives of light and a world made light, to live believing what He has already given us. Do not fail to enjoy what God has given us; believe and live. Even if I live my whole life enjoying the beautiful world that has been opened, enjoying what God has given, I will go before God without having enjoyed all that God has given us. Now there is nothing left but to live enjoying and taking possession by faith. We are no longer blind. We have become not the beggar Bartimaeus but the gentleman Bartimaeus, and now we think of Bartimaeus with his eyes opened. It means that this is what we are. Do not let your lives be bound to the past. *"Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17)*. Dear fellow believers, God has opened the way for us to live in a vast world, a blessed world, a beautiful world. Do you believe that fact? I want you to live by faith. When you do, happiness blooms like a flower in the family, blooms in the church, and blooms in our lives. Our Lord has permitted it. I hope that we will live enjoying it in the light, bear even more fruit before God, and give Him glory. ✉

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CHAPTER

11

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The lesson the colt teaches us

< Mark 11:1–10 >

“Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; and He said to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” say, “The Lord has need of it,” and immediately he will send it here.’ So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. But some of those who stood there said to them, ‘What are you doing, loosing the colt?’ And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: ‘Hosanna! “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!” Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!’”

The disciples who loosed the colt and brought it

Mark chapter 11 contains a remarkable account. It says that Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a colt. For Jesus to ride on a colt, a colt was needed, and the colt that was tied had to be

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brought. So Jesus commanded His disciples, *"Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it" (Mark 11:2).*

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, He entered riding on a colt. The people gave praise, crying out Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Jesus is the King of kings and the Creator, but He was humble, and so when He came to His kingdom, He came on this earth riding on a colt. Yet we must look into what we should know in this word, what we should receive as a lesson, what we should follow by faith, and also what kind of work it is that the Lord has done for us.

Jesus entered riding on a colt. But the disciples of Jesus are the ones who worked so that Jesus could enter riding on a colt. Jesus is God; He has power, He knows the beginning and the end, and He is the One who does as He has planned. Yet what would the disciples' position have been like? Jesus told His disciples to go into the village opposite them and, when they saw a colt tied on which no one had sat, to loose it and bring it. From the disciples' standpoint, it was reasonable to wonder whether Jesus was making them commit theft. Since He told them to loose and bring a colt that was being raised at someone else's house, that was tied, and that no one had ever sat on, the disciples were bewildered. Then what were they to say if anyone asked? Jesus said, *"The Lord has need of it, and immediately he will send it here" (Mark 11:3).*

The disciples had to go and do as they were told. And they went and did it by faith. When they actually went and loosed the colt that was tied and were about to leave, the people asked, *"What are you doing, loosing the colt?" (Mark 11:5).* So the disciples said that the Lord had need of it. The amazing thing is that the people who were standing there let them do so.

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This was possible because Jesus is God. What would have happened if an ordinary person had done such a thing? They would have been taken for thieves and all hauled off. Then is Jesus One who makes people commit theft? Are the disciples of Jesus thieves? No. There is nothing perfect in what people do, but Jesus is perfect. Jesus told them to loose it and bring it, and told them to say that the Lord had need of it if anyone asked what was going on. When the disciples went and were bringing it as they had been told, and were asked why they were taking it, they said that the Lord had need of it, and so they were able to take it. Truly Jesus is God. What leader in this world could do this? No one. Because Jesus is the King of kings, that colt was the Lord's, its owner was the Lord's, and all things are the Lord's, and that is why He could do so. Yet there is a clear purpose in what the Lord says to His disciples here.

The colt was loosed and led, and it carried Jesus and entered the city of Jerusalem. So the people broke off branches from the trees and spread them on the road, and welcomed Him greatly, crying out, *"Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (Mark 11:9–10)*. It means that they welcomed Him just as citizens come out and hang garlands of flowers on athletes to welcome them when they return victorious from a great competition. Then we must think about what the disciples of Jesus and the colt tell us here.

We are that very colt

Jesus told His disciples to bring a colt, and He rode on it and entered the city of Jerusalem. Did Jesus have to enter riding on

a colt because there were no horses or other animals in this world? That is not so. Jesus specifically designated that He would go riding on a colt. That colt was a colt that had never once carried a person, and a colt that had never once pulled a load. It was an animal that had never once done anything. Thinking of it by common sense, would such a colt stay still while carrying Jesus? Would it not kick and leap and make a great commotion? Yet Jesus insisted that He would enter riding on a colt, and so He rode on it. And there is no word that the colt went wild. There is only the word that it went in well. Then what is the meaning this colt gives us? The first lesson it gives us is that we ourselves are this colt.

We were born into this world in iniquity from the time of our birth. David confessed before God, *"I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5)*. It means that when my parents conceived me, I was conceived in iniquity, and when I was born into this world, I was brought forth in sin. It means that I am a seed that cannot but sin. In the same way, we were fundamentally unclean animals and unclean sinners before God from the time we were born into this world. It means that our ancestors and our parents were all unclean before God, and that we, too, were unclean when we were born into this world.

A donkey is originally an unclean animal. That is why God said in the Old Testament, *"Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck" (Exodus 13:13)*. It means that the firstborn of a donkey had to have its neck broken unless it was redeemed with a lamb. Why did He do so? When the people of Israel came out of Egypt, a lamb was sacrificed. When the plague of death came on the Passover, the houses of the people of Israel were protected by the blood of the lamb, so their firstborn sons did not die, while

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the firstborn sons of the Egyptians were all killed. It means that God had to bring the punishment of death on all sinners alike, but He did not bring death on those who were believing the word of the Lord.

That is why we are, spiritually, colts. Because we are colts, we must have our necks broken if we are to be saved. If the neck is broken, one dies. All these words—that in the Old Testament God had the firstborn of a donkey redeemed with a lamb, and that otherwise He said its neck was to be broken—tell us that the Lord, in order to save us, bore our iniquities, died in our place, rose again from death, and saved us. Jesus had all our sins transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, bore those sins and shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again from death, and so He saved us. And this word, going right on, tells us that if we want to be saved from sin by the Lord, and if we want to be used by the Lord and become the Lord's workers, we must have our necks broken. It means that we must break our own very stubborn necks, our own stubbornness. We must die once with Christ. Our own stubbornness rises up relentlessly. How strong is our stubbornness? Like a rubber band, even when it is stretched out, it snaps right back into place. We say we were wrong, and then right away we do the same thing again. That neck must be broken. We must be put to death. We must be put to death together with Christ.

After being saved, break the stubbornness of the flesh

We are saved by truly knowing that we ourselves are sinners and by believing that the Lord gave us the gospel of the water and the Spirit, bore all our sins, and received all the judgment

for us. Then is that the end of it? After we have been saved and have become the Lord's people, the Lord wants to use us. And He wants to enter the city of Jerusalem through us. He wants to use us as workers on this earth until we reach the Lord's kingdom, so that other souls may also be saved just as we were. But even though we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, it means that we must break the stubbornness of our flesh, our self-will, and the thoughts of our flesh. We must break the stubbornness of our own flesh by ourselves before God without fail. If the word of the Lord has said to do this, we do this, and if the Lord's will delights in this, we do that. There is no other way but the way of following the Lord's will. We must break it. If we do not break it, we will never be used by the Lord and will be cast away.

Why was the one who had received one talent cast away? Because he did not break his own thinking. He said to his master, *"Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours" (Matthew 25:24–25)*. The Lord has given us salvation, and He has also given us talents. Would the Lord give us only salvation and end it there? Would He not come to collect the return on it, in order to save other souls through us as well? We must follow the Lord. But what if we have received the remission of sins and yet do not follow? It is easy to think that if we do not follow, we can just quit. But however firmly we make up our minds, we cannot follow unless we break the necks of our own flesh, unless we break our stubbornness. When we try to apply to our actual lives the shallow things we know in theory, the things we have heard with our ears, the only way we can follow the Lord to the end is to break our own stubbornness and break the thoughts of the flesh.

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Without breaking them, we cannot possibly follow. Will we work for a day or two and then quit? Will we yield our hearts once or twice and then quit?

Following the Lord is our destiny

We must know this. If we have received the remission of sins, if we have believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, this is our very destiny. It means that living and doing the Lord's work after receiving the remission of sins is our destiny. Following the Lord is our destiny. If, even though we did not want it, our parents in the flesh believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and became workers of the Church of God, and we were born as their children, then even if we do not want to follow, now that we have believed in this gospel, we will die unless we follow, and so it means that this is our destiny.

This is not something I am saying on my own. Did not the Lord say in the Gospels, *"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34)*? He also said, *"There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:29–30)*. In following the Lord, becoming distant from one's children or parents naturally follows as well. If we say we cannot do such things, how can we follow the Lord?

I, too, before I met the Lord, before I met the word of the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, was at a prayer house. I attended a theological seminary from there, and I was

the person who, upon graduating, would be ordained as a pastor and become the director of that prayer house. The director of a prayer house was by no means a low position. But after I met this word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the truth, as the word of God, I could not stay there. That was not a place where people who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit came, but a place where people who believed only in the blood of the Cross came to pray. It was a place where only people came who had the faith that they were sinners even if they prayed every day, sinners even if they offered prayers of repentance, sinners even if they believed, and all the more sinners the longer they believed. There I tried preaching the word of the gospel. The people heard it and liked it very much. But when the lights were turned off and they were told to pray, they prayed, "Lord, I am a sinner." My heart was hurt, and I could not stay with them. I said that I would preach this gospel, and I left there.

Even in my own family, my older brother, whom I had led to believe in Jesus, kept his distance from me, saying that my faith was different from his. My friends, too, all built a wall between themselves and me. My closest friends followed me around for a year or two, pleading with me to please come back. I said, "I am sorry, my friend. I can never do that. Listen to my sermons, and if there is anything that goes against the Bible, point it out and tell me. If I am wrong, I will go back. If not, you are the ones who should come back; how could I go back?" My friends said, "How can you live like that? When all of Christianity is like this, would you not become a strange person if you alone did so?" But even if I alone in this world believed this way, I could not do otherwise.

We lose friends, parents, and many things. We lose possessions, we lose honor, we lose everything. Had I not done

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so, how could I have followed the Lord? If I had compromised, how could I preach the gospel to you, and how could I run such a pure church as this? The neck must be broken. After I met the Lord, I broke my stubbornness just as the Lord said. Since the Bible says, *"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6)*, I realized that it is the Lord who exalts us in due time, and that I do not become exalted just because I exalt myself, and so I broke myself. I lived by breaking myself. Even now there are many things I break. It is not only you who break yourselves; I break myself, too. I say what must be said and do not say what must not be said, and there are many times when I deliberately say things that would leave my heart at ease if I just let them pass. Why is that? Because if they are left as they are, they die. And after they have died, they complain, asking why I did not stop them at that time. Because they resist all the more if one stops them in a fleshly, human way, I tell them the word of God clearly.

If we want to be used by the Lord after receiving the remission of sins before the Lord, we must break ourselves. We must break the neck of the colt. You must admit that your flesh is one that is to perish, and you must break your plans, too. You must break your bright ideas, too. Since the Lord wants this gospel to be preached to the whole world, we must break ourselves. Even if it is hard to follow, even if we have no confidence, we must follow. If we do not follow, what will we do? We must ask ourselves what would happen if we did not follow the Lord to the end, if we did not serve the Lord to the end, and we must come up with the answer ourselves. Do you think it would be comfortable not to follow? You may think, why not go out into the world, earn some money, and live the life of the flesh, eating and drinking? If you want to do so, you may do so.

The faith of having been crucified with Christ

But it is not because they do not know how that those who follow the Lord refrain from living for the flesh. It is not because they are slow-witted that they do as they do. They think it all through to the end. What happens when they think it all through to the end? The conclusion comes out that it is utterly impossible. Because they have received the remission of sins but following the Lord is utterly impossible, they have no choice but to go to that place where they die on the Cross together with the Lord. Because that place is where we die, unless we go there, no one can follow. *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).* When the Lord died, I died, too, and when the Lord rose again, I was made alive again, too—that is the faith of being united with the Lord. That is why we follow the Lord; otherwise, how could we follow? Is it enough to bear with it? Is it enough to hold out? Is it enough to endure? These are all necessary things. But what is the end of it? We must die. We must die and come alive again. Although the old self is still within us, we can follow only if we have the faith of having died with the Lord, the faith of being united with Him. Otherwise, how can we overcome the thoughts of the flesh? It means that there is no way to overcome them.

Following the Lord is not easy. I have gone through all that process. So I know all about what process you will go through. I am conveying to you that faith by which I was able to follow the Lord. So if you receive my help, you can make up your minds very easily and follow the Lord. But if you try to realize it on your own, it is very hard. This is because a person's thoughts rise up in a fleshly way and are bound to go in a fleshly direction. That is why we must follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before us.

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In fact, it is not easy for those who are in the church to follow the Lord. There is no one who can follow while being guided by the Church of God with all his own opinions intact. Even if one tries to follow, one cannot. It means that we do not have that kind of ability. Are we iron men? Are we the ones who pass through all of a triathlon—cycling, swimming, and running a marathon—and come in first? An ordinary person cannot even attempt such a competition. However strong one may be, such a thing cannot be done. That is why the Lord here told His disciples to loose the colt that was tied and bring it, and said that the Lord had need of it, and used it. We must be loosed. We must be loosed from what is unresolved in our hearts. When we calculate whether or not we can follow the Lord and reach the conclusion that we cannot, how can that be resolved? We must follow with this kind of faith—believing in the Lord and relying on the Lord, living united with the Lord and dying united with the Lord. Since it says that our having died on the Cross with Christ means that Christ lives in us, then it is already finished. If the old self has died, we are not people of this world. Whether we are old or young, we are the Lord's people. Then, as the Lord's people, we cannot but follow the Lord's will. That is our destiny. Following the Lord's will, we cannot but succeed. That is our destiny. Then all we have to do is go on by faith like that. Then that is what gives us peace.

Count the cost and then follow

Living and dying while striving to the death to eat well and live well only for oneself is one lifetime, and yielding one's heart after being born again, believing in the word of God, breaking one's own flesh, and serving the Lord until one departs is also

one lifetime. A lifetime is the same either way. But which is better? We must count the cost. The Lord told us to count the cost when we follow Him. *"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it" (Luke 14:28)*. It means, would one not count the cost before building a tall tower? He also said, *"Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace" (Luke 14:31–32)*. It means that when the enemy army is invading and our army is small and our tactics are weak, we should quickly send a delegation and ask for conditions of peace. It means that we should make peace, saying that we will pay so much in tribute every year, so please let us keep our country. The Lord told us to count the cost and then follow. That is why the Lord also said that whoever wants to become His disciple must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Him. If we follow without counting the cost, we regret it. When one has followed for quite a while, having come along following what one could not even follow, and one regrets having followed this far since one cannot follow anyway, it becomes resentment in the heart.

Salvation is easy to receive. It is also easy to hear and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Was it hard when you believed in the gospel? Was it not free? Does not the Lord say that He has unilaterally removed our sins? Believing this is easy. Preaching it is hard, but hearing and believing it is easy. Moreover, how easy it is to believe in this gospel while being inside the Church of God! But what is hard is following the Lord after that. Yet following the Lord is also easy if we follow by faith. There is a story like this. A certain missionary went to a

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region where it snows a great deal to do mission work, and one time he passed with great difficulty along a snow-covered road in a raging blizzard, praying together with the Lord. After he had passed through safely and looked back at the road, although two had walked, there were only one person's footprints on the road. So he asked the Lord why that was, and the Lord said that because he was struggling so, He had carried him on His back through that treacherous place. When we are in great difficulty, the Lord keeps us and the Lord leads us. How could we follow the Lord with the strength and will that we have? It is only that we do not know ourselves well; this word is telling us about that part. So it means that if we want to follow the Lord, we must break our stubbornness. How many things we are tied to in the world! We must be loosed from them and be trained. Did the colt loose itself? Just as it was loosed because the disciples went and loosed it, we, too, are loosed by those who have gone before us.

We can follow because the Lord leads us

When the colt carried the Lord on its back, if it had been left to its own instincts, it would have twisted and thrown Him off completely. But the Lord gave it such ability, and so it could carry Jesus on its back comfortably and go. Our following the Lord, too, seems in fact as though we are following, but it is the Lord who leads us. It is the Lord who protects us and the Lord who blesses us. It seems as though we are serving the Lord, but it is the Lord who serves us, entrusts us with the work of serving Him, blesses us, and enables us to follow Him. It is the Lord who does it.

It is hard until it gets to that point. There are many conflicts in the heart as well. When we receive the remission of sins and

actually do the Lord's work, evil rises up right away. Because what we know is theoretical, we cannot hold out long, and our limitations are soon exposed. When we follow the Lord and really do the Lord's work, what we know in theory is shattered right away. Is that not so? What we know, our stubbornness, and our patience are nothing. They are shattered right away. We follow the Lord because the Lord gives us strength and because the Lord comforts us from within, telling us that living this way is right; what patience do we have that we could hold out? So what I am saying is that, since we are colts, we must fundamentally break the stubbornness of our flesh. It is not that we are told to break it; rather, we live only if we break it. What happens when we break it and die? When we have died, does not the Lord give us new strength? Is not the Lord within us? Does not the Lord lead us through the Church and cause us to do righteous works? That is why we live by faith. Yet the one who is deluded thinks that he is following the Lord by his own strength, but it means that this is not so.

Nor is it something we accomplish by bearing with it. We follow because the Lord has saved us and the Lord causes us to follow, because all the plans the Lord makes are right, and because what the Lord has done is right. That is our destiny. The Lord enters the city of Jerusalem through us. It means that the Lord enters in order to build His kingdom and to reign as King there.

Within the Church of God, Jesus Christ is the King. God's servants are servants when they do God's work, but before the people of the world their standing is like that of kings. Who can compare with us? Can those who try to make money by speculating in land with a few coins compare with us? Such people, too, must count the cost. If we do not know ourselves, it is hard to follow the Lord. Even little children can all count the

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cost. We can act within the ability the Lord gives us. Our following the Lord now is because the Lord has blessed us. What have we done so well that we follow? We must come to our senses. Rather than being proud of knowing a little, we must know the whole. We must know the history of mankind, we must know the beginning and the end, and we must know about life as well. If we are to do anything, we must do it looking ahead to the very end. A person must become a great person. People of old called a person who thinks of great matters a great person, and a person who thinks only of his own affairs a small person. A great person must become the king of a country, and the ministers, too, must be such people. It means that if small people are gathered in the seats of the ministers, the country is ruined. If, after we have been saved, we do not think of God's will and think only of our personal advancement, everything is ruined. We ruin ourselves and cause everyone else to be ruined as well. If we are not careful, we even send our own family members all to hell because of ourselves.

I tell you clearly. If we live by faith, the Lord will save our families, whenever He may save them, and He will save others as well. But if we give up following the Lord, we lose all the people who would be saved through us. That is the promise and the blessing God has given us. That is the truth. If we follow the Lord well, it benefits us, but it also benefits others. If we do not follow the Lord but go against Him, we ruin ourselves and send our families to hell because of us. As individuals, we may do this or we may do that. This way it is one lifetime, and that way it is one lifetime. But God has planned many who will be saved through me, and He has planned many who will be saved through you. Yet if we reject that will of God and live according to our own will, it is all made void. Then God does the work through others. Those who would have been saved through that

person are finished. In a way, that person has done something deserving a severe beating. The Bible says, *"And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes" (Luke 12:47)*. I, too, in a fleshly way, understand the heart that wishes everyone could live comfortably and well. But if we abandon God's will and do so, we are ruined. Then no one can succeed. Those who go against God's will and pursue only their own desires may appear to prosper for a time, but such a life can eventually lead to serious spiritual and personal difficulties. Therefore, we should live according to God's Word rather than seek only immediate benefits.

So I want you and your families all to do well, and I want all the people of the whole world to be blessed through us. God said to Abraham, *"I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you" (Genesis 12:3)*, and that blessing has come upon us today. If we follow with the faith of Abraham, we all receive blessings just as God blessed Abraham. But if not, we all receive curses. In any case, I give thanks that He has given us the blessing of being able to follow the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The small service entrusted to us who have welcomed the King of salvation

< Mark 11:1–10 >

“Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; and He said to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” say, “The Lord has need of it,” and immediately he will send it here.’ So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. But some of those who stood there said to them, ‘What are you doing, loosing the colt?’ And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: ‘Hosanna! “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!” Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!’”

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The way prepared just as He had said

When Jesus drew near Jerusalem, He sent two disciples. While having them loose and bring a colt on which no one had yet sat, He told them that if anyone asked the reason, they were to answer as follows: *"Say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here" (Mark 11:3)*. The disciples met with what He had spoken of at the place to which they were sent, and they answered just as they had heard from Jesus and brought the colt. The One who prepared this way was Jesus, and the disciples, following His word, took part in the work that had been prepared.

Serving the Lord also begins here. If we think that the Lord can work only after we have first arranged every circumstance, we will only look at what is lacking and fail to take a step. But if the work the Lord has entrusted to us is clear, we can do what we have to do by relying on His word. It is not boasting of an ability we do not have, but believing in the wisdom and care of the Lord who uses us.

The instructions given to the two disciples were not vague. He told them where to go, what they would meet, and how to answer if they were questioned. The disciples were not people who had to figure everything out on their own, but people who only had to move according to the word the Lord had given them. In our service, too, listening comes first. We must not push ahead with our own plans before we even know the Lord's will, simply because we have zeal. When we clearly know what He has entrusted to us and act in faith, the direction of our labor is also set right.

When the people asked why they were loosing the donkey, the Bible records, *"And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go" (Mark 11:6)*. They did not

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assert their own authority or forcibly overpower the other party. They only conveyed the word the Lord had given them just as it was. Looking at this scene, we learn the fact that one who serves is not one who creates his own authority but one who conveys the word entrusted to him. A person must not turn the words that the Lord has need of it into a pretext for fulfilling his own craving. Both the content and the method of service must follow the Lord's will.

A colt on which no one had sat was used on the way of Jesus. In the Bible, this colt in fact speaks of us human beings. The Lord looses and uses, through His servants, you and me, who were stubborn, bearing the burden of sin, and tied to the world. When we think of this, we cannot conclude that a person is useless to the Lord merely on the grounds that he has little experience. Even if we still have much to learn, we can carry out the work the Lord has entrusted to us according to His word. What matters is not how complete a person we are, but who has called us and what work He has entrusted to us. Rather than retreating with our shortcomings as an excuse, we need the faith that learns, receives help, and serves in the part entrusted to us.

The King did not change the way of suffering even amid the cheers

The people spread their clothes and branches on the road and welcomed Jesus. They cried out, *"Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mark 11:9–10)*. Yet Jesus, who was receiving this welcome, had earlier told His disciples that He would suffer and die in Jerusalem. He did not change the way He would go just because there were cheers.

The salvation the Lord would accomplish did not lie in gathering people's expectations and gaining a high position.

A person under sin needs the Savior who will take the burden of sin off him. Before entering Jerusalem, Jesus had already had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River. Even the sins we commit throughout our whole lives are included in those sins. Jesus, while bearing those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins, and so He received the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and became the living Savior. Because He had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, He received in our place the judgment of the Cross that we were to receive, just as the word says, *"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5)*. The King who came in riding on a colt went on to Jerusalem to accomplish this salvation.

Therefore, we who praise Jesus must know what kind of salvation we have received. If we expect only that life will become comfortable, we cannot understand the Lord who goes the way of suffering. When we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we can praise Him as our King and Savior because of the fact that Jesus bore all our sins and even received the judgment for them. The grace that gave us the remission of sins upholds our praise.

The people praised Him who comes in the name of the Lord and hoped for the kingdom of David. But the way we had hoped for and the way of salvation the Lord accomplishes can be different. If we wait only for a king who will immediately remove the hardships of the world, it is hard to understand Jesus, who would bear sin and die. The Lord came to solve the deepest problem of human beings, sin and death. Only when this

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salvation is clear do we not abandon our faith in the Lord even when the hardships of life remain.

To say that we receive Jesus as King does not mean only keeping close at hand a powerful One whom we can ask for help whenever we want. It is to set our hearts on the word of the One who saved us and to live following His will. If we accept the fact that the Lord has given us the remission of sins, yet try to make every decision of life only according to our own will, then while saying with our mouths that we have received the King, in reality we ourselves are sitting in the King's seat. Because we know the love of the Savior, we must now live learning what pleases the Lord.

That does not mean, however, that Jesus becomes King only after our obedience has become perfect. The Lord saved us first, weak as we were. When a wrong heart is exposed in the process of believing in and following that grace, it is corrected by the word. Because the righteousness given by the Lord, who is King, upholds us, there is no need to hide our faults in order to keep our place. A life in which thanksgiving and learning go together is the life of one who believes in the King of salvation.

Carry out even small service by faith

On this day, on the way of Jesus there was the work of bringing the colt and the work of spreading clothes. As it says, *"Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it" (Mark 11:7)*, the Lord mounted upon the small labor of the disciples. The role of the disciples was not to accomplish salvation in the Lord's place, but to serve Him by obeying the word of the Lord who was going to accomplish salvation. We, too, must know this order. The remission of sins

received from Jesus comes first, and service is the response of one who believes in that grace.

There is no need to put off the work the Lord has entrusted to us on the grounds that our faith is young and our experience is small. The Lord's grace can be conveyed even in helping a person who wants to hear the gospel or in examining the word together. Conversely, we must not try to stand above others on the grounds that we have been entrusted with a work. Since the One who calls and uses us is the Lord, serving according to His will is a joy.

We must not look too far away for the work of being used by the Lord. Making time so that a person who does not yet know the gospel can hear the word, examining the necessary materials together, and explaining the parts he finds difficult are also service entrusted to us. Preparing behind the scenes so that someone else can stand in front and preach is also needed. Just as the labor of the disciples who brought the colt was connected to the Lord's entry, small preparation, too, can be used together in the work of preaching the gospel.

When the work becomes too much for us as we do it, we must not think that we are the master who is responsible for everything. This is because the One who spoke to the disciples and sent them was the Lord. We, too, can ask the Lord for the wisdom and strength we need while faithfully doing the work entrusted to us. Receiving help from fellow workers is not a shameful thing, either. If we believe the fact that the Lord uses many people together, we can rejoice in shared service even if our own names are not made known.

Whether the crowd welcomes us or people's interest is small, the purpose of service must be the same. It is to make known that Jesus has saved sinners and to help people believe that word. We must get out of the attitude of boasting that we accomplished

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it by our own strength when there is much praise, and abandoning the work entrusted to us when there is little praise. The Lord who uses us knows the value of the work. Giving thanks for the salvation received from Him, we need to treat the people and the work entrusted to us today with the Lord's heart.

Jesus, even while hearing the voices welcoming Him, kept going on the way to save sinners. We, too, must not leave the direction of our service to people's praise, but must set our hearts on the word of the Lord who saved us. Praising the salvation He has accomplished, let us take part by faith in the small work He has entrusted to us today. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

With what faith do we stand before the Lord, who saw the temple?

< Mark 11:11 >

"And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve."

The temple behind the sound of welcome

Mark reports, *"Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things" (Mark 11:11).* Earlier, many people spread their clothes on the road and praised Him, but the text does not repeat that welcome at length. It records that the Lord's gaze turned toward the temple. The Lord is not One who looks only at the outward appearance of people welcoming Him. He looks at what is actually being done in that place where people claim to serve God.

In this one verse there is no record that Jesus said anything on the spot. However, when we read it together with what He taught the next day as He drove out those who bought and sold in the temple, saying, *"Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'?" (Mark 11:17),* we can see that His looking around the temple was not a visit that passed

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lightly. Since the temple is the house of God, the Lord, who is the Master of that house, has the authority to judge the temple, and just because something looks familiar to people does not mean the Lord also regards it as right.

Our faith, too, cannot be judged only by the appearance familiar to human eyes. Even if we take part in worship and do the work assigned to us, our hearts may be bound more to the evaluation of others than to the word. Before the word that Jesus looked around at all things in the temple, we must examine what the Lord delights in. We must not stop at decorating our own appearance, but must lay before the word what our hearts rely on.

That Jesus looked around at all things means that He did not look at only a part of the temple and pass by. People may try to show off in a big way the parts that are favorable to them and hide the parts that are uncomfortable, but before the Lord they cannot be divided up and displayed that way. The Lord also knows our worship and service. Not only the labor that is easily seen, but also why we do that work and whom we treat in what way, are before the Lord. When we know this fact, we cannot be satisfied with merely putting on the form that is seen by people.

The temple was the place where people gathered, claiming to serve God. Therefore it is easy to think that the content of one's faith is whole merely because of the fact that one has entered there. However, the Lord saw what was being done inside it and exposed what was wrong the next day. We, too, must not consider everything to be automatically right because believers have gathered. We must examine our purpose and our actual state on the basis of the word. The name of a community does not take the place of each person's faith and deeds.

If we do not know the standard by which the Lord sees, people's evaluation will shake our faith. On the day we are

praised, we feel as if we are righteous, and on the day we are rebuked, we feel as if everything has collapsed. However, the Lord knows both our outward appearance and our hearts. A person who stands before Him has no need to be intoxicated by a good evaluation, nor any need to think that he has lost his salvation because of a bad evaluation alone. We must know clearly through the word what the true basis is.

Place the basis of your heart on the word of salvation

Even if we have lived a religious life worthy of praise from people, those works cannot wash away sin. A heart in which sin remains as it is cannot draw near to God through outward familiarity. What the Lord wants is not the skill of hiding sin, but faith that believes in the word by which He saved sinners. Only when the basis of our faith is clear can our worship and service, too, come out of that grace.

We must know how that Lord, who looked around at all things in the temple, dealt with the sins of our hearts. Because it was the sins of people that blocked the way for all nations to come to God, when Jesus began His public ministry, He had the sins of all nations, that is, all the sins of the world, transferred to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, and at that time the sins of our whole lives were also passed on to Jesus. The Lord, bearing the sins that were thus passed on to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment for sins that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and made us who believe righteous. As the Scripture testifies, *"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ –ASV" (1 John 5:6),* the

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gospel of the water and the Spirit, before any demand that we strive to look good, tells us how the Lord washed away our sins.

A person who believes in this gospel has no reason to hide before the Lord, who knows his inner being. This is because even the shortcomings revealed in his heart are included in the sins that the Lord bore. Therefore, acknowledging our shortcomings and believing in the remission of sins do not conflict with each other. We can examine ourselves honestly while still relying on the righteousness the Lord has given us. Only when we have this faith can we follow the word even when we are not recognized by people.

Not hiding before the Lord, who knows our inner being, is not an attitude that says we may live any way we please. Rather, it is laying down the heart that has been putting on a show and acknowledging our actual wrongs. When the fact that the Lord bore all our sins is clear, we need not fear that even our salvation will collapse the moment we acknowledge our wrongs. Grace makes honest self-examination possible, so that we do not try to protect our hearts by understating our sins, but rely on the righteousness that Jesus has given us.

To the people who were familiar with the state of the temple, the Lord's rebuke must have sounded uncomfortable. We, too, when we hear someone say that we should examine again by the word what we have long been doing, may defend ourselves first. However, the fact that something is familiar is not grounds for thinking that it is right. We must confirm together what God has said, and change the direction that is wrong. A person whose heart is set on the Lord of salvation does not regard a change in his own way of doing things as the collapse of his whole faith. This is because the basis of faith lies in the word of the Lord rather than in a way of doing things.

Also, when we think about what we offer to the Lord, we must not try only to increase the quantity, but must examine the basis of our hearts. This is because, even while spending much time, we may only pile up resentment over not being recognized. On the other hand, even while doing a small work, we can give thanks for the remission of sins we have received and hope that souls will come to life. The Lord looks not only at the size of the work we do, but at the faith within it. There are times when hearing grace again and renewing our hearts is needed before adding more activities.

Even when the day grows late, learning continues

When the hour grew late, Jesus went out to Bethany with the twelve disciples. The Lord, who had looked around the temple, took His disciples and went on to the next step. Since it says later, *"And every evening he went forth out of the city –ASV" (Mark 11:19)*, this walk continued day after day. The disciples did not understand all His meaning at once, but as they went about with the Lord they learned His words and His deeds. We, too, must not think that we have learned all of faith through one fervent song of praise. We need the learning that keeps hearing the word and examines our own thoughts by that word.

In the record that He went out with the twelve disciples, we see the picture of learning that continues. The disciples saw the welcome on the day He entered Jerusalem, and they were also with the Lord as He looked around the temple. The next day, before the fig tree as well, as it says, *"His disciples heard it" (Mark 11:14)*, they came to learn His meaning further as they heard the Lord's teaching. We, likewise, are not people who have no need to learn the word further just because our hearts

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once grew fervent. Life with the Savior is a life of continually examining our present hearts and conduct by the word we have heard.

In the place where we learn the word, we must first have a heart to apply it to ourselves. If, while reading about the wrongs of the temple, we think only of other people and other gatherings, we may fail to see similar things even when they are in us. We can look back and ask whether we, too, are putting on a show of godliness to gain people's recognition, and whether we are putting the smooth progress of the work ahead of the souls of those who hear the word. When we believe the fact that the Lord sees all things, we do not avoid such questions.

We also need to share our purpose with those who serve together with us. If we do not know clearly why we do this work and what gospel we intend to preach, our hearts become scattered amid busy activities. We can hear together how Jesus washed away our sins and examine what is needed in order to preach that grace to others. Then even correcting what is wrong becomes not a dispute over who has won, but learning in order to serve the same Lord. We must examine together, before the word, the state of our gathering as the Lord sees it.

Look back today on the heart with which you offer worship and service to the Lord. If you are only waiting for people's response, you must turn your heart back to the word that saved you. The Lord sees all things and also teaches us. Rather than wearing ourselves out decorating ourselves before Him, let us believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, give thanks for that grace, and walk with the Lord. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

A religion with nothing but abundant leaves has no fruit

< Mark 11:12–14 >

"Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.' And His disciples heard it."

Why He sought fruit from a tree when it was not the season

Jesus, having come out from Bethany, was hungry. Seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if there was something on it, but there was nothing on the tree but leaves. The Scripture records together with this, *"For it was not the season for figs" (Mark 11:13)*. It was not that the Lord made a wasted trip because He did not know the season for bearing fruit; He went because He had something to teach through that tree with nothing but abundant leaves. That He sought fruit even though it was not the season means that the Lord requires of us

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not a life lived according to the natural order, but a life lived by faith in God. Therefore we must examine, together with the events that follow, what the word He spoke before the fruitless tree reveals. What the disciples heard was the Lord's word that no one would ever again eat fruit from that tree.

After this word follows the event in which Jesus drove out those who bought and sold in the temple. There were people and activity in the temple, but Jesus rebuked them, saying, *"But you have made it a 'den of thieves'" (Mark 11:17)*, declaring that the place had lost its meaning as a house of prayer. This makes us think about the fact that having an outwardly visible abundance does not mean having a faith that God accepts. The Lord looks beyond what appears to be there, to what fruit there actually is.

We must not regard the Lord's word as merely the complaint of a hungry man. The next morning the disciples saw *"the fig tree dried up from the roots" (Mark 11:20)*. It came to pass according to the word of the Lord, who made life. A person who knows that authority does not reassure himself that it is all right to remain in a faith that has only an outward form, but looks back on the true state of his faith before the word.

In the record that Jesus was hungry, there is the picture of the Lord who came among us clothed in a human body. Yet in the fact that the word He spoke to that tree was fulfilled exactly, the authority that rules over created things is revealed. We must not lower His word to the same level as human words on the grounds that we see the Lord's humbled appearance. We must know that the One who walked with us is the very Savior who gives life. This is because how we treat the Lord's word becomes the foundation of faith.

The fact that the disciples heard that word is also important. They heard the word the Lord spoke before the fruitless tree, and later they saw its result. The word and what came to pass are

connected to each other, and so they learn faith. We, too, when we read the Bible, must look together at what the Lord said and how He fulfilled it, rather than remembering only impressive scenes in isolation. Only then does our faith escape from a vague feeling and stand as faith that trusts the One who spoke.

That leaves were seen and that there was actual fruit were different things. In faith, too, we must distinguish between the appearance that is easy to confirm from the outside and actual faith before God. A record of attending worship or familiar expressions can be seen, but what word of salvation a person believes must be listened to more closely. The same is true of ourselves. Rather than only counting the list of things we are doing, we must examine whether we clearly believe how Jesus washed away the sins of our hearts.

Faith that cannot be replaced by the form of religion

If we attend church for a long time, we can become familiar with the order of worship and with religious words. We can also be evaluated by others as faithful. However, such things do not make the sins of the heart disappear. If we rely more on our own reputation and our own benefit than on the word of God, then even if the outside looks abundant, we may fail to accept the gospel that gives the remission of sins. The faith the Lord seeks is faith that actually receives the salvation He has spoken of.

The fruit the Lord seeks is not something a person produces by himself; it is borne from believing in the heart the salvation the Lord accomplished. Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, and not only the sins of the days we

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have passed through, but also the sins we commit throughout our whole lives were all passed on to Him at that time. Jesus, bearing those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and established those who believe as righteous people. When a person believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, he can stand before God by the salvation the Lord accomplished instead of by his own religious record.

Therefore, when we hear the word that fruit is needed, we must not try to pay the price of salvation by piling up more good deeds. We must first believe the fact that the Lord has washed away all our sins. If we are still holding on to sin in our hearts, we must not cover over that problem with a familiar religious life, but must hear the word of the gospel. Thanksgiving and service come out of the faith that has received the remission of sins; the quantity of thanksgiving and service does not produce the remission of sins.

A heart familiar with the form of religion sometimes regards hearing the word of salvation as a bother. This is because it thinks that it has already attended for a long time and done many things, and that this is enough. However, if many activities cannot take the place of the remission of sins, the same is true of a long record. The faith the Lord seeks is faith that actually accepts the word. We must lay down the pride that we are already people who know, and accept in our hearts whether the transfer of sins and the atonement that the gospel speaks of apply to us as well.

The word the Lord spoke to the fruitless tree is not light. The word He spoke, *"Let no one eat fruit from you ever again" (Mark 11:14)*, means that a person who does not believe in the Lord's salvation in his heart will never receive salvation, will not become a child of God, and will receive an eternal curse like

a tree dried up from the roots. There is no path on which it is all right to hold on only to outward religion while refusing God's salvation to the end. That is why we who have heard this warning must not soothe our hearts with the form of activity. If our sin remains unresolved, we must clearly hear the word of the Savior. The warning is not a word that ends with frightening us, but a word that calls us to abandon false reliance and return to true salvation.

For those who have already received the remission of sins as well, believing the word the Lord has spoken determines the direction of their lives. If, when facing an important decision, we weigh only our own gain and loss, the purpose the Lord has entrusted to us becomes blurred. We must know through the word what the Lord delights in and seek His help. Then we can escape from a life in which the purpose of our faith changes every time our circumstances change a little. The faithfulness of the Lord who saved us gives direction to our hearts.

Believe the word and live a fruitful life

Even we who already believe in the gospel can remain in formality. We can forget why we do the things we must do even while repeating them, and our hearts can easily be shaken by people's reactions. At such times, before increasing only our outward activities, we must hold on to the Lord's answer before the withered tree, *"Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22)*, and think again of the word that saved us. The faith that the Lord bore all our sins and is still faithful to that word even now renews our hearts.

With that faith we can preach the gospel of the remission of sins to others and serve in the work entrusted to us. Even when

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there is no immediately visible result, we do not regard the Lord's word as vain, and we patiently give the explanation the other person needs. Such service is different from religious activity meant to make oneself stand out. Because our hearts are set on the Lord who gives life to sinners, we value the souls of people.

In serving the gospel as well, we must not think that only the outwardly visible scale is fruit. Even if many people gather, if they do not actually know the meaning of the remission of sins, we must preach more clearly the word they need. Even if few people gather, if one soul knows and believes the salvation the Savior accomplished, we must value that work. If our interest stays only on numbers and evaluations, we will miss the value of the souls the Lord gives life to. We must continue the labor needed for the fruit of believing the word.

That labor also includes time spent waiting for the one who hears. Since the hearer does not come to know everything at once just because we have explained it, we can listen to where his understanding got stuck and explain again how Jesus bore sin. It is laying down the impatience that we ourselves must produce the result, and relying on the Lord to work through His word. Such patience is not a waiting that does nothing, but faith that continues to do what is needed while believing the Lord's promise.

The word of Jesus, who saw the tree that had only leaves, does not let us be satisfied with our outward appearance. Today, too, let us be assured of the remission of sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and do by faith the things the Lord delights in. I hope that the service that comes out of a heart that believes the word will continue in our lives. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Have a desire in your heart and live by faith

< Mark 11:11–14, 20–24 >

“And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve. Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, ‘Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.’ And His disciples heard it.” “Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, ‘Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.’ So Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, “Be removed and be cast into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.’”

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The parable of the fig tree

God wants us to have faith that believes in God. If there is anything God requires of us, it is that He wants there to be faith in our hearts that believes in God.

Depending on whether or not we have faith in God, we not only receive blessings before God and are saved from sin, but are also set free from the devil, and the desires of our hearts and all our dreams come true. God has required faith in God of you and me, and of all the people of this world. The question is whether we have faith in God or do not have faith.

When our Lord came out from the region of Bethany and was going to another region, He saw a fig tree. He saw the fig tree from afar and went to it. He thought there would be something on the fig tree; He wanted its fruit.

When our Lord went there, the fig tree had no fruit. Here it is written, *"For it was not the season for figs" (Mark 11:13)*. Even so, our Lord said to this fig tree, *"Let no one eat fruit from you ever again" (Mark 11:14)*, and cursed it like that.

Dear fellow believers, we do not think that our Lord, not knowing the time when fig trees bear fruit, went to the fig tree and made such a mistake. Usually, as for the time when figs are borne, people pick the fruit of the fig tree from midsummer to late autumn. Figs are very delicious. They are also very nutritious.

In some countries there are a great many figs. There are many in the nation of Israel, too. The leaves of the fig tree are broad and large, like a hand. And its fruit is about the size of an egg, and it is very delicious.

At any rate, when our Lord went to the fig tree, there were no figs on it. And our Lord cursed the fig tree: *"Let no one eat fruit from you ever again" (Mark 11:14)*. Exactly as that word

said, when Jesus went to another place, finished His work, and passed along that road again the next morning, He saw that the fig tree had dried up from its roots and died.

Faith in God

What is God's heart toward us? He truly wants us to have faith in God.

He truly wants us to have faith in God. God curses those who have no faith; those who do not believe in the Lord, those who do not believe in the salvation by which the Lord saved them—God curses them like this tree. He sends them to hell.

Whether we humans have faith in God or not, whether we believe in our hearts or do not believe—on this, many blessings and curses are decided.

In fact, when we believe in God—when we have the faith that God came to this earth in the form of a man, received baptism from John, and died on the Cross, and that thereby you and I are saved from all sins—we are saved and also obtain everlasting life. We become children of God.

After we have been saved, do we truly have faith in God? God requires our faith of us and truly wants us to believe in God. God has a heart that wishes us to believe in God Himself. God has a heart that says, "I truly want you to believe in Me."

Our Lord spoke as follows: *"So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be removed and be cast into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them'" (Mark 11:22–24).*

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Dear fellow believers, when we say that we pray, we say we pray in the sense that we plead before God and ask for His help. It means that we ask God for our desires. “God, I want to live this way. I want to become this kind of person. God, I want to receive this blessing before You and to live serving You in this way.” It means that we plead the desire of our hearts before God.

When we plead the desire of our hearts before God and believe that God will do this for us—when we clearly tell Him the desire of our hearts and believe that God will fulfill it, believe that He will do it this way—when we believe this, God answers according to the desire of our hearts, according to what we have prayed.

That is why God delights in those who believe in Him. When we were saved, too, didn’t our Lord come to this earth, save us with the water and the blood, and make us sinless?

Have a desire in your heart

But the question is what we do after we have been saved. After being saved, how should we live, and what should we do?

For faith to arise, we must come to church and hear the word. *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17)*. So faith arises only when we hear the word, but after we have been saved, we do not know the word, we have heard little, and as we try to live on, there are things that seem bleak, and we also have hopes of our own that we wish for. Since He said, *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33)*, when we, in God, ask for something—when we set a desire of our hearts before God—what do we set there?

We have desires of our own hearts, but there is also how we want to live for God, what blessings we want to receive before God and how we want to be used, and how we want to do this and that in the work of God—we have that desire, that dream; we plead for that dream; and we believe that God will fulfill that dream, that He has fulfilled it, that God will surely do this way what we have pleaded for and asked help for before God, that He will do it. When we believe, God fulfills the desire of our hearts, our dream.

Dear fellow believers, when plastic articles are stamped out with a mold, the shape to be made is carved into two pieces of metal, the two are fitted exactly together into one, and then the material is put inside and heat is applied to melt it.

Then the melted material fills every gap of the shape carved into the metal, and when the mold is opened, various articles such as wastebaskets and food containers come out in that shape. Likewise, we must have a desire that we wish for in our hearts.

First, we must have a desire. We must have a desire in God, first within His kingdom and His righteousness, that says, "God, I want to live this way. And God, I wish You would bless me this way." And we must plead for that desire, ask for help, and believe that God will do it this way.

Dear fellow believers, the fig tree here is different from ordinary trees. When the leaves of a fig tree are abundant, the trunk cannot be seen. In midsummer, when the leaves are at their fullest, there are so many leaves that the trunk can hardly be seen—each and every leaf is that broad.

When we truly have, not a theoretical faith, but an actual desire before God in our lives, and for that desire we set our will and our purpose before God and plead and ask for help, saying, "God, please do this for me; please bless me this way," if that desire is fitting in God's sight—that is, if we have been saved

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and believe in God and, while being united in the Church of God, have a purpose that is good in God's sight—God fulfills the desire we plead for and ask for, according to that good purpose.

You and I must have a desire. After being saved, we must have a desire. Of course, we must not make this desire only a matter of eating well and living well in the flesh, and live in vain, neither preaching the gospel of the water and the blood nor serving the gospel. We must set our will before God; we must have a desire.

Dear fellow believers, after being saved, we must have a desire. What desire? I have a desire in my heart before God to preach the gospel to all the people of the whole world. And when I tell my desire before God and plead and ask for help, I have the desire that God would enable me to preach the gospel of the truth of the water and the blood to all the people of the whole world and that He would let all souls be saved. I believe that God will do this.

Dear fellow believers, we must also actually have before God the desire for the salvation of the souls of our family members. We must plead with God, "God, please save them; please let them receive the remission of sins." And we must believe. We must believe that He will do this, that He has done this. We must first have a desire before God, then we must plead and ask for help, and then we must believe that God will fulfill everything in the prayers we plead and ask for help in.

"Believe that you receive them"

This word says, *"Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them" (Mark 11:24)*. Dear fellow believers, if it said to believe that you will receive what you have

prayed for and asked, anyone could believe it, but the Bible says to believe that you have received it, speaking in the past tense. Believe that you have received what you have prayed for and asked—it speaks in the perfect tense.

It means that everything has already been accomplished. After our hearts have been saved before God, we must first have a desire in our hearts, and second, we must plead the desire of our hearts before God—"God, please help me; please fulfill it and give me help." And finally, after we have had a desire, pleaded and asked for help, and finished praying, we must believe that God will do it.

With the faith that says, "I believe that God has done this for me," we must wait for what we asked as the desire of our hearts. The Bible spoke of the desire of prayer as follows.

"Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them" (Mark 11:24). Believe that you have received. Dear fellow believers, you must plead—before God. Pleading and asking for help is prayer. How do we truly wish to live before God? And what work that pleases God do we wish to do while living in His blessing? Dear fellow believers, because we are righteous, our prayers are answered.

He saw the fig tree and rebuked it for having only abundant leaves and no fruit; what does He want to teach us by this? It means that God does not want only abundant leaves—that is, seeming only to attend church diligently, carrying the Bible around, and saying, "I am a pastor, I am an elder, I graduated from such-and-such a seminary."

What does He want? Does one have faith in God? Does one believe? God asks, "Do you believe that I have washed away all your sins with the water and the blood?" We answer, "We believe." Then should there not be fruit? Should the heart of the soul not be without sin, and should one not have become

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righteous? That is the point. The thing is that even though people live the religious life of Christianity and believe in Jesus, they always have sin. They are sinners. Because they have sin, they are not saints before God; they are not righteous. They are not children of God.

He pronounced the curse: *"Let no one eat fruit from you ever again" (Mark 11:14)*. Dear fellow believers, if we do not believe in the Lord's salvation with our hearts, we are cursed. God does not acknowledge us just because our leaves are abundant.

How long one has attended church, or whether one says, "I attend a big church," has nothing to do with it. Under such teaching with only abundant leaves, no matter how long one lives a life of faith, one cannot receive the remission of sins and cannot escape from the rule of Satan the devil. Even if one lives a life of faith for thousands of years, one is always marking time in the same spot and is always a sinner.

A sinner when believing, a sinner when not believing, a sinner from beginning to end—and the only place a sinner can go is to receive the eternal curse in the fire of hell.

Dear fellow believers, we must truly believe in our hearts that our Lord saved us with the water and the blood. Dear fellow believers, if we believe in our hearts, there is fruit. Just as figs are borne on a fig tree, those who believe have fruit. Dear fellow believers, are you truly righteous?

When a fig ripens, its tip turns yellowish and splits open. When the fruit splits open, there is a flower blooming inside it. Dear fellow believers, a truly righteous person has no sin in his heart. Whatever his outward appearance may be, whether he knows the Bible much or little, whatever that may be, he has no sin in his heart. When we look at the Bible, Jesus came to this earth to save a human being like me with the water and the blood, and, just as He said that He did not come to save the righteous

but to save sinners, He came to save sinners; and by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River in my place, in the most fitting way, like the laying on of hands of the Old Testament, as the Lamb of the New Testament, He had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, and died on the Cross. And He rose again.

And He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. The question is whether you and I believe with our hearts in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who came to save us, the Savior of mankind. If we believe with our hearts, it is salvation; but if we do not believe with our hearts—however thoroughly we know the Bible outwardly, however holy we pretend to be, however we adorn our outward appearance—like a fig tree with only abundant leaves, dear fellow believers, such people not only cannot be saved before God but cannot become righteous.

He bore our sins through the baptism He received from John

Dear fellow believers, Jesus Christ truly is the Savior of you and me. Jesus Christ, while being God, came to this earth. Jesus Christ is God. The name Jesus means Savior, and the word Christ means the Anointed One, that is, King. The King, the King of kings, the Creator, God who made all things in the whole universe, became a man. He came as a man. The King of kings came as the Savior, as the Savior of the world. He came as the Savior and saved us. How? When Jesus was thirty years old, He received baptism from John, was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood, and by giving up His own life, He bought us with the price of His own blood.

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It means that by receiving baptism from John, Jesus washed our sins away clean. He bore all our sins and thus washed our sins away clean. That is why Jesus Christ shed water and blood when He died on the Cross. To confirm whether Jesus Christ, who had died on the Cross, had really died, a Roman soldier pierced His side with a long spear. And what came out? Water and blood came out. Dear fellow believers, in many places the Bible tells us in fine detail that He saved us with the water and the blood.

In reality, the Son of God came to this earth and did not save us by word only; He actually came in the form of a man and also bore all our sins. He did not do it by word only; He actually bore all our sins through receiving baptism from John and made us sinless, and that Jesus, who bore all the sin of mankind, received the judgment in place of mankind, just as it is said, *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*.

Through His death, and through His receiving baptism from John, we were able to be saved from sin. Dear fellow believers, there are those who believe this. There are those who believe exactly as the word says. Those who believe exactly as the word says are saved from sin and liberated.

Do you believe with your heart?

Dear fellow believers, is there truly the fruit of the fig tree in our hearts? The question is whether we believe from within our hearts, whether we believe with our hearts. God wants the fruit of the fig tree. The question is whether we believe with our hearts. Do we have faith that believes? God asks, "Do you have sin or not?" We answer, "We have none." How have we received the remission of sins? God asks again, "How did I save you?"

The Lord came to this earth, and when He turned thirty, He received baptism from John and had all our sins transferred to Him, and most fittingly, by the law of the laying on of hands of the Old Testament, just as promised in the Old Testament, Jesus Christ came in the New Testament and, according to the word, bore not only all our sins but all the sin of mankind, without leaving out a single person, and received the judgment on the Cross.

"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5). Why could He die on the Cross? Why could He be slapped on the cheek by people, stripped of His clothes, and suffer so? It means that He suffered on the Cross because He bore our sins through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River.

The prophet Isaiah said, *"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5)*. Even though Jesus Christ had never once committed sin, He had to suffer on the Cross because He bore our sins at the Jordan River through that baptism.

Dear fellow believers, do you believe in your hearts? It says, *"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10)*. Dear fellow believers, true faith lies in whether one believes with the heart or not. It is not some matter of abundant leaves alone; does one believe with the heart? If one believes with the heart, it is salvation, and if one does not believe with the heart, it is not salvation.

What is the true truth? Dear fellow believers, it is to believe in Jesus Christ, who saved us with the water and the blood. What is the true truth? After we have been saved, what is the true truth?

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The heart of a saved person

When a saved person tells his desire, when he pleads and prays, when he asks for help, God fulfills it. *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1)*. Dear fellow believers, faith is the substance of things hoped for; when we pray with a desire in our hearts, God fulfills it.

Dear fellow believers, when I went through hardship in my heart, I searched for God's will. I searched: Why is it this way? What have I done wrong before God that it is this way?

Did Jesus not bear even my wrongs through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River? He took them all away, so what wrong is there? What is there to be beaten for? Since Jesus Christ received the judgment on the Cross in my place, even if I have shortcomings, is there anything for me to be judged for?

Seen by faith, there is nothing for me to be judged for. Then why is there such hardship? At the time I was going through hardship, I looked into a certain seaside city. "Aha, God gave me this hardship and sent me here so that I would preach the gospel in this place," I realized.

"God, please let me preach this gospel of the water and the blood to all people"—I had this desire in my heart.

"Surely these people will all hear this gospel that I preach and receive the remission of sins. Lord, I believe in You."

"God, please save these souls. People believe only in the blood of the Cross and are always sinners, so please let me preach this gospel of the water and the blood exactly as this word says and let them be truly saved from sin; let those bound by demons be set free, and let those suffering from sickness be healed of their sickness. Please let people receive the remission

of sins; please let them be saved from sin. Lord, I believe." I had this desire in my heart. I prayed. At that time it was impossible. I believed.

"God, please do this." I believed. At no time did that faith disappear. In whatever situation I was in, my faith did not disappear. "God will surely do this. I believe." When the time came, after a year had passed, that desire was fulfilled. Dear fellow believers, this did not come about in human terms. You must not think of it on the level of someone having helped me. Of course I have my coworkers, but this, dear fellow believers, was the work of God. Even now, dear fellow believers, whether it is the work of preaching the gospel in every corner of the world or the salvation of our families, all these things come about just so if we set the desire of our hearts, pray, plead, and ask for help, and then believe that God will do it this way, that He has done it.

After we have been saved, the first desire we must have before God is this: "I will be united with the Church of God; even if the knowledge or forms I know are somewhat different, I will follow the Church of God." We must have a heart to be united. Also, we must have the desire, "God, I wish my body to be healthy so that I may become a worker of righteousness; since I have heard the gospel of the water and the blood and received the remission of sins, I wish to become a worker who preaches the gospel to others; I wish to live such a life," and we must plead before God to let us become people who can live this way. We must pray. We must ask for help.

And if we plead and ask for help and believe that God will do it, if God says this is not a bad thing, dear fellow believers, if we believe, live a life of faith, and remain united with the church, then when the time comes, God fulfills your desires in that way. *"Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you*

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receive them" (Mark 11:24). First we must have a desire and plead. We must ask for help.

And we must believe that God will do what we pleaded and asked help for in prayer. Dear fellow believers, if we believe and live, God does it just so. He does it just so. Dear fellow believers, this is the desire of the heart of a saved person and the vision of a saved person. It is the life of faith of saved people.

Dear fellow believers, a saved person must have a dream before God. He must have faith. That is why I plant dreams in people. I cannot provide them with good circumstances, but I do plant in them dreams that please God in the Lord. And it actually comes about just as they believe.

The faith of saved saints

Dear fellow believers, now that we have been saved, how should we live? Now that we have been saved and have no sin, how shall we live? In the old days, when we had sin, we used to plead, "God, I have committed this sin; please remit it," but now there is not even this, is there? There is no prayer of repentance to offer either, is there? Then what shall we do? Dear fellow believers, we must first seek His kingdom and His righteousness. We must do the work that pleases God.

What is the work that pleases God? It is serving the gospel. How do we serve the gospel? It is to serve the gospel by joining hearts with the church, being united together, and gathering our strength. Dear fellow believers, in the old days we always offered prayers of repentance because of sin and struggled to win by fighting Satan the devil ourselves, but now, dear fellow believers, it is not you who win; our Lord has overcome the

world. He has overcome the devil. If we believe in the Lord, the devil cannot budge. He cannot work.

And if the devil ever threatens you or brings you fear, command him, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I command you, Satan, be gone!" Then Satan cannot budge and retreats. If you command by faith, he retreats.

"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). It means that when we pray earnestly and plead and ask for help before God, and when we believe, the work of God takes place.

You and I, how do we want to live? We want to live as pleases God, don't we? Dear fellow believers, do you want to live for the gospel? Do you want to give your lives while preaching the gospel? Dear fellow believers, you must have a beautiful dream. You must have a beautiful faith.

We must have the faith that our Lord delights in according to the word. And we must plead. If we plead, "God, I am not worthy to live this way, but please let me live this way," and ask for help, we believe that God will do so because what we have asked is not something bad in God's sight. When we believe, dear fellow believers, He said that even if we tell this mountain to be removed and cast into the sea, it will be done, and in another Gospel He said that it is enough to have faith even as small as a mustard seed. The word here is that word. We believe.

But is there even the smallest bit of such a heart within you, or not? Our Lord said that the mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds; a mustard seed is hard to see with the eye, and if you so much as breathe while trying to look at it closely, it all blows away. That is the mustard seed. However small it may be, we must have the heart that says, "God, I did not pray for this according to my own will, but because the desire to wish for

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what pleases You is in my heart, I pleaded before You and asked for help."

Confess, "My faith is lacking, but still I believe." If there is just one small faith the size of a mustard seed, God answers. Dear fellow believers, that is why, even if we have no burning emotion in our hearts, if we pray before God with a good desire in our hearts, God will fulfill your desires, our desires.

This is the faith that we saved saints must have. Now that we have been saved, we must live as pleases God, and we must believe that when we pray, "God, please let me live this way," just as we want to live as pleases God, God blesses us so that we can live that way. We must believe and wait. Dear fellow believers, first have a good desire in your hearts. The heart that says, "If circumstances allow, I will do it, and if not, I won't," is not right.

It says, *"Faith is the substance of things hoped for" (Hebrews 11:1)*. It means that if we have a desire in our hearts and hope for it like a mold, God makes it come to pass.

A good dream

What desire do you and I have? We must have a desire. Whoever has been saved must have a dream.

Joseph was a dreamer. One day Joseph had a dream in which sheaves of grain stood up and bowed down to his sheaf, and Joseph told that dream to his father. He told his brothers. His brothers got angry, saying, "You little brother—so you mean we will all bow down to you?" Did it actually come about as in the dream, or not?

Joseph became the prime minister of Egypt. Even during the famine he was prime minister. While he was prime minister,

didn't his brothers come to buy grain and all kneel down before that prime minister? It came about as in the dream. A saved person must have a good dream. When I was born again, I had the dream that I would preach the gospel to this whole world. Before, I believed only in the blood of the Cross. So I was always a sinner.

But I came to know this gospel of the water and the blood. I came to believe it. And the very first thing I prayed was this: "God, this whole world does not have this gospel of the truth. There is no gospel of the water and the blood, God. God, I know this well. God, please open the way so that the gospel can be preached to the whole world."

Dear fellow believers, what faith or what ability does a newly saved person have, dear fellow believers, to pray such a prayer? But when I had just been saved, I asked, "God, I want to preach the gospel to this whole world." It is easy to say, but how can one preach the gospel to the whole world? I cannot even preach the gospel to all of my own neighborhood. No.

I will preach the gospel. I prayed, "God, please open the way." I had a dream. I began to preach the gospel starting from small things.

But, dear fellow believers, God fulfilled it just as I dreamed. For you, too, the question is what desire of the heart you will have before God as soon as you are saved: whether you will live beautifully, rightly, and somewhat uprightly while doing God's work and receiving God's blessings—whether you will live such a life—whether you will live as a person of God who does such work, saving souls, truly doing God's work, receiving God's blessing in both your body and your soul, and letting many people be blessed through you, or whether you will barely earn money and barely keep the flesh alive.

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Dear fellow believers, although it is utterly impossible right now as far as circumstances go, dear fellow believers, what is certain is that you must dream a truly good and beautiful dream. Dear fellow believers, you must believe rightly. You must have a desire before God. You must have a desire. One who has no dream is a dead person. He is dead. Dear fellow believers, do not look at your circumstances; the question is, "God, I have been saved this way before You; I believe in God; surely I am righteous"—and then, doing what kind of work do you want to live while receiving God's blessings in both body and soul?

Do you want to live for the gospel? Dear fellow believers, do not say, "If circumstances allow, I will live so, and if not, I cannot." First have a desire in your hearts. Have a mold. "I want to live this way," or "I want to live like that"—have some mold. And pray and plead before God. Ask for help. Plead with Him to make it so. And believe that God will make it so. This is precisely faith.

The condemner, Satan the devil

The faith spoken of in Mark chapter 11 is precisely this faith. Our Lord wants this faith to be in the hearts of you and me. Having only abundant leaves, just attending church to death, attending with no purpose, and attending church asking only that things go well for the flesh—dear fellow believers, if you attend church without receiving the remission of sins, you perish. If you attend church without believing in the gospel of the water and the blood, dear fellow believers, you can only live bound to the devil.

But I believed the Lord's word that He removed all my sins with the water and the blood. After believing this word, demons

cannot do anything. Now there is no sin in me. Who would come into a heart with no sin?

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit who is holy, has come in and dwells there. The Holy Spirit testifies. He helps. The Holy Spirit says, "Yes, you have no sin; that is right." "Jesus received baptism from John for you, died for you, and received the judgment for you." "When He received baptism from John, all your sins were passed on to Him." "If all your sins were passed on, do you have sin?" I answer, "No, I have none." Right. The Holy Spirit says, "What you say is right." The Holy Spirit testifies within.

The born-again Church of God

Even after being born again, if we hear the words or read the writings of people who are not born again, our hearts become confused again. We fall into bewilderment once more.

It means that Satan the devil cannot come into our hearts, but troubles us from outside. You, too, actually know this; those who do not know that world do not know it. Dear fellow believers, that is why there must be the Church of God. Dear fellow believers, when there is the Church of God and the word of God's truth, when we hear the word, faith arises, and then we can stand against Satan the devil, fight, and win. Now Satan the devil can no longer come even into our hearts.

But the devil can trouble us from around us like a roaring lion. He can threaten us, too.

Although we are born again, the devil can drag us to false people so that we can no longer eat our food. The devil can do that. He cannot drag us to hell, but he can drag us off and make us suffer—the devil can.

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Dear fellow believers, that is why we must be in the Church of God, where God's born-again people gather and worship. In the Church of God, the guide, the pastor, and the evangelist are born again, and everyone is a born-again person. If someone who is not born again comes, we preach the gospel to him and cause him to be born again; and when we preach the gospel among your family members, pray, plead, and ask for help for those family members, and believe that He will do this, God works. We merely preach the gospel with our mouths.

Dear fellow believers, I had such times in the past. Even after I was born again, there were many times when my head suddenly ached and the like. Dear fellow believers, with faith in Jesus Christ, command, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I command you, Satan, be gone!" A king gives commands. Satan the devil retreated. Dear fellow believers, there are times when your body suddenly feels strange and becomes abnormally ill. At such times, Satan the devil can do that. He cannot come into us, but he can put pressure on us from outside—Satan the devil can. At such times, you just have to pray. "Lord, I believe."

Dear fellow believers, if, after truly being born again through the word, we listen to the word faithfully and our faith grows—if we live a life of faith in a born-again church, our soul eats the word and grows, our faith grows, our soul grows, our body is guided, and we offer this body for the gospel of God—then, dear fellow believers, such a person receives many blessings in God and is set free from many bonds of the devil.

But if, after being saved, we go and sit in a church that is not born again, or read books or listen to sermons of people who are not born again, our hearts become confused again and we start wandering. *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep" (Genesis 1:1–2).* The heart becomes

chaotic. We do not know well what the truth is. Dear fellow believers, have you been born again by believing in the water and the blood? Do you believe?

The life of faith

If we believe, dear fellow believers, we must plead before God with a beautiful dream to let us live this way. We must ask for help.

And we must surely believe that God answers what we have prayed for and asked help for. If we believe, it comes about according to our faith. God does not make money appear on the spot like magic. God never works that way.

If we first have a desire, then pray and plead and pray, and then believe, God answers in His time—after a month, after two months, or after a year. This is the work of God.

People who are not born again say that if you give a lot of money you will become rich and be blessed, and that something happens if you hold the Bible to your chest or sleep with it under your head, but such things have nothing to do with it. If you do not believe in your heart, it has nothing to do with it. You must believe in your heart. Dear fellow believers, do you believe with your hearts the fact that Jesus Christ is the Savior who saved you with the water and the blood? When we believe with our hearts, God comes and looks, saying, “Is there anything to eat on the fig tree?” Then we answer, “Here it is; look, we believe in our hearts; we know the word; we believe.” God asks, “Yes, you have the faith of salvation, but do you also have within you the faith that I will fulfill what comes next?” We answer, “We do; we believe.” “Before, we did not have it, but now we have faith the size of a mustard seed, and we believe.”

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A fig tree does not bear just one fig. There is fruit on every single branch. The fig tree sends out its stems. New leaves, new buds sprout there. Right beside the leaf where the new bud has sprouted, a round fig pops out like a little knob. From the very start it grows that way. Other plants bloom and then bear fruit, but the fig grows as fruit from the very start. It begins to grow bigger. When it gets sunlight, it begins to ripen. Then the fig begins to split open. Inside it, flowers have bloomed in clusters. You pick it, dear fellow believers, and you can eat it with the skin, or if you do not eat the skin, you scoop out only what is inside and eat it, as you would eat the inside of a watermelon.

It is sweet and delicious. Dear fellow believers, there is not only that one fig. There are more. If you pick and eat it, is it gone? No. New leaves keep coming out, and new figs keep coming up without end. Until when? Until late autumn. You keep picking and eating them.

Behind our old chapel there was an enormous fig tree. This fig tree grows if you just cut off a piece and plant it in the ground. Dear fellow believers, it means that we continually need new faith. With a new desire in our hearts, we tell this desire, ask for help, and believe that God will do just as we ask. Faith is continually needed.

We receive the fulfillment of all things before God. We receive blessings. This is the life of faith. Dear fellow believers, have you been born again? After being born again, do not think, "Now it is all done; it is finished." Dear fellow believers, do you have no desire in your hearts? You have desires, don't you? Dear fellow believers, I know that you have desires in your hearts, both in the flesh and in the spirit—wanting to live this way in the future and wanting to receive such blessings before God. Plead these desires before God. And pray. Ask for help. And believe the fact that God will do this. And live a life of faith

united with the church. God will abundantly fill your needs in His time.

Have a dream

Young people, and adults as well, have a dream. God loves the faith in our hearts that believes in God. When we believe in God, when we believe that He hears what we have prayed, when we have the faith that believes the fact that He will surely do it, God is pleased and fulfills our desires according to that faith. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? I believe, too. Dear fellow believers, how do you want to live?

Do you want to live serving God and becoming workers of God's righteousness? Dear fellow believers, do you want to live, not a life of serving the devil, or serving the people of the world, or serving this world, but a life of serving God, preaching the gospel of God, and receiving blessings in both body and soul as servants of God? Dear fellow believers, if you have such a desire in your hearts, God will surely resolve it just so. Pray. Ask. Then it will come about just so. I hope you will pray the desires of your hearts before our God. Pray just as you want to live: "God, I want to live this way." ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The life of the righteous shown by the woman who broke the alabaster flask

< Mark 14:3–9 >

“And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, ‘Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.’ And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.’”

The Lord, who visited the house of Simon the leper

Mark chapter 14 records what happened when Jesus was eating at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany. It seems that

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our Lord really liked to eat at the house of Simon the leper. Why is that? It is because Simon served Him with thankfulness. Our Lord really likes the hospitality of the saints. In particular, He likes to go into the house of a leper and eat. In the Bible, the account that Jesus ate at the house of Simon the leper appears in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark.

Where is the place our Lord stays? It is the church. Then, does our Lord visit lepers, or does He visit those who are not lepers? He visits lepers. People who are lacking, who make many mistakes and have many sins—our Lord visits such people. The Lord visits such people and has a meal, and there He clothes them with grace and removes all those sins. And He receives hospitality at that leper's house.

If so, we, too, were lepers in the past. Were you lepers, or were you not? We were spiritual lepers. There is no one in this world who is not a leper. Everyone is a leper. Because we were lepers, Jesus came to heal us.

The woman who poured out a whole year's wages all at once

Now, a woman came to the house of that Simon the leper. This woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard, and she broke the flask and poured it on Jesus' head. This fragrant oil was extremely expensive. It was fragrant oil that could be bought only with the money a grown man had saved by working for a whole year without spending a single penny. Think about it. She poured out onto Jesus' head all of the fragrant oil bought with money saved by working hard for a whole year without spending a single penny. How much of a pity that would seem! If you had done that, you would really feel it a

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pity. The circumstances of that time were different from today. It was a time when the land of Judea was a vassal state of Rome and there was truly nothing to eat. So that material possession would have been even more precious. In that age, she poured all the money earned in a whole year onto Jesus' head.

What did the people who were there at that time say? Some people were indignant and rebuked that woman. Even among the disciples of Jesus there were those who had such thoughts. Someone like Judas thought, "That woman is wasting it in vain." But Jesus did not think so. He said, *"She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial" (Mark 14:8)*, and He said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her" (Mark 14:9)*.

Therefore, we must know how important it is to know the heart of Jesus Christ. If one knows the heart of Jesus Christ, one cannot say such words, but some people said this: *"For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor" (Mark 14:5)*. What they meant was, in that age when there were people starving to death because there was nothing to eat, at that time when they were living as a vassal state of Rome, how could she pour that precious oil in its entirety onto Jesus' head? With such precious fragrant oil, even a single drop gives off a burst of fragrance, yet she broke the flask itself and poured out all of that expensive thing, so in the thinking of those people it was all a waste. They were saying how good it would have been if it had been given to the poor.

But our Lord said that they could always help the poor, but that He Himself would not always be with them. And He said that this woman had done a good work for Him, and that wherever the gospel is preached, what this woman had done

would also be told as a memorial. It means that Jesus Christ received that fragrant oil with full satisfaction, very gladly.

This woman offered up everything she had. But what happens once one has offered up everything? From then on, one is penniless. While it is in one's own hands it is fine, but the moment one offers it, one becomes penniless.

The poor are always there, but the work of God has its time

Our Lord said, *"For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always" (Mark 14:7).* In this world there are very many poor people, and we can help them whenever we want to. But the work of God is not something that can be done at any time.

Also, the word that you can always help the poor also means that we are always poor. People are always poor. If we think of the poor first, we cannot serve Jesus Christ. Are we ourselves poor, or are we not poor? We are poor. Go to the richest person in this world and ask him whether he is rich, and whether his heart is not always lacking. That person always needs something more. That person and we alike are always poor.

The craving of our hearts can never be satisfied. If we try to serve the Lord after fully satisfying this poverty of our hearts, we cannot serve the Lord. Because the poor are always there, if we put the work of helping the poor first, we end up unable to serve Jesus Christ. We actually see this on this earth. From the time Jesus Christ came to this earth until now, beggars have not disappeared from this globe. The poor, the sick, and the weak do not disappear. However good a nation's policies may be, the poor do not disappear.

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We must think about this part: whether or not we can actually live that way, not just in words. We must not stop at hearing the word, but must learn whether we can actually live that way and how we should live our lives. This is not a fine-sounding theory. This woman, after she met the Lord, did not do it as theory. Our life after being born again is not theory. If this woman had thought of the poor more than of Jesus Christ, she would not have prepared for the burial of Jesus Christ because she was busy helping the poor and the pitiable. That is, she would not have prepared the gospel. Fragrant oil is something whose fragrance overflows. It speaks precisely of the gospel.

We have heard this word countless times. We can live for ourselves at any time, and if we want to help the poor, we can help them at any time. But if we think of the affairs of people first, we cannot serve Jesus Christ. If we truly think of people, we must do the work of Jesus Christ first. Only then can we serve our Lord and also serve people.

The life of the righteous is to live for the gospel

We have been born again and live the life of the righteous as new creations. Since we have been born again, we must know what the life of the righteous is and what kind of life is right. What should the righteous live for? What is the purpose of the life of the righteous? We must know why we should live, having been born on this earth, and where we came from and where we are going, and to do so we must know what righteousness is. Before a born-again person lie two ways: a righteous life and a sinful life.

Then what is righteousness? Righteousness is what is right. A righteous life is living for what is right. Then what is the

greatest righteousness in this world and in heaven? Living to save souls is the most right thing. The greatest righteousness in heaven and on earth is the gospel by which Jesus Christ removed the sins of us human beings. That God came to this earth, removed the sins of us human beings, and made us children of God—that is the greatest righteousness. When Jesus Christ came to this earth and received baptism from John the Baptist, He said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. This word means that when it comes to what the most right thing is, removing the sins of human beings is the most right thing. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus bore all the sins of the world once and for all, and by bearing those sins and shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and by rising again from death, He removed our sins. This is righteousness. This is the righteousness of God.

Then what should we human beings live for in life? The life of righteousness is precisely serving this gospel. For a person to live for this gospel is the most right thing. Everyone must live for this gospel. There is nothing greater in this world than living for this gospel. We already know what righteousness is. We also know how precious this gospel is, and we also know what the most right thing is that God did when He came to this earth. We know that He has removed our sins. Then we also know how it is right for us to live. But if it ends with knowing, we are nothing. What is actually important is to use and apply what we know. A person who has learned only academically and has not thought about how to apply it in living brings no benefit with what he has learned. We know the righteousness of God. We know what we should live for and how it is right to live. The question, then, is how we take part in it. To live taking part in and serving what is right is our task. How we take part, how we actually apply this right work to our lives and serve, and how we serve more and

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take part more until we finish our lives—this is the task of our lives.

Among us there are students and there are working people. But whether we are students or young people, we have been born again. And we know what kind of life we should live. We are all the same in that we must serve the Lord and take part in the work of the gospel regardless of our circumstances or situation. One cannot say, "I am a student and do not earn money, so it does not apply to me," and one cannot say, "I am a mother of a child and cannot earn money, so it does not apply to me," either. When we look at the Old Testament, when the ransom for life was to be given, God said, *"The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel" (Exodus 30:15)*, and told them to give the same amount. So the rich and the poor, students and young people, everyone without exception serves the Lord in the same way. All take part in the same way in this right work of the gospel. There is no one who is excluded from this. Those who have received the remission of sins before God, whether pastors, evangelists, or saints, all take part in the same way.

This woman served the Lord, but this word is not saying that only this woman does so. When we look at what happened in the house of Simon the leper, there was a leper there and there was also the woman who poured the fragrant oil. We were lepers in the past, but now we have been changed into those who serve the Lord like this woman. This woman actually served the Lord. She served the Lord by offering all of her life with all her strength. Why does the Bible record this? It is telling us what kind of life we should live. If we try to serve the Lord according to our circumstances—serving if we have some material possessions and not serving if we have none, not serving because we are students, not serving because we are mothers of children, slipping out this way and that—then who will serve? This

woman offered all she had before the Lord with all her strength. Doing one's best to serve the Lord in whatever position one is in—this is the way we take part in the work of righteousness.

Serving is truly necessary. We like to be served, but we do not like to serve. Serving is not ingrained in us. But when we come into the born-again church, we come to serve the Lord. In fact, we must serve that way, and that is right. With material possessions, what matters is not how much one has but where one uses them. If we have some amount of money, we are sure to spend that money. If we do not spend it for the Lord, for serving the gospel, we are bound to spend it somewhere else. Therefore, we must first think about and know how we will take part in this gospel and how we will serve in the church. Just as Jesus Christ came to this earth and served all mankind, we born-again people serve all mankind. After Jesus Christ has come into our hearts, the more we grow spiritually, the more we must fulfill the office of serving all people. We are originally priests, and a priest's office is an office of serving. Regardless of our office, we who have been born again are all priests spiritually. We want all people to receive the remission of sins. Then how should we serve? We must serve all people, but above all we must serve, through the church, those who have not been born again.

"Do you love Me more than these?"

After our Lord rose again, He came to Peter. Peter had followed the Lord around for three years, but he did not really know how to serve. The disciples fought a lot over the struggle for position, over who would sit in the high seat. But when the risen Lord came to Peter, what did He ask first? He asked, *"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" (John*

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21:15). This is a tremendously important question and a practical question. People love people, and relationships with people are what they have most of. But the Lord asked Peter whether he loved the Lord more than these people. If the Lord were to ask you, too, whether you love the Lord more than these people, how would you answer? Peter answered, *"Yes, Lord; You know that I love You" (John 21:15)*. How can you answer this question? Do you love our Lord more than people?

But in our hearts there is love for people and there is a heart that loves this world. If anyone says that he has no heart that loves this world while living in this world, that is a lie. In this world, too, if one tries to love, there is truly much to love. Yet our love is so lacking that we cannot even fully love a single person. I applied this question that the Lord asked Peter to myself and thought about it. When I first met the Lord, I said very forcefully that I loved the Lord, since the Lord had saved me. But as I went on living a life of faith and following the Lord, I discovered that in my heart there was love for people and love for the world. In particular, I came to discover that I loved myself more than other people, and that there was in me a heart that loved myself more than God.

So I thought it over. I thought about whether this self that I love so much really has the worth to be loved, and, placing the Lord and myself side by side, whom it would be more worthwhile and more right to love. When I thought about it, I could not help but love our Lord. So I understand Peter's words. Nothing in this world can compare to the love with which the Lord loved us. Even my loving myself is worthless compared to the love with which the Lord loved me. The love with which the Lord loved me is so great that it cannot be expressed in words; it does not change, it becomes more precious as the days go by, and it is so perfect and eternal. Therefore, I was able to know

that even if I have a heart that loves myself, I must not serve myself, and that because the love with which the Lord loved me is greater, it is right for me to serve the Lord as I ought. That is why Peter was able to say so boldly.

We must make a comparison once. I am saying let us compare how much the world or the people you love love you and how good they are to you, with how much the Lord has loved you and how good He is to you. Our Lord loved us far, far more than the people of the world love us. The love with which the Lord loves us is a hundred million times greater than the love any person has for each one of us. The Lord loved us with a tremendously great love, and that love does not change. Even when we do wrong, even when we make mistakes, that love does not change. The weaker we are, the more precious He regards us and the more He loves us. The love of all the people connected with us is nothing before the love of Jesus Christ. That is why we come to love the Lord because we cannot help loving Him, come to believe because we cannot help believing, and follow because we cannot help following. We follow Jesus Christ because it is worthwhile, because it is precious, because it is more right. If it were not worthwhile, we could turn our eyes away at once. Therefore, we must think about and know which thing it is worthwhile to love more, and apply it once again.

Because we human beings are weak, when we love people we fall into the love of people, and when we love the world, our hearts are completely captivated by the things in this world. Because our love is small and our strength is very small, depending on what we love, everything we have goes there. Our love cannot be divided. Loving this world and also loving the Lord—it cannot be that way. If what we have were large, we could give a little of it here and a little of it there, but we are not like that. Once our hearts go toward something, we fall deeply

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into it. Because we are small, we fall completely into even a small matter. Therefore, we must think ahead. We must think ahead about where we will set our hearts and what we will pursue, what we will serve and what work we will take part in. We cannot take the very little we have and share a little here and a little there. Depending on where we put our all, what remains differs. A wise person must think about this. If we want to live a profitable life rather than living life in vain, we must think about this now and put our all in the right place. Only then will we have no regrets, and later we will truly live receiving and enjoying blessings before God.

We know that it is only natural to follow and serve the Lord. We know that it is right. But the point is that we have not yet made up our minds. The point is that we have not yet settled our judgment of the standard of value as to which thing is right. If one knows which thing is right, one is sure to do what is right. People follow what they know. You believe that Jesus Christ has removed your sins. When you came to know that, your goal changed and your standard changed. If so, if we know exactly how it is right for us to live, our lives change. If you know what it is right to live for and what it is right to love, you are sure to change. The reason we wander without knowing where to go is that we do not know which thing is right. If one knows which thing is right, even if one wanders, one returns to one's proper place. It is because people do not know this that even after being born again they wander, suffer and exhaust their strength on useless things, and pour their all into useless things and come to ruin.

Since the Lord loved us more than these people love us, it is fitting for us to love the Lord more than these people. Loving our Lord becomes precisely loving these people. But we must know the fact that if we love these people first and regard the

Lord as second, it is not loving these people; rather, it brings these people to ruin, we fail to follow the Lord, and we ourselves also come to ruin. We must know what the priority is, and by setting the priority and following it, we can accomplish all things in the Lord.

Some people may think that if they follow the Lord they will lose everything. But that is not so. If we follow the Lord loving Him, if we follow Him knowing that this is right, at first there is truly much that we lose. But if we follow the Lord, later what we gain through the Lord is inexhaustible. A child offered five barley loaves and two fish before the Lord, and with them the Lord fed many people and still twelve baskets were left over. I know that while following the Lord there is truly much that we lose because of the Lord, whether time, body, family relationships, or material possessions. But the Lord said that He would repay a hundredfold what we have lost because of Him. *"Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:29–30)*. He said that He would repay a hundredfold in this world. Then, is this word of our Lord a joke, or is it real? It is real. If we truly know which thing is right and follow the Lord, we are sure to receive persecutions along with it, and after that the Lord repays us. If a person always keeps what he has in his own hands, it is simply his own and nothing more, but once it has been offered before the Lord, the Lord multiplies it by a hundred and repays him. That is the word of the Lord, and it is actually so. If we know this, we follow the Lord and love the Lord. If we do not know this, we can do nothing but mark time in place.

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Serve the gospel through the church

We have received the remission of sins before the Lord. But other people must also receive the remission of sins. Our families, our friends, and all the people connected with us around us must receive the remission of sins. What must we do so that those people receive the remission of sins? We must serve those people. If we truly love those people, we must serve them. But it is not that we may serve in just any way. If we are going to serve, we must first serve through the church. The way of loving and following the Lord also comes from this serving. This serving is not theory but actually serving the Lord. If this serving is absent from a Christian's life, he is sure to end up serving the world. The Bible says, *"Do not love the world or the things in the world" (1 John 2:15)*, but as we remain in the Lord, we are sure to enjoy the things in the world as well. The Lord permits the things of the world, too. Was Abraham poor, or was he rich? He was rich. Isaac was also rich. It is not that born-again people become poor, live badly, and become penniless. Born-again people can do better than others even in business, and can do well in whatever they do. The problem is how we serve the Lord.

We must keep trying to serve in the church. If we do not keep trying to serve, we cannot do it. The person who keeps trying can do it, but the person who does not try cannot. The Lord said, *"For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him" (Mark 4:25)*. The person who serves the Lord well comes to serve more. But the person who does not serve the Lord has even his heart that loves the Lord taken away, and not only is that taken away, but he comes to be unsure even of whether or not he has received the remission of sins. Later, he has everything that is right before God taken away and, holding only what is not good, is trampled

underfoot in this world. The Lord said, *"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men" (Matthew 5:13)*. It means that if we lose the right heart, we are completely trampled underfoot by the world. It means that born-again people are salt, but the salt loses its flavor. Whether salt is in a jar or on the roadside, salt is salt. It is not that the salt itself changes; rather, the value of that salt is determined by whether or not it is useful. There is useful salt and there is useless salt. Therefore, it is good for us to train ourselves to serve the Lord, and not only to train but actually to serve the Lord much.

Our Lord saw that this woman had poured out her all, and He said that what this woman had done was good. He said that wherever the gospel is preached, what this woman had done would also be told as a memorial. This is the word our Lord spoke looking at this woman and saying that she had done well, and it is the word telling us to do likewise. I want you to be blessed. I have a heart that wishes for your lives to go better from now on than they do now, to be more abundant and happier. I have not the slightest reservation in my heart in wishing for you to do well. The way for you truly to do well is the way of serving the Lord. The way for you to fare badly is the way of not serving the Lord. One may ask how serving, which means losing again and again, could be the way to do well. By human calculation it seems to make no sense, but the person who serves the Lord will shine like the sun in the future. The way of this world and the way of the kingdom of God are different. In the kingdom of God, those who serve much do well. Those who actually lived for the Lord have a beautiful end. Do you want to live happily? Then I tell you the secret of blessing. Serve the Lord. If you serve the Lord without fail, follow the Lord, and love the Lord, God

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Himself will supply you with everything a person needs. This is not theory. It is not sweet talk.

The Lord said, *"Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:5–6)*. It means that if we accept the word of the Lord and the will of the Lord with meekness just as they are and do them just as they are, we come to possess the earth. It means that God makes such a person rich. The word of the Lord is actually fulfilled. Do you believe this fact? The word of the Lord comes to pass just as it says. If we accept the meaning of the word of the Lord just as it is and follow it, born-again people actually possess this earth. The Bible says, *"I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread" (Psalm 37:25)*. It means that there is no such thing as the righteous becoming beggars. God is sure to bless the righteous who are meek in heart and also to bless their descendants, and, just as it says, *"Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand" (Psalm 37:24)*, even if they fall, God Himself holds them and raises them up so that they do not fall completely. The secret of success in our lives is to serve the Lord, to accept the word of the Lord meekly, and to believe and follow that word. God tells us to take part in that work.

Look into what the church needs and take part with your heart and material possessions

A born-again person must speak boldly about which thing is right. I, too, intend to speak boldly. If we are going to serve the Lord, we must first look into the things the church is doing.

Loving God is also wisdom. Without this wisdom, we achieve nothing. The wisdom needed to serve and follow the Lord is this: that we can serve the Lord only through the church. We must keep in mind the fact that apart from the church, we cannot serve the Lord individually. However much money a person has, he must serve through the church. We can serve the Lord through the church, and the Church of God is sure to go forward toward the gospel. A corrupt church does not go forward toward the gospel, but the Church of God is sure to go forward toward the gospel. So it is with our hearts, and so it is with the Church of God. Therefore, we must look into what the church needs. And serving in the parts where the church has need, whether with material possessions or with service or in various ways, is precisely serving God. We must have eyes that look into the church. If we truly love the Lord and want to follow and serve Him, if we want to receive blessings, we must look into what the church needs and take part in the work of the church going forward toward the gospel. That is serving and following the Lord.

Our Lord said that at the end He would become the Judge and separate the sheep from the goats. He separates them, one to the right and one to the left, and to those on the left He says, *"For I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink" (Matthew 25:42)*, and curses them, and to those on the right He says, *"For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in" (Matthew 25:35)*. This word is about who took part with the prayer, material possessions, and service needed for the gospel when the born-again church and the servants of God were going forward toward the gospel, that is, when the gospel had to be preached but there was a famine of the gospel. Not a single person who has not been born again took

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part in this. But born-again people took part in that. Whether or not one took part in the born-again church's going forward toward the gospel—that, the Lord says, is precisely what one did to our Lord. *"Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40)*.

I want to preach the gospel, and the servants of God all want to preach the gospel. But the gospel is not preached with the mouth alone. Even if we try to show hospitality to the elderly in a nursing home, it is not done merely by saying with our mouths that we love them. There, service must certainly go in, heart must go in, and labor must go in. But however much labor, service, prayer, and heart go in, if material possessions do not go in, it does not show. The Lord said, *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21)*. The Lord wishes for your hearts to take part in serving the gospel. The Lord wants your labor, devotion, material possessions, prayer, and time to take part in it. The Lord said that this woman had done what she could. In reality, we cannot give our all. We still must have something to eat and drink. But if there is something needed in the church for preaching the gospel, every member must take part in it with however little. One must not say, "I have no money, so I will stay out." When we take part and put our hearts, our material possessions, and our time into it, that work goes up before God. You and I alike must serve the gospel.

I want to establish all the saints as workers of God, and I wish for the material possessions we have to be used for the gospel. But I see that the saints do not do it because they do not know how to serve the Lord and do not know what deeds bring blessing. I also see that when material possessions are mentioned, their faces change color. But wherever I go, I speak about this part without fail. It is not something done with words. How can

anyone say that he is serving the Lord when, in actually serving the Lord, heart, time, and material possessions do not go in? If we truly love someone, we buy him a gift. If we love, we already do so. If we love the Lord, if we say this is right, how can we not do it? In preaching the gospel, our heart, prayer, time, and material possessions certainly go in. Our sincere devotion goes in. First we must gather our hearts, next gather our prayers, gather our faith, and gather our time and sincere devotion. Some brothers and sisters serve the Lord with material possessions and look after the church. That is not something done once and finished, but something done again and again, and I, too, will tell this story again and again. The reason I repeat this story is that I want you to do well. If I left you to do nothing at all, it would be the same as praying for you to turn out badly. Because the result a few years later is all too obvious, because I am looking ahead at how all too obvious the end of your lifetime is, I want you to do well starting now.

If you do not follow the Lord, you are sure to follow the world. If you follow the world after being born again, you come to ruin. As for following the world before being born again, Satan the devil uses every means so that one lives that way anyway and goes to hell. But a born-again person has a secret. The Bible says that even if we flee to the ends of the sea, the Lord holds us even there. *"If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me" (Psalm 139:9–10)*. And the Lord is sure to discipline a born-again person until he returns. Being born again is in some respects good and in some respects tremendously heavy. There is only one secret to our success, and it is none other than the secret of succeeding in the Lord. Now there is no secret to succeeding in the world. However well things are going, they fly away in a

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moment. The only secret to success is the secret of succeeding in God. If one goes out into the world after being born again, at first it seems to go well, but later one is toyed with by the hand of Satan the devil and becomes wretched. People who have not been born again order the born-again person around as they please, and if the born-again person tries to live under them, it is unbearable. What we must know without fail as we live in the Lord is that we must take part in the gospel and serve the gospel. We must serve in that part with our hearts and material possessions. He said that where our treasure is, there our heart is. The Lord says that in order to preach the gospel our material possessions are needed, like the fragrant oil that this woman offered before the Lord, and He says that He wants our material possessions. The gospel needs material possessions.

Become mighty men of the Lord in the time of your youth

Then how will we use material possessions? If there are young people in the church, the young people, rather than hoping for the church to do something for them, must think, "How can we gather our strength and material possessions, gather our prayers and hearts, and serve the work of saving souls?" If there is a young people's fellowship, that is what is needed. When there are young people, adults, sisters, and students who live for the Lord, the Church of God prospers and flourishes.

David appears in the Bible, and the Bible calls David king. Jesus Christ was born as a descendant of David. David was of the tribe of Judah, and the Bible says that the eternal King comes from the scepter of Judah. Then how did David become king? The Bible says that there were mighty men who fought for David.

It begins, *"These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-Basshebeth the Tachmonite, chief among the captains. He was called Adino the Eznite, because he had killed eight hundred men at one time" (2 Samuel 23:8),* goes on listing the names of the mighty men one after another, and concludes with *"and Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all" (2 Samuel 23:39)*. Thirty-seven mighty men fought for the king and gave themselves for the king. When David went out to fight, David did not always fight well. When the enemy had driven David into a corner and he was on the brink of death, one of David's men came forward and struck down that enemy. When a battle broke out and the other side was as numerous as a swarm of ants while this side was sparse and already disheartened, if one of David's mighty men went out and struck down the enemy, this side, seeing it, took courage, and with that momentum won the battle. David fought not for himself but to establish the kingdom of God, for the nation of Israel. Who is the King of the nation of Israel? It is Jesus Christ. Therefore, understanding David, understanding the king, is precisely understanding Jesus Christ. The Bible says that there were thirty-seven mighty men who laid down their lives entirely for that king. In his last years, David recalls one after another who fought for him and how. The Bible says that the reason David was able to unify the nation of Israel and gain control over all the surrounding nations like the Amalekites and the Philistines was that under David there were mighty men who laid down their lives and lived entirely for the king. It was not because David fought well and was an excellent man. David was a man whose heart was united with God, not a man who fought well. David was originally a man who, even after being anointed by God, was chased about.

What the Bible is saying is that God looks at how many people there are in the church who serve the Lord and live for

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the Lord, like those mighty men under David. Whether a church is a strong church or a weak church is based on how many mighty men it has. Do you know who the mighty men in the church are? They are people whose hearts are pure. Students and young people have truly pure hearts. People whose hearts are pure advance when David advances and retreat when David retreats. They follow the king's command without even weighing whether they will live or die. That is a mighty man. Our young people and students are the mighty men in the church. Adults have many things to weigh and many worries. Even when something is right, they tremble. But young people and students, when told that something is right, have no wife and children, so they can push forward like a bulldozer. From the time of the young people's fellowship, from the time of the students' fellowship, we must learn to serve the Lord. Only then will God bless you when you become adults. This time is tremendously important. This time of youth, when it is decided whether you become mighty men and whether you receive grace before God, is important. If you cannot serve the Lord in the time of the young people's fellowship, when will you serve the Lord? When you become adults, you have to worry first about the means to raise children. Adults have the rightful responsibility to support their children, so at that time they cannot do as they wish. But when you are young, there is nothing to hold you back. You can live your whole life entirely for the Lord. What about later, you ask? If you live for the Lord, the Lord will bless you so that later, even if you form a family with nothing in hand, you can live abundantly. If you gain in your heart faith that believes in the Lord, that is better than gaining anything in this world. If later you gain boldness in prayer and have that boldness of faith and that desire, you can live in this world with it and receive a blessing greater than any material possessions. Whether or not

there is faith in the heart—that is more important. Material possessions are there one moment and gone the next. But faith is not like that. Faith that has once come through the Lord is more precious than gold.

There are times when the servants of God set their hearts on the work of preaching the gospel and make that work known to the church. Then the young people and all the saints in the church unite their hearts in that part, put in material possessions, and fight the fight. There must be soldiers to fight, must there not? Without soldiers one cannot fight. Can one go out and fight alone? If you and I do not serve the Lord in the region where the church now is or in the regions where churches will be established in the future, we end up receiving the remission of sins only among ourselves and ending among ourselves. Our families, too, end up never hearing the gospel. But if you and I serve the Lord, we never lose in the spiritual war. Whenever we fight, we win. We have never once lost. Because Jesus Christ has won, we never lose. It is only that the outcome has not yet been decided, but whenever a fight breaks out, we are sure to win. Mighty men are needed. Our Lord wants us to preach the gospel, and He stirs up a heart for the gospel in the servants of God. Then what should you do? As mighty men, as fellow soldiers, you fight the fight. It is right to serve the Lord and fight in the time of your youth. In the time of the young people's fellowship, will you not put in your heart, try putting in material possessions, try putting in time, and try living for the Lord? I hope that you will look into the church, look into what is needed for preaching the gospel, and if it is needed for the gospel, pray and ask, and offer material possessions, offer your bodies, offer your time, and offer your lips and hearts before the Lord. The Lord never lets what He receives come to nothing. If you save even a little more of your allowance and offer it before the Lord,

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and if the various groups in the church gather material possessions that way and offer them to the parts needed for the gospel, that power is mighty. A child offered small barley loaves before the Lord, and the Lord brought about a great work. If we offer the small things among what we have before the Lord, the Lord wins great victories in the spiritual fight through them. The Lord does not want big things at first; He wants small, little things. And with them He makes them multiply greatly.

If a church does not do any work, it is sleeping and it is dead. If we say we love the Lord yet do not do the work that pleases the Lord, we do not love Him. What work must the church do? It must do the work of preaching the gospel, the work of praying, and the work of putting in material possessions. In the church, a great many people are needed who will serve the Lord with material possessions. Whether one is a minister or not a minister, one must be trained without fail. It is absolutely not that the rich give much, nor that the poor do not give. It is always the person who has the heart who gives material possessions before the Lord. And those material possessions are not used in vain. I wish for many people who live entirely for the Lord to arise in all the churches of God. In particular, I wish for many to arise among the young people who live giving their lives completely before the Lord. God absolutely does not leave such people in misery. If you are for the Lord, you will absolutely not become miserable. What will you live for? When a few mighty men of the church arise and go forward in the lead, those behind follow, imitating and learning from that faith, and come to enjoy the same blessing. God wants that. This is not something said to any one person but to everyone. Do you not want to give your lives before the Lord? I hope you will live for the Lord. Living for the Lord is the most rewarding, and living for the Lord is the most successful life. That does not mean that you should quit school. You can live for

the Lord even while going to school. You can live everything for the Lord—studying for the Lord, earning material possessions for the Lord, and living family life for the Lord. When you do, the Lord gathers up all the things of the world for us and fills you with them. Do you believe that fact?

Finally, let me say once again: I hope you will serve the Lord. If you and I do not serve the Lord, who will serve the Lord? But if you and I serve the Lord, our Lord will cause us to bear fruit a thousandfold and ten thousandfold through us, cause tens of millions of people to receive the remission of sins, and through them cause even more people to receive the remission of sins. And He rewards us and our descendants for everything with which we served the Lord. We must not sit slumped down. We know which thing is right. I hope you will take part and serve the Lord. I hope you will actually serve through your lives. Do not expect to receive something from your brothers and sisters; when you are served, receive it with thankfulness, and within the limits of the strength with which each of you can serve, serve souls, your brothers and sisters, the church, and the gospel. I hope you will know the fact that this is precisely a blessing to you. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord's house is a house of prayer for all nations

< Mark 11:15–18 >

"So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it a "den of thieves."' And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching."

What He stopped in the temple

Jesus went into the temple and drove out those who bought and sold. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves, and He did not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple either. The reason He did not leave what the people were doing as it was appears in the teaching that follows. The Lord taught, saying, *"Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves'" (Mark 11:17).*

In a house of prayer, a person must bring his heart before God and stand before the word. Yet when gaining benefit for

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men under the name of serving God becomes the center, even the people who seek God come to be regarded as a means. Jesus did not cover over such things with the authority the temple had. Rather, precisely because it was a place belonging to God, He exposed the wrongs that were being done there.

We, too, must not feel at ease merely because something is being done busily in the church. We must examine whether that work is being used to preach the gospel of the remission of sins and to care for souls. If we treat someone more preciously because of the property or influence he has, and take lightly the heart of a weak person, we depart from the purpose of serving God. What the Lord regards as precious is the soul that seeks Him.

After driving the people out, Jesus taught the reason. He did not merely show an action that changed the order of things; He made the purpose of the temple clear with the written word. When we, too, set right what is wrong, we must not try to prove our rightness by the magnitude of our anger. We must know clearly what God has said and how the actual state of things has deviated from it. Only when there is a basis in the word does the work of correcting wrongs also not drift into some other craving.

It is recorded, *"And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple" (Mark 11:16)*. This record makes us look back on the attitude with which that place was treated. The place where people seek God was being used carelessly according to people's convenience and profit. Just because something is a practice people have grown used to does not mean the Lord is pleased with it. In our worship and service, too, there are things that cannot be decided merely because they are efficient and convenient. We must first examine whether that work helps souls hear the word and draw near to God.

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If we keep in our hearts the word about all nations, the standard by which we divide people must also change. Those who have much, those who are good at their work, and those who can be of help to us cannot be the only objects of our concern. A person who is clumsy in speech and needs time to learn faith is also a soul who must hear the word of salvation. This is because the Lord gave Himself for their sins, too. If the church first weighs what it can gain from that person, it loses the meaning of the house of prayer.

The way for a sinner to draw near to God

In the word that it is a house of prayer for all nations, there is no room for the idea that only certain people can seek God. However, saying that anyone can seek God does not mean that the problem of sin may be left as it is. Because a sinner cannot stand boldly before God by his own merit or religious qualifications, he needs the grace of the Savior, who washes away sins.

Jesus, who overturned the tables in the temple, Himself opened that way. When Jesus received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and the sins of our whole lifetime were also passed on to Jesus at that time. Bearing the sins that had thus been passed on to Him, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross and received the judgment for our sins in our place. It is just as the prophet foretold, *"The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5)*. The Lord rose again from death and became the Savior who is alive even now. Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit draw near to God with the faith that their sins have been resolved.

This grace is not obtained by offering much wealth or by occupying a religious position; it is received by faith in the fact that the Lord bore all sins. Therefore, the church must preach the gospel clearly to people. It must help a heart weighed down by sin come to know the baptism Jesus received from John, the redemption of the Cross, and the resurrection, and to believe in the remission of sins it has received, giving thanks to God and praying. This is the center of the work of serving souls.

The fact that the way to draw near to God has been opened by grace makes the attitude of those who serve humble. We must not act as if a person could be saved only if we, standing in between, accepted him. The One who accomplished the remission of sins is Jesus, and we are those who preach that gospel. Therefore, we must remember that the more the one explaining exalts himself, the more the heart of the listener can be bound to a person rather than to the Lord. Those who serve souls must devote their strength to showing clearly what the Savior has accomplished.

Because this is a salvation that cannot be obtained with money or position, there is no reason for anyone to be pushed away from the door of salvation because of his circumstances. Do not step back with the thought that, having nothing, you have no merit to offer the Lord. The Lord did not save sinners by receiving something from them; He saved them by taking the sins of sinners upon Himself. When we believe that grace in our hearts, we can give thanks to God and pray. We must move from the place of counting people's qualifications to the place of relying on the righteousness the Savior has given.

To keep the meaning of the house of prayer, it is not enough merely to teach people the words of prayer. We must make clear to them on whom they rely when they pray. To those who keep God at a distance because they think sin remains in their hearts,

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we must preach the gospel that the Lord bore all sins. Those who, even after receiving the remission of sins, try to manage their lives alone, we can urge to seek help from the living Lord. When the gospel and prayer are connected in this way, prayer leaves formality behind and becomes fellowship of faith.

Do not push away rebuke, but turn your heart

The passage closes with the words, *"And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching" (Mark 11:18)*. Though they heard the word, instead of examining themselves before the word, they tried to remove the One who was teaching. When the heart that wants to keep its own position is strong, even the right word can be received as a threat.

We, too, need this warning. When the word corrects our thoughts or the things we are used to, we must not push that word away because our hearts feel uncomfortable. We must be able to hear what pleases the Lord and turn back from a wrong direction. Those who believe in the Savior who bore all sins have no need to protect their righteousness by hiding their faults. Because they have the righteousness the Lord has given, they can admit their faults and be corrected.

The leaders feared that the crowd was astonished at Jesus' teaching. In that heart is revealed a concern to protect their own influence rather than the truth itself. We, too, rather than rejoicing when others come to understand the word and grow, may worry that the authority we hold will diminish. When such thoughts arise, we must remember again who the Lord of souls is. If the purpose of our service is for people to come to believe

the word of Jesus, then their relying on the Lord all the more must be a joy to us as well.

To hear a rebuke and turn back, we must be able to distinguish between our own faults and the basis of our salvation. Just because our way was wrong does not mean that the grace Jesus has given is wrong as well. Therefore, instead of refusing the word to save face, we need only change what needs to be changed. Faith that we have been saved by grace is not a shield to cover our responsibility, but strength to set our faults right. To be built up together as a house that pleases the Lord, we must hear the word with such an honest heart.

Let us remember Jesus, who taught the meaning of the house of prayer. So that our gatherings and service do not become a place that puts people's profit first, we must first set our hearts on the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Relying on that grace, let us pray to God, and let us serve others with the word so that they, too, may come to know the same grace. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

Even when evening comes, rely on the Lord, who has saved us

< Mark 11:19 >

“And every evening he went forth out of the city”

The evening recorded between great events

After Jesus taught in the temple, when evening came, the company went out of the city. Before this short record is the account of the chief priests and scribes who *“sought how they might destroy Him” (Mark 11:18)*, and after it is the account of the disciples seeing the withered fig tree the next morning. Even in the midst of rising opposition, evening fell and morning dawned. Jesus’ teaching and the disciples’ learning continued within each of those days.

We tend to think that faith is needed only when there is a great event. But in fact, in a life of following the Lord, there is much time spent finishing the day’s work and meeting the next day. Even on days with no noticeable change, the Lord’s word does not disappear. The teaching heard in the temple and the word heard before the fig tree were words the disciples had to hold on to even after they went out of the city.

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The same is true of the word we have heard today. Just because we finish worship and return to the place of daily life does not mean that word becomes unrelated to us. Even when we finish our work and our hearts are weary, and when the conflicts of the day come to mind again, what we believe matters. Going one step further than the memory of having heard the word, we must set our hearts on that word now.

The time of hearing teaching inside the city and the time of walking out of the city were not two lives cut off from each other. This is because the disciples moved together with the same Jesus. For us, too, there cannot be one faith for the time of worship and another for the time of working and resting. If at worship we confess that the Lord has saved us, while in daily life we consider everything to depend on our own strength, we lose hold of the word in the very place where faith is most needed. We must take the word we have heard into our daily lives.

The passage says, *"And every evening he went forth out of the city" (Mark 11:19)*. Just as this lets us know that this evening was not a one-time event but a walk repeated day after day, so when a day repeats itself, we can do our work without our hearts in it because of familiarity. Life becomes a matter of getting up because it is time, handling tasks because they are assigned to us, and going to meetings because it is time to gather. The outward order is maintained, but our hearts may grow dim as to why we do those things. We who have received the remission of sins must examine how we are living the life we have received from the Lord. Only when we know whether the work we do today is work that pleases the Lord, and do it with a heart that believes in Him, does a clear meaning arise even in our everyday labor.

This does not mean that we must feel special emotions every moment. When we are tired our hearts can be dull, and there are

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times when our thoughts are not clear. Even so, what we believe and in which direction we are living can be clear. It is to trust the word the Lord has spoken rather than our feelings, and to seek the help we need. Even on days when our emotions are not fervent, faith can be shown in faithfully doing the work of serving the gospel and in dealing honestly with those close to us.

The salvation that holds the heart in the evening

When we look back on the day, the things we lacked may loom larger than the things we did well. We may also discover a heart that put its own benefit first even while saying it would follow the Lord. If at that time we look for the basis of the remission of sins in the day's score, our hearts waver many times even in a single day. Because our salvation rests on what the Lord accomplished, we must know that work clearly and believe it.

The basis of our salvation is this. When Jesus received baptism from John in the Jordan River, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and all the sins we would commit in our whole lifetime, including the sins revealed this evening, were passed on to Him at that time. Jesus, who bore those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for our sins in our place, and He rose again from death and is alive even now. The remission of sins of those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not something that newly arises and vanishes according to the day's mood or performance.

When we believe this fact, we do not take our faults lightly but can look back on them honestly. We have no need to make excuses as if our words and actions had always been right.

Giving thanks to the Savior who bore all our sins, we can turn from wrong words and actions and go to the people we have hurt to set their hearts at ease. Assurance of salvation is not an excuse to avoid responsibility, but strength to walk rightly again.

When our faults come to mind in the evening, we easily lose our hearts in two directions. On one side, we make sin small, saying it was nothing; on the other, we think that because of this fault even the salvation we received from the Lord has been lost. But the gospel, without making sin small, lets us know that the Savior's redemption is sufficient. Jesus bore real sins and received real judgment. Only when we believe that fact can we honestly admit our faults while keeping our faith in salvation.

To say that today's shortcomings are included among the sins of our whole lifetime does not mean that tomorrow's faults are permitted in advance. It means that the range of sins the Lord bore is greater than the range we imagine. Those who believe that grace do not return to the calculation that it is all right to sin, but, thankful to the One who has given them life, look for the way to live rightly. The Apostle Paul also confessed, *"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).* Having certainty of salvation does not mean avoiding responsibility; rather, precisely because salvation is certain, we can correct our faults instead of hiding them.

We also need time to give thanks to the Lord as we finish the day's work. Not everything we did was lacking. We can remember the grace that gave us the opportunity to hear the word, let us meet the people we needed, and gave us the strength to bear our tasks. We look back not to boast of our achievements, but to think about how the Lord helped us. With that thanksgiving, even today's small labor does not look vain, and the heart that meets the next day is not gripped by fear.

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Even during the night the Lord's word was not in vain

The disciples who had gone out of the city with Jesus saw the next morning the result of the word the Lord had spoken, and Peter said to Him, *"Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away" (Mark 11:21)*. Even during the night, which they did not see, the Lord's word was not in vain. We, too, must not doubt the word and give up serving merely because there is no visible result. Believing the promise the Lord has made, we can do what must be done today and prepare for the next step.

Some things require more faith because their results cannot be seen within a day. We may have explained the gospel to someone who has not yet understood it, and a matter we wanted to help with may not have worked out as we wished. At such times, we must not equate the fact that we have not seen the result with the judgment that the Lord is doing nothing. Believing the Lord's word, *"Whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says" (Mark 11:23)*, we can consider what more to explain next and how to help. Faith lets us entrust unfinished matters to the Lord while continuing to bear our own responsibility.

Even when someone serving with us is weary, there is help that is needed at the end of the day. Before demanding that he do everything better, we can hear about his labor and share together the grace we have received. We can look together at where things are blocked and prepare by dividing up the portion to be borne next. In such fellowship we learn the fact that the Lord has not left us to live by our own strength alone. The

comfort and help we receive through one another are also a part of a life of relying on the Lord.

Faith that prepares for tomorrow is not the ability to resolve in advance everything that has not yet happened. It is believing the fact that the Lord who saved and taught us today will be alive tomorrow as well. So we can make the necessary preparations without filling everything we cannot know with worry. We need only keep the direction we have set while hearing the word, and when new difficulties arise, seek the Lord's help again. In this walk that continues day after day, we learn how to rely on the Lord.

Just because evening had come did not mean that the way of following the Lord had ended. Let us, too, remember the grace we have received through the gospel of the water and the Spirit as we finish the day's labor. Let us give thanks to the Lord, who saved us, lacking as we are, and prepare tomorrow's service, too, with a heart that believes in Him. Even in a day that passes ordinarily, there is a place to live believing the Lord's word. ✉

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Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

Have faith in God and ask boldly

< Mark 11:20–26 >

"Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.' So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be removed and be cast into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.'"

The faith we learn from seeing the withered tree

In the morning, as the disciples passed by on the road, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. When Peter told Jesus about it, the Lord answered, *"Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22).* The disciples' eyes could have stayed on the astonishing result, but Jesus taught them to set their faith on God, who had done that work. Faith does not end with marveling at an astonishing

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phenomenon. It is trusting the One who spoke and living according to His word.

Jesus taught prayer that believes without doubting, saying, *"Whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says" (Mark 11:23)*. We must not shrink this great promise down to our narrow ability. Even when there are things we cannot overcome by our own strength, we can ask, believing that God can do them. At the same time, we must not forget the fact that the starting point of prayer lies not in believing in the power to push our own thoughts through forcefully, but in believing in God.

Seeing the tree, Peter remembered the word he had heard before. The change before his eyes and the word the Lord had spoken were connected. In our life of faith, too, remembering the word like this is necessary. If every time a difficulty arises we try to come up with an answer by ourselves from the beginning, our hearts are easily shaken. We must think about what the Lord who accomplished our salvation has promised and hold on to that word. We must know the fact that the One to whom we pray is not someone who fails to fulfill His word for lack of power.

Hearing the word about moving a mountain, we must not try to pray only within the range of what is possible by human strength. If we ask only for what we already think we can do, it is hard to learn the faith that relies on God. The Lord told the disciples to have faith in God. Therefore, even when the way to preach the gospel seems blocked and the help we need is nowhere to be seen, we can ask the Lord. We pray because of the fact that the Lord has the power we do not have.

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At the same time, we must not use the word ‘believe’ as a word to justify our cravings. We must first discern by the word whether it is a will that pleases God. Asking that souls come to know the remission of sins and asking that we be raised above others differ in purpose. Just as the Lord corrected the desire of the disciples who earlier sought high positions, our prayers, too, must be shaped by the word. Those who believe in God ask with a heart ready to hear His will.

Believe in the grace of salvation and draw near to the Father

When we examine what we are asking for, too, we must take the word of God as the standard. The Lord said, *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33)*. It is to discern whether it is a work that pleases the Lord, and to ask, relying on the Lord who will accomplish that work. If there are difficulties in preaching the gospel and caring for souls, we must not give up while looking only at our circumstances, but must ask for help. Rather than praying as a formality after having already arranged every means, we can tell the Lord what we need and rely on Him.

At the foundation of the faith of which He said to have faith in God is the remission of sins. This is because a person whose sin remains as it is cannot ask boldly before God. When Jesus received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and even the sins of our whole lifetime were passed on to Him. Jesus bore those sins and, by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, received the judgment for our sins in our place, and He rose again from death and made us righteous people. We who believe in the gospel of

the water and the Spirit pray on the basis of this salvation, calling God our Father.

We need not judge that even the Lord's salvation is incomplete because we are lacking today. Since the Lord bore all our sins, we can believe in that grace and draw near to God. Because we believe in the One who accomplished salvation, we also ask that He help us bear the work He has entrusted to us. *"Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them" (Mark 11:24)*. This word makes us trust the Lord who promised, instead of giving up prayer out of fear. The Lord did not say to believe that you will receive; He said to believe that you have received, so the Scripture speaks in the perfect tense. When we believe that what we have prayed and asked for is as good as already accomplished by God, God brings it to pass in His time.

However, if we make only the time and the way we have decided on the standard for an answer, it is easy to doubt the Lord while we wait. Since the One we believe in is the living Lord, we must entrust it to Him and continue to act according to the word. Those who have asked in faith, instead of doing nothing and only pressing for results, continue the service they must do now, looking to the Lord's help.

Acting in faith after praying is also necessary. If we have asked for an opportunity to preach the gospel to someone, we must listen to the story of the person we meet and be ready to share the word. If we have asked for wisdom to bear the work entrusted to us, we must learn what is needed and also receive the help of those serving with us. Believing that the Lord works and avoiding what we ourselves must do are not the same. Because we have faith that God helps, we can prepare and carry things out.

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When we meet an obstacle while doing the work, we may think that our prayer was in vain as well. But we must not decide that the Lord did not hear merely because a difficulty has arisen. We can keep asking the Lord for help while examining what more we should learn and what direction we should correct. Faith is needed not only when we first begin, but also in holding on to the word and entrusting things to the Lord while results are slow. If it is a work that pleases the Lord, we must not easily abandon it merely because our mood has changed.

The grudge we must not hold on to while praying

While teaching about prayer, Jesus said that if we have anything against anyone, we should let go of his trespasses. He makes us examine the heart that asks God for grace while harboring a grudge against a neighbor and refusing to let it go. We must not pass over this word lightly. A heart that endlessly holds on to another's wrong and wants to pay it back makes us, who pray before God, obstinate.

It is not that Jesus' redemption is completed by the merit of our letting go of others' trespasses. Jesus first bore our sins and received the judgment for them as well. Those who believe in that grace must remember what mercy they have received and show mercy to others as well. We must not take this to mean calling a wrong right or doing away with needed responsibility; rather, we must lay down before the Lord the heart that would make itself the judge and take revenge.

To the matter of letting go of others' trespasses, Jesus joined the word, *"Your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11:25)*. We must not take from this word only the part that is convenient for us. As people who hope for

remission from the Father, we must hear as addressed to ourselves the command to release the other person from his trespasses. We must see before the word how obstinate is the heart that says we ourselves must receive grace while the other person must pay to the very end. The mercy we have received must extend to our neighbor as well.

Even when we clearly know that the other person did wrong, continuing to nurture a heart bent on revenge is a different matter. We can do what is needed to set responsibility right, but we must not keep our hearts bound, wishing for that person's downfall. When we consider the fact that the Lord bore all our sins, we come to know that we, too, are people saved by grace from sins that deserved judgment. That grace becomes the basis for laying down the grudge in our hearts.

If a grudge is revealed when you pray, do not hide it and go on asking at length only for other needs. Because the Lord knows your heart, you can tell Him just as it is. We can learn from the word what words and actions we should correct in dealing with the other person, and where possible, we can reach out first for reconciliation. The Father to whom we pray cares not only for the results of our work but also for our hearts and relationships. The faith that seeks the Lord's help must become real in such places as well.

Even when your heart does not easily soften, tell the Lord just as it is. Believing in the grace that washed away all our sins, we can ask for help to escape the heart that hates the other person. Prayer that believes in God must extend not only to our work but also to the heart with which we treat people. Relying on the Lord who saved us, let us ask boldly and treat our neighbors with the grace we have received. ✉

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Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?

< Mark 11:27–33 >

“Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. And they said to Him, ‘By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?’ But Jesus answered and said to them, ‘I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me.’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, “From heaven,” He will say, “Why then did you not believe him?” But if we say, “From men”’—they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. So they answered and said to Jesus, ‘We do not know.’ And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’”

An evasive answer while asking about authority

When Jesus was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. They asked, *“By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?” (Mark 11:28)*. Jesus asked them in return to answer whether the baptism of John was from heaven

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or from men. Those who were trying to judge the authority of Jesus first had to reveal how they had received the one whom God had sent.

They did not seek together what the facts were. If they said it was from heaven, they would receive the rebuke of why they had not believed John, and if they said it was from men, they had to fear the multitude who regarded John as a prophet indeed. They weighed which answer would be to their own advantage. So they answered, *"We do not know" (Mark 11:33)*, and Jesus said that He, too, would not tell by what authority He was acting.

A heart that honestly asks about what it does not know and a heart that says it does not know because it has no intention to accept are different. These people asked a question, but they were not prepared to turn around themselves when the truth was revealed. We, too, can stand in the same place if we calculate gain and loss first while listening to the word. Rather than examining whether it is the word of God, we come to weigh first what we would lose if we believed it.

The question itself of asking Jesus about His authority is not wrong. This is because we, too, cannot believe a claim just as it is simply because someone speaks of God, and we must examine on what basis he is speaking. However, the people in the text did not try to judge honestly the work of John, which they had already rejected. The question of Jesus revealed their standard of judgment. It is a warning that behind the words of verifying authority, a calculation to protect one's own position can be hidden.

They knew that if they answered that it came from heaven, they would be asked why they had not believed. It would not end with acknowledging the work of John; they would also have to acknowledge their own unbelief. So rather than asking about the fact, they weighed the burden that would arise after

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acknowledging that fact. We, too, while looking into the meaning of the word, can put off accepting it on the grounds that we would have to correct the words and deeds we have already done. A heart that hears the truth needs to be prepared to acknowledge its own wrongs.

Conversely, they were too afraid of the multitude to say that it came from men. On the one hand they tried to avoid the Lord's rebuke, and on the other hand they tried to avoid the reaction of people. Between the two, they chose to say that they did not know. It was an answer that would take responsibility for neither side. We, too, find it hard to state clearly what we believe if we regard people's evaluation as the greatest thing. If we know what is true before the word and yet try to acknowledge it only when it is advantageous, the direction of our faith becomes blurred.

The work of John entrusted from heaven

The question He asked, *"The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?" (Mark 11:30),* has to do with knowing Jesus. This is because the most important of the baptisms John gave was the baptism he gave to Jesus at the Jordan River. John was not a man who testified of Jesus in order to exalt his own name, but a man who did the work God had entrusted to him and pointed to the Savior who was coming. If we lower the work of God revealed through John to a mere work of man, we cannot rightly know the work by which Jesus saved sinners either.

We must know why Jesus received baptism from John. Through that baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The sins of our whole lives were also included in all these sins and were passed on to Jesus. The Lord bore those sins and received the

judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and He rose again from death and accomplished salvation completely. John was the man who, as the representative of mankind, gave baptism to Jesus according to the law of the laying on of hands in the Old Testament and passed the sin of the world on to Him; so his work was not to save in place of Jesus, but to reveal the Savior who bears sin.

Therefore, we cannot push aside the baptism Jesus received from John as a ritual unrelated to the gospel. When we know how the sins that were judged on the Cross were passed on to Jesus, the fact that the Lord bore our sins as well becomes clear. To believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not to follow a religious authority made by people, but to accept the salvation God accomplished through Jesus Christ.

That the work of John came from heaven does not mean that we must imitate all his human characteristics. It means that we must know the work God entrusted to him in order to reveal the Savior. John did not bind people's faith to himself but pointed to Jesus. We, too, must listen to the content of the salvation that a person who preaches the gospel testifies of, rather than to his excellence. Whether what the Lord did is clearly conveyed must be the basis of faith.

The Bible testifies of Jesus, saying, *"Not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood" (1 John 5:6)*. When we know that the baptism Jesus received from John and the Cross are joined together as one, we cannot treat the gospel of the water and the Spirit as a mere religious name. In it there are the actual facts of to whom our sins were passed on and who received that judgment. If we leave out the fact that the Lord received baptism from John, the relation between the sins He bore on the Cross and our sins becomes blurred. This relation must be explained clearly to those who hear the word of salvation. Faith does not

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come from memorizing a name, but becomes clear when we know what the Savior did.

When the basis of salvation is clear, we can keep our faith even in situations where we are not acknowledged by people. It is not that the salvation of Jesus becomes true only when everyone listens favorably to what we say. Even though people treated John carelessly, the work entrusted to him was a work that belonged to God. We, too, must distinguish between people's reactions and the truthfulness of the word. If there is opposition, we should look into what needs to be explained more clearly, but we cannot change and preach the salvation itself that the Lord accomplished because of that reaction.

Receive the word before people's evaluation

The leaders of that time reasoned among themselves, saying, *"If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?'" (Mark 11:31)*, and then evaded the answer because of people's evaluation. Today we, too, can avoid the word of the gospel in order to protect the thoughts we have believed until now or the image we have shown to others. However, a thought does not become true just because we have held it for a long time. If the word corrects our thinking, we must accept that word rather than defend ourselves.

This attitude is necessary even for those who already believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If, when our faults are pointed out, we do not acknowledge them in order to save face, or if we do not listen to what we ought to hear because of the position we hold, our hearts become hardened. Since it is the Lord who has made us righteous, there is no reason why our own assertions must always be right. Because we believe in the grace

we have received, we can acknowledge our shortcomings and turn back according to the word.

When, while listening to the word, we realize that what we had known before was wrong, we must value the truth more than saving face. The heart that thinks, "I have believed for a long time, so I cannot be wrong," blocks learning. Conversely, if we believe in the grace by which the Lord has washed away all our sins, we can honestly acknowledge even our own mistaken understanding. Salvation does not depend on the merit of having explained everything exactly right from the beginning. Because we rely on the righteousness the Lord accomplished, we can correct what we now know wrongly.

When we hear another person's question as well, we must first listen to whether he wants to learn. We must not drive him into a corner as being the same as the leaders in the text merely because the question is uncomfortable. To a person who asks because he wants to know the truth, we have the responsibility to answer with the word. If we block questions in order to protect our own authority, we ourselves may rather come to resemble the calculation in the text. We need the attitude of examining together the truth the Lord has given, explaining clearly what we know, and searching the word further to learn what we do not know.

The people who asked Jesus about His authority hid their own answer to the end. We must not follow their calculation, but believe in the work of God, who sent John and washed away all sins through Jesus Christ. Let us open our hearts before the word of salvation, and live by the faith that clearly accepts what the Lord did rather than people's evaluation. ✉

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Sermon 11 by Paul C. Jong

The person who is loosed from where he was tied and carries Jesus

< Mark 11:1–33 >

“Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; and He said to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” say, “The Lord has need of it,” and immediately he will send it here.’ So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. But some of those who stood there said to them, ‘What are you doing, loosing the colt?’ And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: ‘Hosanna! “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!” Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!’ And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late,

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He went out to Bethany with the twelve. Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.' And His disciples heard it. So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it a "den of thieves."' And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. (And every evening he went forth out of the city –ASV). Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.' So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be removed and be cast into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.' Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and

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the elders came to Him. And they said to Him, 'By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?' But Jesus answered and said to them, 'I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me.' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'If we say, "From heaven," He will say, "Why then did you not believe him?" But if we say, "From men"'—they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. So they answered and said to Jesus, 'We do not know.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.'"

The colt on which no one has sat

Dear fellow believers, when you think about the work entrusted to you, what do you reckon first? If you start by counting the reasons why you cannot do it, even the heart that wants to serve the Lord's work shrinks. However, what carried Jesus into Jerusalem in Mark chapter 11 was not a large animal that people had tamed. It was a colt on which no one had yet sat, a colt that had never done anything, having not once even pulled a load.

In the Bible, the colt refers to people. It refers to you and me. A donkey does not listen, is stubborn, and goes about bearing loads all its life until it dies. People, too, are born, go about bearing the burden of sin all their lives, and die. From the time we were born into this world, we were unclean animals, unclean sinners. Yet the Lord designated it, saying, *"You will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it" (Mark 11:2)*.

This means that He uses as the Lord's workers those who have not become servants of men. This is because if one already has another master, the Lord cannot use him. Even if it is a young faith that was born again not long ago, if the Lord wants to use it, He uses it.

The colt was tied. We, too, are tied to our families, tied to our workplaces, and tied to many things we have started. The servants of God go and loose them. Just as the Lord sent two disciples, the Lord does not go and call directly, but calls through the Lord's servants, through the disciples. I hope that you will be loosed from the parts where you are bound, with the help of the word that the servants of God preach.

The colt redeemed with a lamb

In the Old Testament there was the ordinance that says, *"Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb" (Exodus 13:13)*. The lamb is killed in its place to let the colt live. This speaks precisely of our remission of sins. To save us, who were dying while bearing the burden of sin, the Lamb of God died in our place.

Jesus, that Lamb, by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, at the Jordan River, had all the sin of mankind passed on to Him according to the law of the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, without a single person left out. He bore that sin, shed His blood and died on the Cross, rose again from death, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. We are saved by knowing that we are sinners and by believing that the Lord bore all our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received all the judgment for us.

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It is not that we obtained salvation by proving our usefulness. We became the Lord's people by believing in the remission of sins that the Savior accomplished. Only when we clearly believe in the remission of sins can we give our lives to the Lord with thanksgiving.

Do not decline the calling

The Lord said, *"If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it'" (Mark 11:3)*. When the Lord calls us, He does not attach a valid reason. If He wants to use us, He simply tells us to come. It is not that He seeks our understanding and then uses us. From the disciples' standpoint, it was an absurd command to bring a colt tied at someone else's house, but since He is the King of kings, the colt, its owner, and all things are the Lord's. Because the Lord had first worked in the heart of that owner, when the disciples spoke as He had told them, he permitted it. It came to pass just as the Lord had said.

If the Lord wants to use you, how will you respond to that invitation? Your faith must become such that you say, "It is an honor just that You use me; please use me." If the Lord's calling is clear, do not decline but respond. You will never suffer loss. The parts that are not important you can just shake off, and if there is some small loss, you can simply bear the loss. The younger a person is, not yet tied to the affairs of the world, the more he must keep this word in his heart. It is the same for those who are advanced in years. The Lord calls through the workers of the church, saying, "Brother, do this too; sister, do this too." Even if you have no ability at all, if you obey and follow as He calls, you become a precious worker of God.

When the disciples threw their clothes on the colt, Jesus sat on it. Placing clothes on the back of the donkey means entrusting it with the work of God. The colt that had never once carried a person did not struggle even while carrying the Lord. Because the Lord gave it such ability, it could carry Jesus comfortably. It seems as though we follow the Lord, but in reality the Lord leads us, protects us, and blesses us. Just as people spread their clothes and branches on the road and gave a great welcome, crying, *"Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" (Mark 11:9)*, if we follow the Lord, we receive suffering but also receive glory. The Lord wants to enter Jerusalem through us, establish the Lord's kingdom, and cause other souls also to be saved just like us.

Believe and follow the Lord, who accomplishes just as He has said

When the disciples obeyed and went and did just as He said, it came to pass just so. This event is the same principle as the word in the same chapter, *"Whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says" (Mark 11:23)*. When the Creator speaks, it comes to pass just so. When the Lord spoke to the fig tree, it dried up from the roots. Because we believe the word the Lord spoke, we believe that the gospel will be spread throughout the whole world, and we also believe that He causes that gospel to be preached through us. There are times when, while following the Lord, we feel frustrated, wondering why things turn out this way. At such times we must examine what we are believing in.

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Just as God called Samuel while he was still a child, He also calls and uses young faith. We want to be not donkeys that go about carrying on their backs those who serve as slaves of the world, but donkeys that go about carrying the Lord on their backs. The Savior who delivered us from sin first made us the Lord's people. Like the colt that was loosed from where it was tied and carried Jesus, when the Lord calls, let us not decline but comply and follow. The person who responds to that call when the Lord wants to use him has truly been preciously chosen. ✉

Sermon 12 by Paul C. Jong

The faith that causes fruit to be borne even when it is not the season

< Mark 11:1–33 >

“Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; and He said to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” say, “The Lord has need of it,” and immediately he will send it here.’ So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. But some of those who stood there said to them, ‘What are you doing, loosing the colt?’ And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: ‘Hosanna! “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!” Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!’ And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late,

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He went out to Bethany with the twelve. Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.' And His disciples heard it. So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it a "den of thieves."' And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. (And every evening he went forth out of the city –ASV). Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.' So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be removed and be cast into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.' Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and

the elders came to Him. And they said to Him, 'By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?' But Jesus answered and said to them, 'I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me.' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'If we say, "From heaven," He will say, "Why then did you not believe him?" But if we say, "From men"'—they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. So they answered and said to Jesus, 'We do not know.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.'"

This fig tree is us

When a tree has many leaves, from afar it looks abundant. But if a person seeking fruit goes near and lifts the leaves and there is nothing, he does not get what he expected by looking only at the outward appearance. In Mark chapter 11, Jesus went to a fig tree having leaves, but there was nothing but leaves. In the Bible, a tree refers to a person. This fig tree shows the condition of us human beings. A tree abundant only in leaves is a religious person who merely attends church diligently, keeps rituals well, and concentrates on practicing faith by outward appearance. A person who says that even though he believes in Jesus he always has sin, that he is a sinner when he believes and a sinner when he does not believe, is precisely a tree abundant only in leaves.

Yet the Bible makes clear that at that time *"it was not the season for figs" (Mark 11:13)*. Can He curse a tree that has no

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fruit because the season has not come? Does it not seem somewhat strange? The Lord went against the natural order and demanded fruit even though it was not the season, and when there was no fruit, He cursed it. He could have just passed by, thinking that it was not the season, but He did this. Because the Lord wants us to live by faith in God rather than live a natural life, He did this in order to teach faith. A person who does not believe in the Lord's salvation in his heart is not acknowledged just because he is abundant in leaves, and he is cursed like this tree.

The fruit the Lord seeks is having no sin in the heart. The Lord is saying, "Do you believe that I have washed away all your sins with the water and the blood? Then should there not be fruit? Should your heart not be without sin, and should you not have become a righteous person?" Do you truly have the fruit of the fig in your heart?

Believe in God, who asks us to believe Him

The answer the Lord gave to the words of Peter, who saw the withered tree, was the single phrase, *"Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22)*. If there is just one thing God requires of us, it is faith that believes in God. God asks us to believe Him. He says, "If only you believe Me, I will do everything you ask." Since God has never once lied to us, the problem is whether, on our side, we believe God or not.

Faith in God has content. It is the faith that we are saved from all sins because Jesus, who is God, came to this earth in the form of a man, received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again. That Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, is the event in which He had all

the sin of mankind passed on to His own body once and for all, just as the sacrificial offering in the Old Testament received the laying on of hands on its head. Jesus bore that sin, was nailed to the Cross, and received the judgment for sin, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. When we come to know this, our spiritual eyes are opened and we can live a bright life of faith, and we become thankful for the work of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

To believe this fact in the heart means to accept that what Jesus did has to do with our own sins. If someone explains to others that it is the word of salvation, yet thinks that he himself must still wash away his own sins, he does not believe that word as his own salvation. The Bible says, *"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10)*. For the person who says, "I believe that the Lord has removed all my sins," there is heaven, and for the person who says, "I believe that I have sin," it comes to pass according to that faith. If we believe in the heart, it is salvation, and if we do not believe in the heart, it is not salvation.

A life lived by faith, not a natural life

If a person who has received the remission of sins does not live by faith in God, nothing comes of it. Yet the life of faith is extremely easy and has no formula. Since the Lord said, *"Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them" (Mark 11:24)*, we only have to ask God for what we need and believe that we have received what we asked for. All we have to do is ask and believe. The rest God does for us.

Yet we repeat believing and then stopping, entrusting and then taking back. If we believed God to the end, He would work,

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but because we do not believe Him, He cannot work. Sometimes things do not work out even though we believe. This is because God acts according to God's will. Our Lord, too, prayed, *"Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:36),* and ultimately entrusted it to the Father's will. God answers not right away but in due time. So faith is needed not only when we first ask but also while we wait for the answer.

The most important thing for a born-again believer is whether he acts by faith. Doing something because it must be done by custom and convention is different from doing it by faith. When we are young, we follow along by the faith into which a guide leads us, but when we grow up, our own faith is required. Our working life, too, must be done by faith in the Lord, preaching the gospel must also be done by faith, and serving the Lord must also be done by faith. When we preach the gospel, we run into obstacles and the brakes are put on. But if we act by the faith that when we preach the gospel the one who hears receives the remission of sins, souls are saved. Quitting when things do not work out is not faith. When raising our children as well, we must entrust to God by faith things that look impossible to the eye. We first discern whether it is a work that pleases God, and if it is a work that pleases Him, we do it by faith in God.

Natural things like the fig tree bear fruit only when the season comes. But in the kingdom of God, even when the season has not come, if we pray and believe that God has already given what He will give, it comes to pass just so. If we do not believe and live naturally, even what we have is taken away, but if we believe God, we can pick and eat fruit from the fig tree even in winter. We who have received the remission of sins and become the Lord's disciples must not try to live naturally. We must believe.

Do you have faith in God? When you do something, do you do it by faith in God? When we believe God, there is boldness in our hearts, there is delight, and there is joy. Do not try to fabricate by your own strength the fruit the Lord seeks. First believe in your heart the gospel that remitted our sins, and entrust today's life also to that God. Let us believe our God. In the heart of the person who believes in God, who causes fruit to be borne even when it is not the season, there is the fruit the Lord gives. ✉

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CHAPTER

12

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

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The Son whom people rejected has become the cornerstone of salvation

< Mark 12:1–12 >

"Then He began to speak to them in parables: 'A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, "They will respect my son." But those vinedressers said among themselves, "This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours." So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. Have you not even read this Scripture:

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“The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes”?’ And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.”

The vinedressers who made what was entrusted to them their own

Jesus told the parable of an owner who planted a vineyard and entrusted it to vinedressers. When the time came, the owner sent a servant to receive the fruit, but the vinedressers beat the servant and sent him away empty-handed. They also treated other servants shamefully and violently, and even killed them. The people who had been entrusted with the vineyard and worked in it refused the rights of the owner. The heart that sought to seize as its own what had been entrusted to them showed itself as hostility toward the servants who were sent.

The owner still had his beloved son left. The owner sent his son, saying, *“They will respect my son” (Mark 12:6)*, but the vinedressers recognized him as the heir and decided to kill him. In the end they killed the son and cast him out of the vineyard. Jesus said that the owner would come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others. Having a position entrusted to them did not let them escape the responsibility for having refused the owner to the end.

The leaders who heard this parable knew that this word pointed to them, yet rather than turning their hearts, they sought to seize Jesus. The heart of the vinedressers who had proposed killing the son was revealed just as it was in their attitude as they heard the word. Even if one has been entrusted with the work of

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serving God, if he refuses the Son whom God sent, that position cannot protect him.

The owner planted the vineyard and prepared a hedge, a place for the wine vat, and a tower. The vinedressers were not people who had raised up their own property out of nothing, but people who had been entrusted with a vineyard that was already prepared. Therefore, the request for the fruit was not an attempt by a stranger to take something away unjustly. Nevertheless, the vinedressers turned the position entrusted to them into their own right. This parable reveals the fact that when one handles for a long time what was entrusted by grace, one can forget who the owner is.

The record that the servants were sent repeatedly contains the fact that the opportunities for the vinedressers to turn back were also repeated. However, rather than acknowledging their earlier wrong, they did greater violence to the next servant who came. When one tries to cover up a wrong, yet another wrong can pile up. We, too, must honestly acknowledge it from the start when the word exposes our own cravings. We must not turn the fact that the Lord is patient into permission to keep on refusing. We must treasure the opportunities given by grace.

The calculation of the vinedressers who said, *"This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours" (Mark 12:7)*, was a thought that ignored the fact that the owner was alive. The vinedressers saw only the actions they themselves could take, and did not see the owner who would judge those actions. We, too, can think that a problem will end if we get away from a person or stop uncomfortable words. However, the responsibility we must bear before God does not disappear. Keeping away from the person who preaches the word does not make the sin that the word has exposed disappear as well.

The salvation accomplished by the Son who would be killed

While saying this, Jesus let them hear the Scripture that says, *"The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes" (Mark 12:10–11)*. The fact that people threw Him away does not mean that God's will is also nullified. Through Jesus, who would be rejected, God accomplishes salvation. The wickedness of the people who kill the sinless Son is revealed as it is, but the work the Lord would accomplish is not blocked by their wickedness.

Jesus, who would be rejected by people like the son rejected by the vinedressers, first received baptism from John in the Jordan River, saying, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and through that baptism He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The sins of the people who refused the Son and the sins of our whole lives were passed on to Him at that time. Therefore, His shedding of blood and dying on the Cross cannot be explained only by the sorrow of having been rejected by people. The Lord received the judgment in our place as the price of those sins He bore, and He rose again from death, completely accomplished the salvation of those who believe, and became the living Savior. That Jesus, who was rejected and died, has given us life in this way is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The vinedressers' killing of the son cannot be justified. However, God did not let the judgment of the people who refused the Son stand as the final conclusion, but established Jesus, who rose again from death, as the ground of our salvation. The One we are to rely on is not a person who has gained power

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in the world or the owner of a religious position, but the Son of God, who bore our sins and rose again.

The beloved son and the servants who were sent do not stand in the same position. The servants convey the owner's will, but the son is the heir. Through the parable, Jesus revealed how great the sin of refusing the Son whom God sent is. We cannot treat Jesus as a person who conveys one among many religious teachings. This is because how we receive the Son whom God sent to give life to sinners is related to salvation. It is necessary to believe in the work the Lord has accomplished.

The fact that God set the rejected stone as the cornerstone shows that man's judgment and God's doing can differ. The fact that the builders considered the stone useless did not mean that the stone's place was over. God established Jesus Christ as the ground of salvation. Therefore, we cannot judge the gospel merely by the fact that many people reject it or the fact that religious authorities do not acknowledge it. We must confirm through the Scriptures what the Lord has accomplished and believe it.

The fact that Jesus rose again from death reveals even more clearly the salvation God has accomplished. People tried to solve their own problem by killing the Son, but He did not remain in the tomb. The Savior who is alive today becomes the Lord of those who have received the remission of sins. Our faith is not a heart that pities someone whom people have defeated, but a faith that entrusts our life to the One who bore our sins and rose again. That is why we can preach the gospel even amid opposition.

Do not make the work entrusted to you your own possession

We who hear this word must also not regard the work entrusted to us as if it were our own possession. The fact that we have been entrusted with a position of teaching people or serving the church does not mean that souls must follow our will. The One who received baptism from John and shed His blood for that person is Jesus. Rather than trying to hold people on our own side, we must help them hear and believe the word of the Savior.

It is the same when the word exposes our wrongs. If we hate the one who preaches the word for fear that our authority will be lowered, we are coming to resemble the heart of the vinedressers. We who have received the remission of sins are not people who can live only by insisting on our own rightness to the end. Because we believe in the righteousness Jesus has given us, we can acknowledge our wrongs and set right the work entrusted to us.

The heart that regards the work God has entrusted to us as our own possession appears even in small places. Because we have been in charge of something for a long time, we may dislike another person learning it, or we may reject even a proposal that accords with the word if it differs from our own way. At that time we must think again about for whom we were entrusted with the work. The abilities and opportunities the Lord has given should be used to give life to souls. Even if we ourselves are not made prominent, if the gospel is clearly preached, we should be able to rejoice in that work.

Also, when we hear the word, we must not think that we ourselves are onlookers standing outside the parable. The leaders in this passage knew that *"He had spoken the parable against them" (Mark 12:12)*, yet they did not turn back but

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looked for a way to seize Him. The mere fact that they understood did not mean that they obeyed. For us, too, when we come to know our own wrongs, what matters is our next response. We must make up our minds whether we will look for a reason to avoid the word, or believe in the grace received from the Lord and correct what must be corrected. One who believes in the Son must stand as a learner before His word as well.

God set Jesus, who was rejected by people, as the cornerstone of salvation. We who have received the remission of sins by believing in Him must live with hearts that give thanks for the grace received and render to the Lord what belongs to the Lord. Let us cast off the stubbornness that refuses the Son, and faithfully serve the souls and the work entrusted to us, relying on the living Savior. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's

< Mark 12:13–17 >

"Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. When they had come, they said to Him, 'Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?' But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, 'Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.' So they brought it. And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' And they marveled at Him."

A test devised while praising the truth

Some of the Pharisees and the Herodians came to Jesus. They said, *"You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth" (Mark 12:14)*. However, these words were not the confession of

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people who wanted to receive His teaching. This was because they were people who had been sent to catch Jesus in His words. Even words that exalt the truth with the mouth can become a tool of deception according to the purpose in the heart.

They asked whether it was right to pay taxes to Caesar, and Jesus, knowing their hypocrisy, had them bring a denarius and asked whose image and inscription were on that money. When they answered that they were Caesar's, Jesus answered, *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17)*. The Lord's answer was not trapped in the test they had devised.

Hearing this word, we must look back at the heart that wants to choose only the responsibilities that are convenient for itself. We cannot make light of the responsibilities we must bear in the world on the grounds that we believe in God. At the same time, we must not entrust to people even the faith and the heart we are to give to God, on the grounds that the power of the world is great. We must not divide up according to our own benefit the two responsibilities of which the Lord spoke together.

The people who came to test Him said that Jesus did not regard the appearance of men. If they had truly believed the meaning of those words, they should have thought of the fact that their own hypocrisy was also exposed before the Lord. However, they wrapped their question in fine words and tried to put Jesus inside their own plan. We, too, can exalt God with our mouths while in reality hoping that He will move according to our will. If we confess the Lord's truthfulness, we must also honestly reveal our hearts before Him.

Jesus had them bring the coin and asked them directly, *"Whose image and inscription is this?" (Mark 12:16)*. He made the people who had asked the question answer with their own mouths whose it was. He made it impossible for them to carry

on only an abstract debate apart from the relationship between the money they used and their actual lives. We, too, cannot turn away from the question of what responsibility we now bear toward whom, while speaking of the principles of faith. The word is not a matter of debate detached from life, but the standard that corrects our actions.

We must not miss the fact that the word to give to God the things that are God's came together with the answer about taxes. The people asked only about what to give to Caesar, but Jesus also revealed their responsibility toward God. Having done well with the responsibilities one holds within the systems of the world does not mean that faith toward God is automatically in place. Conversely, speaking of faith does not mean that the responsibilities of daily life disappear. We must accept the fact that our whole life stands before the word of God.

Our life, which belongs to God

The image engraved on the money was Caesar's, but our life and salvation depend on God. Though we live managing possessions and forming relationships with people, we must not think that we ourselves are the owners of all that life. God gave us life, and He saved us, who were to be judged for sin, through Jesus Christ. The word about giving to God the things that are God's makes us ask whom our hearts are relying on.

The money engraved with Caesar's image goes back to Caesar, but our life, which God created, was dead in sin. To give life to that life, Jesus received baptism from John, and through that baptism He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and at that time He also had even the sins we commit throughout our whole lives transferred to Him. The Lord

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bore those sins and, by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, paid the price of those sins in our place. The word that says, *"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5)*, was fulfilled just as it is. And the Lord rose again from death and completely saved us. Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit know by how great a grace their lives have been saved. In the salvation the Lord has given us, there is no remaining price that we must repay with money or merit.

For that reason, the service we give to God cannot become a transaction to buy salvation. It is first believing in and giving thanks for the grace that has washed away all our sins, and giving our hearts. If we calculate what we might give in order to gain greater worldly benefit, we are treating the One who gave us grace as a party to a transaction. When we believe in the fact that the Lord has become our Savior, we can also use what we have for His will.

When we know the fact that the life we have belongs to God, we also come to see possessions differently. We must do the work of providing and planning for what we need, but those possessions cannot protect our life forever. If we discard even the word of salvation for fear of losing possessions, we lose what is more precious. The new life that Jesus gave us by bearing all our sins does not depend on how much or how little we possess. When we have this faith, we can use what we have according to the Lord's will.

The heart that tries to turn the salvation received by grace into a transaction can also creep into the matter of giving. If we think that because we have served this much, the Lord must surely fulfill our plans, the purpose of our service is again bound to our own benefit. However, the Lord bore our sins even before we gave any price first. Giving out of gratitude for the grace

received is not holding out a claim of debt against God, but believing that He is our Savior and using with joy what He has entrusted to us.

Also, we must not turn what is God's into what is man's. We can be thankful to those who help our faith and cooperate with them as needed, but our faith and conscience do not become that person's possession. Since the One who accomplished the remission of sins is Jesus, we must also examine whether a person's demands accord with the Lord's word. If we unconditionally entrust to some human authority the faith we are to give to God, the direction of serving the Savior can become blurred. We must discern responsibly within the grace by which the Lord has saved us.

Fulfill the responsibilities of life honestly as well

The faith that gives our hearts to God is not separated from the responsibilities of life. That faith must also appear in doing honestly what we must do and in giving people what is rightfully theirs. If we put religious words first while shifting losses onto others or neglecting promises, we are using the Lord's word to suit our own benefit. One who believes in the grace received must examine his own words and actions by the word.

Also, we must not put the word of God behind in order to be recognized in people's eyes. Just as the Lord saw through them, saying, *"Why do you test Me?" (Mark 12:15)*, the people who tested Jesus appeared to be speaking the truth but harbored a different purpose inside. We must look back at whether, while exalting God with our mouths, our hearts are bound to possessions and people's opinions. If a shortcoming is revealed,

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we can set the direction of our hearts right, remembering the grace received from the Savior.

Honest responsibility is not a principle to be kept only when it is to our advantage. Keeping a promise takes effort, and giving what is rightfully due can reduce our own share. If at that time we put only our own benefit first, it is easy to make up religious reasons and avoid responsibility. But one who believes in the grace of salvation does not need to protect himself by deceiving people. When life is hard, we must speak the facts honestly, seek the help we need, and look for a way to faithfully fulfill the responsibilities we must bear.

Giving our hearts to God must also not end in vague words. Actual responses are needed: setting aside time to hear the word, preaching the gospel of the remission of sins to others, and praying for souls in difficulty. Rather than putting forward pious words in order to be recognized by others, it is devoting our hearts and strength to the things that please the Lord. When we fulfill our responsibilities in the world and yet do not forget the purpose of salvation, our lives come to show how we treasure the life received from the Lord.

Hearing Jesus' answer, the people marveled. We must go beyond admiring that wisdom and live according to the word. While faithfully fulfilling the responsibilities entrusted to you in the world, give faith and thanks to God, who has saved us. The things that are Caesar's go back to Caesar, but our life, obtained through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, belongs to God. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Those who have received the remission of sins are the living before God

< Mark 12:18–27 >

“Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: ‘Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man’s brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.’”

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A question that confined the resurrection within their own thinking

The Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, asked Jesus a question. Their question was that if seven brothers took one woman as wife in turn and died without children, and the woman also died, *"In the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be?" (Mark 12:23)*. They knew the writings of Moses, but they tried to deny the resurrection by applying the marriage relationships of this present world just as they are to the resurrected life as well. By the reasoning of people who have not been born again, it was a natural question.

Jesus said, *"Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?" (Mark 12:24)*. He said that when people rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven. The resurrection is not a matter of extending the conditions of present life just as they are. If we confine the life God will make new within human experience, we come to misjudge the meaning of the word even after reading it.

At this time, Jesus was not saying that people turn into angels; rather, He was explaining how resurrected life is different in response to their question about marriage. We cannot go beyond what He said and decide by imagination every aspect of the resurrection on the basis of the relationships of this world. We must hear the word with the faith that God, who created life, can also raise the dead.

The Sadducees asked their question on the basis of one regulation of the Scriptures, but they did not believe in God's power to raise the dead. This shows that knowing the sentences of the Scriptures and believing in the God of that word can be different things. Even with much knowledge, if we allow the

word only within our own judgment, we end up limiting what God will do. We must not use the word we have read merely as material to prove our own thoughts, but must be ready to have our thoughts corrected by that word as well.

Jesus did not leave the resurrection as something that could not be explained just because their question was complicated; He made clear that the premise of their question was wrong. The contradiction arose because they thought that the same marriage relationships as now would continue just as they are in the resurrected life as well. We, too, when we find it hard to accept God's promise, must examine what thoughts we have fixed in advance before concluding that there is a problem with the word itself. God's power is greater than our present experience.

The attitude of believing as much as the Scriptures have told us about the resurrection is also important. If we fill in with imagination the details we do not know, that imagination can in turn become an obstacle to faith. The Lord taught that the dead rise and that there is an order of life different from the present one. What we need is the faith that trusts that promise. With a heart that will believe only if it can first picture every aspect, we cannot receive the word of the Lord who created life.

God's promise, which is not severed by death

Jesus spoke of the event of the burning bush recorded in the book of Moses. God said to Moses that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The fact that those forefathers had died in the flesh did not mean that their relationship with God was also gone. Jesus corrected the thinking that denied the resurrection with the word, *"He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living" (Mark 12:27)*. When we divide the living

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and the dead before God, the dead are those without faith, sinners who are the descendants of Adam, and the living are those who have received the remission of sins and been born again. God does not become the God of just anyone; He becomes the God of those who have been born again.

We, too, must not consider the power of death greater than God's promise. Man is helpless in the face of death, but God is the One who gives life. The hope of us who have been saved from sin also lies here. When the life of the flesh ends, the salvation received from the Lord does not end as well; rather, we come to enjoy the life the Lord has promised. This hope is not a vague comfort, but is grounded in the Lord who raises the dead.

The God of the living opened, through His Son, the way to make us, who were dead in sin, the living. Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and at that time He also had all the sins of our whole lives passed on to Him. Bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and thereby received in our place the judgment we were to receive, and, as if to show that He is not the God of the dead but the God of the living, He rose again from death and completely saved us. The One who saved us does not remain in the tomb; He is the living Savior who gives new life to those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The word God spoke, *"I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6)*, reveals that death cannot bring down His covenant. Abraham was a man who believed the word, Isaac was a man of obedience, and Jacob was a man who received God's favor; so God is the God of the three generations of forefathers who had faith, and He is the God of us who have inherited that faith. In people's eyes the forefathers had already departed from this

world, but God spoke as their God. Jesus taught the resurrection of the dead from this record. Therefore, the hope of the resurrection is not a wish that people made up in order to endure death, but is grounded in the word of God. We must believe that the One who promised can give life.

We must not leave this hope merely as a doctrine unrelated to ourselves. If we say with our mouths that Jesus rose again, yet think that our own sins are still unresolved, we cannot enjoy the new life the Savior has given. We must accept in our hearts that through the baptism the Lord received from John, saying, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, our sins also were passed on to Him, and that the judgment of the Cross was the judgment in our place. When the Savior's resurrection is connected with the fact of the salvation that gave us life, God sends the Holy Spirit upon that faith, and we can call the living God our Father.

Even those who have received the remission of sins are still weak in the flesh, making mistakes, falling ill, and undergoing hardships. However, such circumstances cannot do away with the grace of the Lord who gave us life. Since Jesus bore the sins of our whole lives, there is no need to prepare a new price for salvation each time our weakness is revealed; we need only believe in the righteousness the Lord accomplished, correct our wrongs, and seek the help we need. The life we have received depends not on our achievements but on what the Lord has accomplished.

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Rely on the living Savior today as well

The confession that we believe in the resurrection must not remain merely as a thought about the distant future. We who have received the remission of sins must believe that the living Lord is our God even now. Since we can pray to Him, hear the word, and seek His help, we are not people who live by our own strength and meet the Lord only at the end, but people who even now live together with the Lord within the salvation we have received.

When life is hard and the flesh is weak, it can feel as though the Lord is far away. However, we cannot judge whether the Lord is alive by that feeling. We must believe the fact that He who bore all our sins and rose again from death, just as He said, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19)*, has become our Savior. Here also lies the reason we need a life of hearing together the word the Lord has given and sharing our faith. When our hearts waver, we hear the grace of salvation again and gain strength.

For those who believe in the living Savior, the gathering to hear the word has a meaning beyond a place to fulfill an obligation. We hear the word of life the Lord gives and gain strength. A weary heart rises again through the gospel, and a person who had been confined within his own thoughts finds the way through the word. In such fellowship we learn the fact that the Savior cares for His own people even now.

Therefore, when there is hardship, we must not distance ourselves from the word in an attempt to handle every problem alone. Difficulty does not prove the Lord's absence. We can pray to the living Lord, share the help we need with fellow believers, and walk by faith. The One who will raise us in the future is also involved with us today. Do not keep Him as a Savior who will

be needed only on the last day, but rely on Him in your present life. The faith in the resurrection gives us the strength to live today.

The Sadducees limited God's power to the range of what they knew. Let us lay down that thinking and believe in Jesus, who rose again from death. We who have received the remission of sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit can call God our Father. Even amid today's difficulties, let us seek help from the living Lord and hope for the life of the resurrection that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will give to us as well. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Cast off your own righteousness before the commandment and receive grace

< Mark 12:28–34 >

"Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' So the scribe said to Him, 'Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.' Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' But after that no one dared question Him."

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The love that demands the whole heart

A scribe, seeing that Jesus had answered well, asked which was the first of all the commandments. Jesus answered, *"Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:29–30)*. It means that we must give God a love that cannot be divided with anything else. And He spoke together with it the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself, and said that there is no commandment greater than these. He did not set apart the heart that loves God from the heart that treats one's neighbor.

This commandment cannot be said to have been fully kept by a few religious acts. Before the word that says with all your heart and with all your strength, there is no part to be held back. One cannot say that one has loved perfectly while seeking God only when it is advantageous to oneself, or cherishing only those with whom one is on good terms. The more we know what the greatest commandment is, the more we come to see how lacking our own love is.

The scribe agreed with the words of Jesus and answered that loving God and one's neighbor *"is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:33)*. He knew that faith cannot be judged by the quantity of rituals. Jesus, seeing his wise answer, said that he was not far from the kingdom of God. Discerning the meaning of the word is precious, but one must not stop at knowing that word; one must receive the salvation that one needs.

This scribe had heard the words of those before him reasoning together, and he knew that Jesus had answered well. Even though they were called by the same name of scribe, not everyone came to Jesus with the same attitude. The text shows

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this man's question and wise answer concretely. We, too, must not judge a person only by his office or the name of his group, but must look at what word he actually hears and how he responds. To a person whose listening heart is open, we must clearly preach the truth that he needs.

The confession that God is the one and only Lord is placed before the commandment of love, and it makes us think of the fact that our hearts cannot serve several masters equally. If we say that we love God yet decide only as riches and honor demand, our confession and our life are at odds. Jesus said to love with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. By allotting only a leftover portion to religious life, we cannot be said to have fully accepted the meaning of that word. Our whole life is before God.

The word to love one's neighbor as oneself makes us look back on the heart that is sensitive only to its own benefit. We can feel even a small inconvenience to ourselves keenly while easily passing by another person's difficulty. When we want to hear an explanation, we want to hear it fully, yet we sometimes answer others' questions briefly and finish. The commandment shines a light on this actual heart. This is why we cannot say that we have fulfilled love perfectly merely because we have not committed a great crime visible to the eye.

The grace needed by a person who knows the lack of his love

A person who acknowledges his own lack before the commandment of God cannot boast that he is righteous of himself. Nor does he think that all his sins will be solved if he adds a little more love. He knows that he needs the Savior who will solve his past sins and even the weaknesses that will be

revealed in the future. The law teaches us the right will, but it does not declare that we have lived perfectly according to that will.

To save such people as us, Jesus received baptism from John. Through that baptism He received from John, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, so the sin of failing to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and the sin of failing to love our neighbor as ourselves were also passed on to the Lord at that time. Bearing those sins, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross. Just as Isaiah proclaimed, *"The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5)*, the Lord paid the price of those sins in our place, and He rose again from death and completely saved us, who could not stand before the commandment. When we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, our sins are washed away not by the size of our own love but by the salvation the Lord accomplished.

Therefore, even a person who has become discouraged while hearing the commandment can come to the Savior. This is because Jesus has saved those who have failed to fulfill the love that God requires. In the heart that believes in that grace, thanksgiving arises. Freed from the fear that we can be accepted by the Savior only if we love well, we come to be able to believe in and love the One who has already washed away our sins.

The scribe's answer, which regarded love as more precious than burnt offerings and sacrifices, makes us think about the purpose of rituals. Even if one offers much outwardly, if one's heart is closed to God and one's neighbor, that quantity cannot take the place of true love. We, too, rather than reassuring ourselves by counting the number of times we worship and serve, must examine with what heart we do them. If only the fact that

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we did religious work remains and there is no heart that actually values souls, we must set our direction again before the word.

The word that Jesus spoke, *"You are not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34)*, acknowledges this man's wise understanding, yet it also leaves us room to think more deeply. Knowing what the commandment means and receiving the remission of sins must be distinguished. Even knowing the fact that love is important, one can cling to one's own righteousness, claiming that one has fulfilled that love. If one has come to know the meaning of the word, one must acknowledge one's lacking self before it and come to the Savior. One must not stop the steps of faith at the satisfaction of having given the right answer.

If our love were the basis of salvation, our hearts could not help but always be anxious. This is because even if we seem to have loved today, selfish thoughts are revealed tomorrow, and even while laboring for those close to us, we inwardly hope for a reward. That is why the righteousness that Jesus accomplished is needed. The Lord bore even such sins and received the judgment for them. When we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, instead of making righteousness by hiding our lacking love, we receive the grace of perfect salvation. That grace becomes the basis of a new heart to love.

Serve your neighbor with the love you have received

Since the Lord said, *"The second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:31)*, we must not take the commandment of love lightly on the grounds that we have received the remission of sins. We who have received grace must

learn our heart and our life according to that word. If we confess that we love God yet turn away from the difficulty of a person near us, or put only our own comfort first, that is not a response worthy of the grace we have received. Remembering how the Lord has treated us, we must look after our neighbor.

Serving people involves actual labor. We must listen to the person's words and give the help that is needed, and if there is something we have done wrong, we must acknowledge it and set it right. Also, to a person who has sin in his heart, we must preach the gospel of the remission of sins. Letting him know the news that Jesus bore all sins and helping him, too, to enjoy the same grace is loving a soul.

When we serve our neighbor with the love we have received, we can refrain from first calculating what we will get back from the other person. Of course, the responsibility of living together rests on both sides, but there is no need to turn every act of love into a contract for compensation. If we remember the fact that the Lord saved us, who had no merit at all, we can patiently help even a person who is not thankful. Such patience comes not from one's character being especially good, but from relying on the grace one has received.

Also, we must not reduce the words "loving one's neighbor" to only one side, either spiritual concern or material help. If there is a bodily difficulty, we must look to the help that is needed, and if there is sin in the heart, we must preach the gospel of salvation. It is to actually care for that person without ignoring the other need on the grounds that we have done one of them. Just as the Lord cares for each of us as one person with a body and a heart, we, too, can listen to the person before us and take on the labor that is needed. The grace we have received must lead to concrete love in our lives.

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Merely stating the greatest commandment correctly cannot take the place of our faith. We must know our own lack before that commandment and believe in the salvation accomplished through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Let us give thanks to the Savior, who loved us first and washed away all our sins. Relying on that grace, let us keep learning a life of giving our hearts to God and valuing our neighbor as ourselves. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Why did David call the Christ Lord?

< Mark 12:35–37 >

“Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, ‘How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” Therefore David himself calls Him “Lord”; how is He then his Son?’ And the common people heard Him gladly.”

A confession deeper than the Son of David

While teaching in the temple, Jesus asked, *“How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David?” (Mark 12:35)*. He let them hear the word that David, by the Holy Spirit, called the Christ Lord, and asked how He could then be his Son, since David himself called Him Lord. This question is not meant to make them abandon the promise that the Christ would come as a descendant of David, but to make them go further than knowing Him merely as the descendant of a great king.

According to the question He asked, *“Therefore David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; how is He then his Son?” (Mark 12:37)*, if we understand Jesus only by the word descendant, we cannot explain why David called Him Lord. Jesus taught the exalted authority of the Christ through the word of Scripture.

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The One whom even David served as his Lord was now speaking before the people. Knowing Jesus goes deeper than knowing one familiar title. We must accept together the testimony of Scripture as to who He is.

Jesus asked the question on the basis of the word that David spoke by the Holy Spirit. Even if people's interpretation has been handed down and become familiar, if it cannot explain all the testimony of Scripture, we must learn more. The saying that calls the Christ the Son of David is true, but that saying alone does not fully reveal the meaning of David's calling Him Lord. We must not think that we have known Jesus sufficiently on the grounds that we know one expression. We must hear what more Scripture testifies about Him.

David was the king of Israel, but he called the Christ his Lord. Even a person who held a high position in the world is, before Him, one who is ruled. We, too, cannot put the words of Jesus under our own judgment just because our experience and offices have accumulated. Even if we have been entrusted with the work of explaining the Lord's word, we are disciples who must hear and follow that word. The more we are in a position to teach, the more we must first keep a heart to learn from the Lord. Knowledge does not change the position in which we serve the Lord.

What Jesus made known to the people was not merely a riddle hard to solve. He made them know more clearly who the Christ they were waiting for is. If, while hoping for salvation, one does not know the Savior properly, one comes to look only for the image that fits one's own expectations. If one wants a strong king, one rejects the suffering Jesus, and if one wants only a good teacher, one may fail to accept the authority of the Lord who gives life. We must not limit the image of the Lord by our own needs, but believe according to the testimony of Scripture.

David's Lord humbled Himself for sinners

Jesus is the Son of God who came clothed in a human body. Though He lived among men, He is not One who remains merely an excellent teacher of one age. The authority to save sinners and the life to overcome death are His. The reason we can rely on Jesus for the remission of sins and everlasting life is precisely that He is our Lord.

That exalted One, whom even David called Lord, humbled Himself to save us. When Jesus received baptism from John, of whom He Himself testified that *"he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14)*, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and He had even the sins of our whole lifetime passed on to Him at that time. By bearing those sins and shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, the Lord paid the price of those sins in our place, and by rising again from death, He completely accomplished our salvation as the living Savior seated at the right hand of God. A person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not stop at admiring the greatness of Jesus from afar, but receives the salvation that He accomplished for him.

The identity of Jesus and His work of salvation are not separate. Because the One who is our Lord Himself bore sin, we can rely on that salvation. Also, because we know how the Lord saved us, we can believe in Him as our Savior and give thanks. We must not remain merely calling on His high name without knowing how our sins were washed away. We must believe that the salvation He accomplished through the baptism He received from John, the atonement of the Cross, and the resurrection is directly related to our sins.

The faith that Jesus is the Son of God and is our Lord makes us know His humbling even more deeply. It is different from

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seeing the Cross merely as an event in which a powerless man fell victim to wicked men. This is because the Cross is an event in which the honorable One gave Himself up for sinners. The more we know who the Lord is, the more we realize how great a grace the suffering He endured for us is. The exaltedness of the Savior and His service toward sinners are not separate from each other.

Also, we must believe together the fact that Jesus truly came clothed in a human body. The Lord did not merely say in words that He would remove our sins; He actually received baptism from John and shed His blood and died. The sins He bore and the judgment He received were real. Therefore, our remission of sins, too, is not a comfort that arises when we have good thoughts, but the grace received by believing in the salvation that the Savior accomplished in history. Only when that fact is clear does the basis of the remission of sins remain unshaken even when our feelings change.

One can exalt the name of Jesus and yet fail to connect the work of salvation He did with one's own sins. In such a case, though there are many words praising the Lord, the heart remains pressed down under sin. We must accept the fact that when the Lord received baptism from John, He also bore all our sins. Because He received my judgment in my place on the Cross and rose again, I believe in Him as the Savior. Our confession about Jesus must become clear in this way, together with the content of salvation.

Believe in and follow the exalted Savior

David proclaimed, *"The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool'" (Mark 12:36)*. It means that people's rejection and hostility cannot be the final state of the Christ. Jesus rose again from death and was exalted. Our faith does not lie in reminiscing about One who was once respected by people. We rely on the Lord, who is alive even now and will accomplish the will of God in the end.

This faith holds us up when we are in suffering. The salvation the Lord has given does not weaken because we meet opposition while preaching the gospel or because we look small in the world. The One we follow is the Christ, whom even David called Lord. Therefore, valuing His word more than people's evaluation, we can continue to serve in the work entrusted to us.

We must not turn the word to sit at the right hand of the LORD and the word that the enemies will be put under His feet into a justification for subduing our enemies by our own strength. The One who achieves that victory is the Christ. We preach the gospel entrusted to us, believing that the Lord will accomplish His will in the end. If we think that faith is victorious only when we subdue those who oppose us by our own strength, we easily lose the purpose of saving souls. Because we believe that the living Lord judges, we can speak the truth clearly and yet be patient with people for a long time.

Faith that relies on the Lord is also different from stubbornness that does not listen to others' evaluation at all. If there is something in people's words that can correct our faults, we must learn humbly. It is only that such evaluation cannot be the standard that determines the truth of the salvation that Jesus accomplished. Our insufficient explanation can be corrected, but the gospel that the Lord bore sin cannot be changed. A person

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who exalts the Savior does not exalt all his own words as absolute as well.

In hearing the word gladly there is the joy of realization. But if, even after hearing, one lives following only one's former thoughts, that joy does not carry over into one's life. If we believe that Jesus is our Lord, we must ask His will when we stand at a place of choice. When we spend time, use possessions, and deal with people, we can examine what is worthy of the grace we have received from the Lord. If we, too, call the Christ whom David called Lord our Lord, that confession must lead to today's obedience.

Many people heard the words of Jesus gladly. We, too, should rejoice when we hear the word, but that joy must lead to a clear faith in whom we believe. Jesus, David's Lord, bore all our sins and rose again. Believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, give thanks to this Savior, and walk today also following the word of Him whom David called Lord. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The greed that cannot be hidden by long prayers

< Mark 12:38–40 >

"Then He said to them in His teaching, 'Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.'"

The heart that loves to be exalted

Jesus taught, *"Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts" (Mark 12:38–39)*. Those who were to serve people from the position of knowing the Scriptures were using that position to gain honor for themselves. The religious dignity displayed outwardly did not cover up the pride within their hearts.

This warning does not mean merely to change the length of one's robes or the location of one's seat; it makes us examine the purpose of the heart, why we love such things. When the desire to be treated well by people grows, even the work of preaching the word can become a means of exalting one's own name. While doing the work the Lord has given, how others see us becomes more important.

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We, too, do not become free from such a heart of our own accord. We may think that we should be recognized more because we have served long, or feel hurt when no one acknowledges us. At such times, rather than thinking over and over only of our own labor, we must look back on whom we serve. The position of serving the Lord is a position of preaching to others the grace received from Him.

Long robes, greetings, and the best seats are honor visible to people's eyes. Jesus warned against the heart that desires such outward appearance. Being respected by people may happen, but if we make it the purpose of serving, our hearts change. We easily get angry when we are not treated well, and we come to seek conspicuous positions rather than quietly doing what is needed. We must examine before the word not only what work we have been entrusted with, but also what we expect while doing that work.

Such a heart also makes us keep close only those who try to look good to us. We may value those who praise our labor and feel uncomfortable with those who tell us our faults. Then it becomes hard to hear the exhortation that the word requires. The more a person does the work the Lord has entrusted to him, the more he needs a listening heart. This is because a soul standing right is more important than protecting one's own name. We must remember the fact that a respected appearance and right service are not always the same thing.

If we direct the warning of this text only to certain people, we fail to see the same craving within us. Anyone, even in a position of small responsibility, can have a heart that wants to make others follow his words. The thought, "Since I have served, others ought to treat me well," can also be the beginning of it. The Lord did not call us as owners of the right to be served, but

as those who serve with the grace they have received. We need to hear the warning first as addressed to ourselves.

Prayers offered while harming the weak

The rebuke of Jesus goes deeper. The Lord said that they are those *"who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation" (Mark 12:40)*. This is because they harmed the property of people who could hardly protect themselves while showing a godly appearance. Long prayers cannot hide greed, nor does religious status lessen the responsibility for having harmed others.

Prayer is telling one's heart to God. But if it is used to gain people's trust and take profit, it becomes deception in the form of prayer. The Lord looks not only at the godliness visible on the outside but also at how that person treats the weak. We must fear the heart that seeks its own benefit by exploiting someone's faith and difficult circumstances.

Those who preach the gospel of the remission of sins must also stand before this warning. Speaking of grace does not make greedy conduct justified. When a fault is revealed, we must not try to cover it with godly words, but acknowledge our responsibility and set it right. We must examine our actual relationships to see whether we are failing to help those who need help and instead laying burdens on them.

The word about devouring widows' houses reveals to whom religious dignity actually brought loss. Those who most needed help were instead harmed. Jesus saw both the outward honor and the hidden harm. We, too, must not turn away from what burdens the weak are bearing in the process merely because the work is going well. If we speak of the purpose of saving people, we must

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check whether we are actually caring for that person's life and heart.

The word that the fact of having prayed long cannot cover faults asks us about truthfulness before God. One may appear godly to people, but the Lord knows the conduct behind those words. Therefore, when a fault is revealed, we must not avoid responsibility by speaking more plausible words of faith, but acknowledge the harm we have caused and set it right. A person who prays truthfully to God must also be able to examine before the word the wrongs he has done to people.

The warning of receiving greater condemnation keeps us from taking lightly the knowledge and status entrusted to us. The responsibility for having harmed people by using a position received in order to make the word known and help people is not small. The name of preaching grace does not remove that responsibility. Therefore, those who teach and guide must examine with a fearful heart how their influence is being used. They must look back on whether they are helping their hearers rely on the Savior or making them bound to themselves.

Serve, following the Savior who gave Himself

Unlike the scribes who devoured widows' houses, Jesus did not come to be exalted by taking something away from sinners; He came to save us and received baptism from John. The word the Lord spoke at that time is *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. Through that baptism, the Lord had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and He had even the sins of our whole lifetime passed on to Him at that time. By bearing those sins and shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, Jesus

paid the price of those sins in our place, and by rising again from death, He completely saved us. We who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit have been saved through the grace of the Savior who gave Himself up.

A person who knows this salvation has no grounds for exalting himself above others by putting forward his own godliness. We have become righteous not as the result of an excellent religious life, but because the Lord has washed away all our sins. The more we believe in that grace, the more we come to see others, too, as souls who need the same salvation. We must treat the weak not as objects to exploit, but as precious people for whom the Lord gave His own life.

When we look at the service of Jesus, we see the direction in which to use what we have. Just as He said, *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45)*, the Lord gave Himself for people who had no ability to be saved. We, too, cannot treat a person lightly on the grounds that little benefit will come back to us from him. We can make time for a person who finds it hard to learn the word, look into the circumstances of a person whose livelihood is in difficulty, and help with the shortcomings of one who serves together with us. Such labor is the work of preaching the grace of the Lord even without displaying our own names.

Also, if we have already discovered a wrong attitude, we must not spend our strength defending ourselves. Because the Savior who bore all our sins is there, we can admit our faults. A person who believes in grace does not avoid responsibility, but honestly corrects the relationships and work that need to be corrected. Even if our dignity is lowered in the process, that does not mean losing the grace of salvation. Relying on the righteousness the Lord has given, we can choose the way of serving again from a lowly position.

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Jesus exposed the greed hidden behind long prayers. Let us, too, lay down the heart that wants to be seen by people, before the word the Lord spoke. Giving thanks for the remission of sins we have received, let us care for souls from a lowly position and use honestly what has been entrusted to us. The service in which the Lord delights lies not in our own names being exalted, but in the grace received from Him being preached to others. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The two mites of the poor widow who put in more than everyone else

< Mark 12:41–44 >

"Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.'"

The Lord sees even the circumstances of the one who gives

Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put in money. Many rich people put in much money, and one poor widow put in two mites. It was a small sum, amounting to a quadrans. Yet Jesus called His disciples and said, *"Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those*

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who have given to the treasury" (Mark 12:43). He was teaching a meaning that cannot be known by the visible amount alone.

He also directly explained the reason in the words *"for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood" (Mark 12:44)*. The Lord did not see only two coins; He knew what share they were in this person's life. Even an offering that looks small to people, the Lord does not regard lightly.

We, too, easily judge another person's service only by the amount that shows outwardly. We may think that a person who does many things is more precious, and that a person who does little has little heart as well. But each person's circumstances and the share he can handle are different. When we believe that the Lord knows even those circumstances, we do not readily evaluate others. Nor do we need to be ashamed of our own small service by comparing it with what others do.

Jesus did not let this scene simply pass by His disciples. He called them and explained the widow's offering. This is because, although a large sum of money may catch people's eyes first, what the Lord saw was different. We, too, must learn from the Lord the eyes with which to evaluate service. If we decide what is great and what is small only by the standards of the world, we pass over faith and sacrifice that do not stand out. When we listen to the word of the Lord, we also come to see the circumstances of people that we had not seen.

The Lord did not erase the fact that the rich had put in much money. He only spoke together of the fact that they had put in out of their abundance and the fact that the widow had put in everything out of her poverty. Even the same amount has a different weight according to a person's circumstances, and even with different amounts, we must look at the relation between the heart that gives and the giver's life. Therefore, ranking people's

faith in order by outward figures alone is not an attitude that has properly learned the Lord's judgment.

The widow's two mites were a small amount, but to her they were everything she had to live on. We can praise this person's offering and yet speak lightly of the weight of her life. The Lord explained precisely that weight. If we hold another person's sacrifice precious, we must also listen to the circumstances in which he serves. There must also be a heart that looks into what he needs, instead of only asking whether he did much or little. Respect and care cannot be separated from each other.

The heart to examine in light of the fact that she gave everything

The widow gave her whole livelihood. We must not reduce the weight of this fact. This is because this woman's offering was not a matter of setting aside a little from what was left over. Jesus made precisely that difference known to His disciples. Giving to God makes us look back not only at the size of the amount but also at how much of our life and heart is contained in it together.

However, we must not use this word as a tool to demand that other people hand over their whole livelihood. Just before this, Jesus rebuked the scribes as those *"who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers" (Mark 12:40)*. The heart of the Lord, who looks upon the offering of a poor person, and the greed that tries to extract more from that person cannot be the same. We must hold the widow's devotion precious and at the same time care for the lives of people in hardship.

In this passage there is no word that the widow bought the remission of sins by giving money. This is because an offering

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cannot take the place of the price of sin, and the One who gave Himself in order to bear our sins is Jesus. Just as the widow put in her whole livelihood, Jesus gave His whole life for sinners. When He received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and even the sins of our whole lifetime were passed on to Him at that time. Bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and just as the word says, *"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5),* He paid the price of those sins in our place, and He rose again from death and saved us completely. We receive salvation by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jesus, who earlier warned against those who devour widows' houses, now looks upon the offering of one widow. When we read these two scenes together, we come to examine more deeply our attitude in dealing with the weak in the name of religion. The fact that the widow gave everything must not be turned into a right to demand the same amount from other widows as well. The Lord did not teach a technique for getting more out of people; rather, He caused His disciples to know the circumstances of the one who gives and the weight of that offering.

If one thinks that salvation is obtained through offerings, a person comes to trade sums of money for the remission of sins. He may consider himself more righteous because he has given much, or think that because he has little to give, he also has less qualification to come to God. But the remission of sins is received by believing in the salvation that Jesus accomplished through the baptism He received from John, the redemption of the Cross, and His resurrection. It was not what we gave that bore our sins; rather, because the Savior gave Himself, we

obtained life. Only when this order is clear can we also give rightly.

The fact that we received salvation freely does not make giving meaningless. Rather, it opens the way to act out of gratitude for grace. Instead of giving under compulsion in order to obtain the remission of sins, we come to take part in what pleases the Lord, who has already saved us. We can use what we have, holding precious the work of the gospel being spread and of souls hearing the word. Rather than changing only the amount of our service, grace changes the basis of the heart, the reason why we give.

Serve gladly with the grace you have received

When we believe in the grace by which Jesus washed away all sins, we can get out of the heart that bargains in order to obtain salvation. We do not fear that the Lord will wash away our sins only if we give more; we serve with gratitude for the salvation He has already accomplished. Also, because we know the Savior who gave Himself for us, we also come to reflect on the heart that wants to hold on to what we have only for our own comfort. Grace sets our giving free from compulsion and boasting.

When you use your time, strength, and possessions for the Lord's will, lay down the eyes that compare yourself with others. Give even a little in faith, and even if you have served much, do not try to stand above other people because of it. Just as the Lord knows your circumstances, He also knows the circumstances of your neighbors. You can also give your heart to preaching the gospel to people in hardship and giving them the help they need.

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A person who has served much must not make his offering a right to rule over other people. If he says that he has given to the Lord and then demands in return that his own will must come first, service becomes a transaction again. Conversely, a person who has served little also has no reason to withdraw, saying that he is not needed. The Lord knows each person's circumstances and faith. Giving thanks for the salvation we have received together, we can each serve honestly in the share we can handle and help one another with what is needed.

When we prepare our giving in our daily lives, we must consider not only what remains for us but also what it is used for. When we know the meaning of the work of preaching the gospel to souls and helping people in hardship, we can put our heart even into a small share. At the same time, we must not arbitrarily decide other people's circumstances and force burdens on them. We learn the eyes with which the Lord sees people and seek together the way to serve with gratitude. The widow's two mites thus make us reflect on both our judgment and our heart in giving.

Jesus did not pass over that small offering recorded in the words *"Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans" (Mark 12:42)*, but made known to His disciples the weight of that offering. A person who believes in the grace by which all his sins were washed away can cast off the heart that wants to look great in people's eyes and give gladly even two mites. Believe in the Lord, who knows your circumstances, and continue to give honestly and gladly in your daily life. ✉

Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

Do not measure the Lord of the resurrection by human thinking

< Mark 12:1–44 >

“Then He began to speak to them in parables: ‘A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, “They will respect my son.” But those vinedressers said among themselves, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.” So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. Have you not even read this Scripture: “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing, And it is

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marvelous in our eyes”?’ And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away. Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. When they had come, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?’ But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, ‘Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.’ So they brought it. And He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription is this?’ They said to Him, ‘Caesar’s.’ And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ And they marveled at Him. Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: ‘Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man’s brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke

to him, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.' Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' So the scribe said to Him, 'Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.' Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' But after that no one dared question Him. Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, 'How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" Therefore David himself calls Him "Lord"; how is He then his Son?' And the common people heard Him gladly. Then He said to them in His teaching, 'Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater

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condemnation.' Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.'"

One can misunderstand the will of the Lord even while quoting the Scriptures

Knowing the Bible well and believing in the Savior of whom the Bible testifies are not the same. In Mark chapter 12, people who know the word come to Jesus with various questions. Among them, the Sadducees, even while quoting the writings of Moses, thought that there is no resurrection. Jesus said to them that they were mistaken because they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. This means that even if one remembers the written words, if one limits their meaning by one's own thinking, one may fail to know the life that God gives.

They asked whose wife the woman who had been the wife of seven brothers and then died would be at the resurrection. Because they had fixed in advance the idea that the relationships formed on earth now continue just as they are even after the resurrection, by the reasoning of people who have not been born again it was a natural question, and the resurrection looked like a contradiction. But the Lord told them, *"For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (Mark 12:25)*. Their error lay in

judging the resurrection that God brings about by the conditions of the present flesh alone.

We, too, easily remain in similar thinking. People say that since they have not seen a dead person come back to life, it is hard to believe in the resurrection. The range of what they have experienced becomes the standard of all truth. A person who has received the remission of sins does not doubt the resurrection of Jesus, but a person who has not received the remission of sins, even while saying that he believes in Jesus, cannot believe that he himself will die and live again. But whether God, who made the life of man, can raise the dead again cannot be decided by our experience. We must first hear what the Bible says and acknowledge the power of God, who spoke that word.

Read the word about the rejected stone

In the first part of this chapter, Jesus told the parable of the vinedressers who rejected the servants and the beloved son sent by the owner of the vineyard. The vinedressers thought that if they got rid of the heir, the inheritance would become theirs. Their calculation for their own gain went as far as killing the son the owner had sent. Those who heard the parable, even though they knew it was a word pointing to themselves, tried to seize Jesus. It is revealed that one can understand the meaning of the word and still not turn one's heart.

The Lord asked whether they had not read the Scripture that says, *"The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone" (Mark 12:10)*. Being rejected by people does not mean being useless to God as well, nor can the work that God establishes be undone by people's judgment. Therefore, we must not evaluate Jesus by how much people acknowledged Him,

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but must see from the word who the Lord is and what He accomplished. To throw away the Savior because He does not fit one's own judgment is, in the end, to refuse by oneself the way to be saved.

Jesus asked the Sadducees, too, whether they had not read the Scriptures. He taught the resurrection by citing the word in which God said to Moses that He is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God revealed Himself as the God of the three generations of forefathers who had faith, and the Lord, citing that word, concluded, *"He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken" (Mark 12:27)*. That word makes us, too, ask what kind of person we are standing as before God.

The gospel that brings to life the soul that was dead in sin

To be alive before God does not stop at meaning that the flesh is breathing; it refers to a person whose soul has come alive by receiving the remission of sins. Even if a person's body is healthy and his thinking is clear, if he is under sin, he is spiritually dead before God. Nor does that sin disappear because one studies the Bible and asks good questions about the resurrection. For a soul dead in sin to come alive, one must believe in Jesus Christ, who accomplished the salvation of the remission of sins.

In order to bring us to life, Jesus came to this earth and received baptism from John, the representative of mankind, and through that baptism He received from John, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The sins we commit throughout our lifetime were also all passed on to Jesus

at that time. Because the Lord bore those sins, He received the judgment in our place on the Cross and shed His blood and died. And He rose again from death, gave new life to us who believe, and completely accomplished salvation. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth of salvation that brings sinners to life as righteous people.

We cannot rightly know salvation if we separate from one another the Lord's having our sins passed on to Him, His dying on the Cross, and His rising from death. Because the sinless One had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, He received the judgment, and because He did not remain in death but rose, we believe in the living Savior. The prophecy that says, *"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5)*, points precisely to this work. The resurrection of Jesus is not a story of an excellent man unexpectedly coming back to life; it is the work in which the Savior, who received our sins and our judgment in our place, rose and gave life to those who believe.

Therefore, do not think that you have fully examined your faith merely by saying that you agree with the resurrection. You must examine whether you believe that Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, took away all your sins as well and received your judgment in your place. If you regard your own sins as unresolved and acknowledge only the resurrection as a far-off event, you cannot receive that salvation as your own life. When you accept in your heart what the Savior accomplished as your own salvation, you are saved from sin and stand as one alive before God. If you have received the remission of sins by believing in your heart in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross, confess with your mouth as well, "I am not a sinner but a righteous person."

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Lay down your thinking before the One whom David called Lord

Jesus went on to ask, *"Therefore David himself calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?" (Mark 12:37)*. If one knows only the phrase "the Son of David" and thinks of the Christ as no more than the descendant of a man, one cannot fully know who the Lord is. The Christ, whom David, by the Holy Spirit, called Lord, is God who came to save us. He does not stop at being a wise teacher who answers people's questions. He is the Savior who delivers us from sin and death and gives us life.

The grounds on which we believe in the resurrection also lie precisely here. If Jesus were merely a man bound to sin and death just like us, He would not be able to overcome even His own death. But the Lord is God who came clothed in flesh in order to accomplish the work of salvation. He received the judgment for sin in our place and rose from death. Therefore, those who believe can also hope for the life of the resurrection that the Lord gives. His death is our death, and His resurrection is our resurrection. Our hope is certain not because our flesh is strong but because the Savior overcame death.

Even a person who has this hope experiences aging, sickness, and weakness in the present body. That does not mean that the gospel has not been fulfilled. We must believe while distinguishing between the fact that the soul has now come alive by receiving the remission of sins and the hope of rising again in the future with a spiritual body. Do not deny even the life that God promised because of the limits of the visible body. We must look to the fact that the Lord, who gave us the remission of sins, will lead those who believe to glorious life in the end.

Reading the Sadducees' question, we should not merely say that their knowledge was lacking. We must examine whether

there is in us, too, the heart that tries to measure by our own common sense the power of God, who set the rejected stone as the cornerstone. This does not mean that we should stop asking questions because there are parts that are hard to understand; it means that we should not reach a conclusion denying the power of God before we have even heard the answer. When we come before the Bible with a heart that wants to hear the word of the Lord, we learn the work of salvation that we did not know.

Everyone, do not make human judgment the final standard. God, who made the stone the builders rejected the cornerstone, is not the God of the dead but the God of the living. Because the Savior who brought us to life is alive, death cannot cut off our hope. Let us not push away the promise of the Lord for the reason that we have not experienced it, but live as people who believe in the power of God, who set the rejected stone as the cornerstone. ✉

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Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

The relationship of Father and child obtained through the remission of sins

< Mark 12:1–44 >

“Then He began to speak to them in parables: ‘A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, “They will respect my son.” But those vinedressers said among themselves, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.” So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. Have you not even read this Scripture: “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing, And it is

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marvelous in our eyes”?’ And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away. Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. When they had come, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?’ But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, ‘Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.’ So they brought it. And He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription is this?’ They said to Him, ‘Caesar’s.’ And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ And they marveled at Him. Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: ‘Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man’s brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke

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to him, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.' Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' So the scribe said to Him, 'Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.' Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' But after that no one dared question Him. Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, 'How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" Therefore David himself calls Him "Lord"; how is He then his Son?' And the common people heard Him gladly. Then He said to them in His teaching, 'Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater

condemnation.' Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.'"

The reason we call God Father

When we pray and call God Father, is it because of a religious habit of speech we have grown used to, or because we have actually become His children? Even if we call on the same name with our mouths, what we believe in our hearts may differ. There are people who regard God as being far away and live by their own strength alone, and there are also people who seek help with the faith that their Father is caring for them even now. Mark chapter 12 makes us examine whom we believe in and to whom we belong as we live.

Jesus told the Sadducees the word that God had spoken to Moses. God said, *"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Mark 12:26)*. He did not merely list the names of the forefathers; He revealed the relationship He had made with them. Abraham was a man who believed the word, Isaac was a man who inherited that faith and obeyed, and Jacob was a man who received the grace of God. God made Himself known as the God of these people of faith.

Taking up that word, Jesus taught that God is the God of the living. Vaguely acknowledging that God exists and believing

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that He is one's own God are different. God does not become a Father to just anyone. A person who has received the remission of sins and whose soul has come alive calls God his Father. That relationship was not obtained through the lineage of the flesh or a track record of faith. It is because we have received by faith the new life that the Savior gave and have become children of God that we call Him Father.

We have received the life that the Savior gave

Originally, we were people born in sin who could not escape the judgment for our own sins. Our sins do not disappear just because we first learn the words to call God Father. Just as a son belongs to his father, if we are to belong to God, we must first be delivered from sin. Because we cannot accomplish this ourselves, the Son of God came to this earth. What we need is not a resolve to qualify ourselves, but faith that knows the salvation the Savior accomplished.

At the Jordan River, Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and received baptism from John, and through that baptism He had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. The sins we commit throughout our whole lives were also passed on to Jesus at that time, without exception. Because Jesus, bearing all those sins, received the judgment for sin on the Cross in our place, He shed His blood and died. And He rose again from death, gave new life to us who believe, and accomplished salvation completely. A person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart receives this salvation, obtains the remission of sins, and becomes a child of God. Since we have received the remission of sins through the sacrifice that the Son

of God offered, we have inherited the life of that Son, and so we can call God Father just as the Son calls Him.

The life obtained in this way is different from inheriting a body from one's parents. Because a child's sins are not washed away automatically just because his parents are godly, each of us must believe with our heart that the Savior has remitted our sins. Just as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob believed in the same God, we, too, stand before God by believing that word of grace. We are the descendants of faith who have inherited that very faith.

God gives the Holy Spirit to those who have received the remission of sins and is with them. Therefore, when we call Him Father, we are not vaguely crying out toward the sky. We come forward believing in God, who has become our Father, in Jesus Christ, who has become our Savior, and in the Holy Spirit, who dwells in our hearts and helps us. When we know this relationship and pray, the fact that the Father hears His children's supplications becomes more important than how loud our own voice is. Our hope lies not in the skill of praying but in this relationship bound together through salvation.

He does not leave His children even in the midst of suffering

In the passage about the burning bush that the Lord mentioned, God, who cares for His people in the midst of suffering, is revealed. While the people of Israel were in harsh slavery in Egypt for four hundred years, God did not leave them. The One who appeared to Moses in the bush amid a flame that did not go out, and who declared Himself the God of the forefathers of faith, heard the suffering and the supplications of their descendants. We cannot say that God was not with them

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just because the hard time was long. Even when no way of help was visible to their eyes, God remembered His covenant.

We, too, sometimes wonder why hardships continue even though we have received the remission of sins. When our flesh is weak and life is hard, it feels as though God were far away. But being saved does not mean that we suffer no pain at all on this earth; it means that God, who has made us His children, is with us even in the midst of suffering. If the condition of our flesh determined the fact that we are children of God, we would be able to call on the Father only on comfortable days.

The Holy Spirit's dwelling in our hearts is different from His knocking on the door from outside, so do not judge that fact by how strong or weak your feelings are. It is not only when you feel good that God is with you. Because the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart that believes the word of salvation, even in times of discouragement we can hear the word and stand again by faith. Tell God your difficulties honestly and seek the will that pleases Him. The Father does not take His eyes off His children; He hears their prayers and the desires of their hearts, and He turns them back from wrong paths.

This faith does not leave God as someone who was needed only at the time we were saved. Just as He said, *"He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living" (Mark 12:27)*, the living Lord is working with His people even now. Even when we find it hard to carry out the work of serving the gospel because of our weakness, we can ask for the Lord's help. When a child tries to live according to his father's will, would the father refuse him? The Father helps that child.

Give a life that belongs to the Father

In Mark chapter 12, Jesus said to those who were testing Him over taxes, *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17)*. Having responsibilities to bear in the world does not mean that the faith and obedience we are to give to God disappear as well. We who have been saved must live knowing to whom we belong. If we call God Father while giving over our heart and life entirely to our own cravings, we are forgetting that grace in our lives.

Giving our life to the Father is not a matter of repaying the price of salvation in order to keep our status as children; it is following the Father's will with thanksgiving, knowing the grace by which we became His children. If we reverse this order, serving soon becomes a fearful duty. On the days we have done well we are confident, and on the days we have done poorly we worry that God may abandon us. But a person who believes that he has already become a child through the remission of sins can ask for help even where he falls short and follow the Lord's will again.

At the end of the chapter, Jesus saw the two mites that the poor widow gave. In the eyes of people it was a small amount, but the Lord took her giving into account, saying, *"She out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood" (Mark 12:44)*. This word makes us live not looking only to people's evaluation but before the Lord, who knows our circumstances. It is not that we become children only by giving more than others, nor is it that the Lord does not look at us because we are poor. A person who knows the grace of salvation gives relying on the Lord with his heart rather than boasting of the size of what he has.

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Everyone, do not bury the grace of being able to call on the Father under the worries of daily life. We are not people living alone with no relationship to God. We have become children of God through the remission of sins and are under the care of the living Lord. Do not think that God is God and we are just ourselves; rather, tell Him today's circumstances without hiding anything, but believe the Father's word more than those circumstances. For the rest of our lives, let us know deeply how great a grace and privilege it is to call God Father, and let us live giving our days to that Father. ✉

Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

The life received from God leads to love for our neighbor

< Mark 12:1–44 >

“Then He began to speak to them in parables: ‘A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, “They will respect my son.” But those vinedressers said among themselves, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.” So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. Have you not even read this Scripture: “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes”?’ And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.

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Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. When they had come, they said to Him, 'Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?' But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, 'Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.' So they brought it. And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' And they marveled at Him. Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: 'Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.'

Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' So the scribe said to Him, 'Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.' Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' But after that no one dared question Him. Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, 'How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" Therefore David himself calls Him "Lord"; how is He then his Son?' And the common people heard Him gladly. Then He said to them in His teaching, 'Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.' Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and

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threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.'"

Words that know love and a heart that loves

One can say that one loves God and yet seek only to exalt oneself before people. One can teach that one must love one's neighbor and yet turn away from the plight of a weak person. In Mark chapter 12, after teaching the commandment to love God and one's neighbor, Jesus said to beware of the scribes who desired high seats and devoured widows' houses. He shows that the mouth that knows the commandment and the heart that stands before that commandment can differ. We must not stop at speaking of love, but must know where that love begins.

When a scribe asked what the first of all the commandments was, Jesus first said that God is the one and only Lord. And He said, *"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30)*. We cannot give only a part of our heart to God, who made us, and exalt other desires alongside Him. The Lord also gave, together with it, the word to love one's neighbor as oneself. It means that we must not claim to love God while regarding lightly the life of another person who stands before God.

The scribe answered that loving God and one's neighbor is better than all the whole burnt offerings and other sacrifices, and when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said, *"You are not*

far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34). But to say that he was not far also means that he had not yet entered. Answering that the commandment is right and standing without sin by fully carrying out that commandment are different. The more we hear the word of love, the more our own shortcomings are revealed along with it.

One must first become alive before one can love

We say that we love God with all our heart, but when a loss arises, we easily put our own benefit ahead of the Lord's will. While saying that we love our neighbor as ourselves, we are often lenient toward our own faults and strict toward the faults of others. This is not a difference in personality but sin that is revealed before the commandment of God, and with a resolve to practice love more, we cannot escape the judgment for the sins we have already committed.

That is why we must also look at the God of the living, of whom the Lord spoke in this chapter. When the living and the dead are divided before God, the dead are sinners without faith, and the living are those who have received the remission of sins and whose souls have come alive. A person who has become righteous because his own love was abundant is not one of the living. If we try to make ourselves righteous by works, we end up putting forward what we have done well while fearing because of the sins that remain. Just as a dead person cannot love, what we need first is to become alive by believing in Jesus Christ, who gave life to sinners lacking in love.

Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from that John, of whom He said, *"He is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14)*. The

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sins we committed throughout our lives by putting ourselves ahead of God and harming our neighbors are also included among all those sins. Because the Lord bore those sins, He received the judgment on the Cross in our place and shed His blood and died. And He rose again from death, gave the remission of sins and new life to us who believe, and accomplished salvation completely. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we must believe without relying on our own merit.

The Savior accomplished salvation not for people who had first become worthy of being loved, but for sinners who could not become clean by themselves. A person who believes this fact with his heart cannot put forward his own righteousness. We have become righteous not because we loved better than others, but because the Lord remitted even all our sins. Therefore, love after being saved is also not a matter of displaying one's own superiority, but of giving thanks for the life received by grace and treasuring other souls.

The heart that wants to be exalted harms one's neighbor

The scribes whom Jesus said to beware of desired long robes, greetings, and the best seats, and they devoured widows' houses while making long prayers for a pretense. In the very place where they were close to the word of God, they instead used weak people for their own benefit. Concerning them, Jesus said, *"These will receive greater condemnation" (Mark 12:40)*. An appearance that looked godly to people could not cover their sin before God.

This word was not given so that we would hunt out the hypocrisy of others. We, too, when the desire to be recognized grows while we do the Lord's work, easily come to see people as means to help with our own work, and at that time we must turn our hearts back before the commandment of love. The One who saved us treasures every soul, so we must not regard other people lightly for the sake of our own achievements.

To think that because we have received the remission of sins we need not have our wrongs pointed out is also to misuse grace. Faith that the Savior's salvation is complete is not a faith that insists that all our own deeds are right as well. We must honestly acknowledge what we have done wrong and set right the harm we have caused to people. At the same time, we must not try to wash away our sins by our own strength again because of those faults, but must set our hearts on the gospel in which the Lord had our sins passed on to Him. This faith frees us from proud excuses and endless self-reproach and makes us follow the right path.

Treasure the life you have received and serve

Remember the word in which God said that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Lord makes people of faith His own people. Today we, too, have obtained life through the same word of salvation. If so, we cannot regard the brothers and sisters who have received the remission of sins together with us as insignificant on the grounds that they do not fit our own standards. Knowing the heart of the Father, who cares for the children of God, we must listen to one another's weak circumstances and help one another within the word. If we have truly been born again, the God we believe in is the same God, so

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the hearts of those who have received the same grace must be broad within the word.

We must also preach the grace we received first to those who do not yet believe the gospel. What a soul under sin needs most is the word of salvation by which it can come alive before God. Along with looking after their difficulties in life, we must take an interest in what that soul believes. We should explain step by step the fact that one cannot wash away sins with one's own righteousness, and the remission of sins that the Savior accomplished. We must preach not as an argument to defeat the other person, but with a heart that wants him to obtain life.

The word of Jesus, who looked at the poor widow right after He said to beware of the scribes who devour widows' houses, also makes us look back on the eyes with which we judge people. Many rich people put in much money, but the two mites the widow gave were that woman's whole livelihood. The Lord did not pass her by looking only at the amount, but said, *"This poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury" (Mark 12:43)*. Likewise, we, too, must not evaluate people by visible ability and wealth. If we draw near only to people who will be of help to us, we move away from the word to love our neighbor as ourselves. We must also regard as precious those who serve the Lord in small circumstances.

Even if we have no great wealth or prominent position, we can listen to a weak person's words to the end, explain the gospel to those who do not know the word, and faithfully carry out the work entrusted to us together. Such service is not a price for buying salvation, but a response of thanksgiving for the life we have received.

Everyone, do not separate the words that you love God from the heart with which you treat your neighbor. The more you realize that your love is lacking, the more you should look back

first on the remission of sins you received from the Lord. Let us not remain at knowing the commandment like the scribe who heard that he was not far from the kingdom of God; rather, as befits those who have become the people of that kingdom through the remission of sins, let us lay down the craving to be exalted by people and live treasuring those whom the Lord regards as precious. Since the God of the living has made us alive, that life must lead to love for our neighbor. ✉

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CHAPTER

13

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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

Even the great temple collapses before the word of the Lord

< Mark 13:1–2 >

“Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’”

The stones and buildings the disciple boasted of

As he came out of the temple with Jesus, one of the disciples pointed to the stones and buildings before his eyes, saying, *“Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!” (Mark 13:1)*. To him, that magnificent sight was something worth boasting of. But Jesus spoke of the end of the temple that the disciple was marveling at. The solidity visible to the eye and the Lord’s judgment differed from each other. We, too, must examine, in the light of this word, what we believe in and feel secure about as we live. Jesus spoke of the collapse of the temple in Jerusalem and the collapse of this world by linking them together as one, so we must see the end of this world that lies beyond the building the disciple was looking at.

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The temple was the place where sacrifices were offered to God. That is why the disciple must have regarded the building as all the more impressive. However, the fact that it bore the name of serving God did not guarantee that the building would last forever. Jesus turned the gaze of the disciple, who was asking Him to appraise how large the stones were and how splendid the construction was, to the question of what would become of it before God. The word of God must come before people's admiration. The religious background we boast of must also be judged under that word.

What the disciple pointed to was not a false building. The stones were indeed large, and the buildings were right before his eyes. The problem lay in making the visible facts the standard for the final judgment. When people are inside a large building, they easily feel that they themselves are safe as well. If a religion is large in scale and old, people can think that all the teachings they hear in it will also be true. But rather than denying the size of the building, Jesus spoke of its end. Between the fact that something is large now and the judgment that it can be relied on forever, there is a gap that must surely be examined by the word.

The same question is needed when we examine our faith. There may be many words to describe the place we belong to, and yet we may be unable to explain how our sins were actually removed. An answer stating that we have attended church for a long time and have a history of diligent service shows the experience of our lives. But it does not explain how we escape the judgment for sin before God. If we soothe our hearts with outward conditions without making this clear, then on the day those conditions are shaken, our faith is shaken along with them. That is why the Lord makes us set what we rely on before the word and examine it.

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The Son of God, who knows what will collapse

Let us read verse 2. *"And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down'" (Mark 13:2)*. Even while Jesus looked together with the disciple at the building the disciple was looking at, He knew the end that the disciple did not know. We who have heard this word must lay down the thought that whatever is large will last long. The word of the Lord is different from human predictions, which change to fit the circumstances before one's eyes. Because the Son of God speaks, even the future we cannot see comes to pass according to that word. Because Jesus Christ is God, what He Himself has spoken surely comes to pass exactly as it is, and the temple in Jerusalem actually collapsed completely according to that word, with not one stone left upon another.

Jesus, who spoke of the collapse of the temple, went on to teach about the tribulation His disciples would go through and His own coming again, and He said, *"I have told you all things beforehand" (Mark 13:23)*. The short answer about the temple building becomes the starting point for learning from the Lord about the things that will happen in the future. Therefore, we must not let this word pass by as a story about the fate of an old building. We must know now who it is that will save us even when the solid things of the world collapse. A building cannot bear our sins in our place, and even the prestige that a religion holds cannot remove the judgment for sin that we must receive before God.

What we need when we stand before the Lord is the remission of sins. If, while sin remains in our hearts just as it is, we put forward the history and size of the religion we belong to, it amounts to boasting of what people have built up instead of

the evidence that we have obtained salvation. The problem of sin must be solved by the sinless Jesus Christ Himself. The One who spoke of judgment toward the temple is the Savior who came to deliver sinners from that judgment. We must accept both Jesus' warning and His salvation together.

Those who learn from the Lord, who knows the future, are not people who merely gain more knowledge about disasters, but people who realize what kind of faith they are now living by. What must be confirmed even before knowing when the temple will collapse is the question of whether we know the Savior to whom we can entrust our souls even after the collapse. We have many things to do to prepare for tomorrow. But if we try to secure only the safety of our daily lives without making clear the basis of the remission of sins, we are putting off the most important preparation.

Having heard this word does not mean that worshiping together in church and serving the gospel become unnecessary. The fact that a building cannot save does not mean that we may neglect the community. We must examine what we believe and what we preach there. Instead of boasting of the outward appearance of the gathering, we must serve so that the people gathered together actually hear and believe the salvation the Lord has accomplished. A building can provide a place to hear the word, but it cannot become the master who remits sins.

Rely on Jesus, who washed away sins

When Jesus began His public ministry, He received baptism from John in the Jordan River, and through that baptism all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus once and for all. The sins that each one of us will commit throughout our lives are also

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contained in that sin of the world. Because He had those sins passed on to Him, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and He rose again from death. The basis on which we can stand before God without sin is precisely this gospel of the water and the Spirit. It was not a temple built by people that washed away our sins; rather, the Son of God saved us with His own body.

Those who believe this gospel do not look for assurance in their own religious conditions. Whether the time they have attended church is long or short, and whether they have done many or few things that others would recognize, the basis of the remission of sins is the same. It is believing the word that Jesus bore all our sins and finished that judgment. Therefore, the richer the outward appearance of our faith is, the more we must also examine the faith of our hearts. We must confirm in the light of the word whether we believe in the salvation the Lord has accomplished, or whether we are holding on to human boasting beside that salvation.

Believing in the Lord's salvation does not mean that shortcomings no longer appear in our lives. We can still think wrong thoughts and reveal our faults to other people. At such times, rather than hiding what we are or covering it with religious boasting, we must acknowledge our wrongs before the word. Even so, we must believe that the basis on which we were saved lies in the Lord's work. Acknowledging our own shortcomings and doubting the salvation He has already accomplished are not the same. Those who know the grace of the Lord, who bore even those sins, can turn back with a humble heart.

Such faith also affects our attitude toward other saints. We cannot regard even the grace of salvation as small just because

someone has few possessions or a short history of faith. The remission of sins given to those who believe the same gospel is the same. Rather than evaluating one another's outward appearance, we must exalt the Savior on whom we rely together. Knowing that the Lord has given us life, we must give thanks, and we must clearly let even those who do not yet know that grace hear how that salvation was accomplished.

The disciple's eyes saw large stones, but Jesus' word revealed that those stones would collapse. Let us, too, not judge the firmness of our faith by the size of what is visible. If we hold on to what will collapse as though it were eternal, our hearts are shaken along with it. The Lord said, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Mark 13:31)*. Believe the word of Jesus Christ, who washed away our sins. When we live today's life with the faith that relies on Him, we can live without having our hearts taken by boasting that will vanish, giving thanks for the remission of sins God has given us. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

When there are many who deceive and rumors of wars are heard, whom will we believe?

< Mark 13:3–8 >

"Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?' And Jesus, answering them, began to say: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am He," and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows.'"

The warning given to the disciples who asked when it would be

The four disciples, who were facing the temple on the Mount of Olives, asked Jesus about the time when that building would

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collapse and about the sign. They wanted to know the meaning of the word they had heard earlier. Yet the answer Jesus gave first was the warning *"Take heed that no one deceives you" (Mark 13:5)*. Even when we learn about the things that will happen in the future, what we must keep first is our faith in the Lord. If we are led by false people while priding ourselves on knowing much about the future, we end up losing the purpose of learning the word.

Then Jesus said, *"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many" (Mark 13:6)*. While speaking of Christ, they will exalt themselves and draw people's hearts to themselves. Therefore, we must not accept every teaching just because the name of Jesus is heard. We must examine whom that person makes us rely on and how he preaches that our sins were washed away. If we take lightly what the Lord warned of in advance, we are more easily deceived by familiar religious words than by strange claims.

The four disciples asked quietly. Because the word that the temple would collapse was so tremendous that they could not possibly understand it with their thoughts, the disciples did not raise their voices but quietly asked the Lord. When we want to know about the things to come, it also matters whom we ask and whose answer we listen to. If we merely collect the interpretations that each person puts forward, our thoughts may instead become more complicated. Just as the disciples came to Jesus, we, too, must return to the word and distinguish between what the Lord actually made known and the thoughts we have added.

The Lord did not say that those who deceive would be few or easily noticed, but said that many would come and many would be deceived. Therefore, we cannot judge something to be true merely by the fact that many people follow it. Nor can we

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entrust our souls to a person just because he uses a name we are used to hearing, explains our anxiety well, and says words that give us immediate relief. The Lord draws us to Himself, but a person who claims that he is the Christ tries to take the Lord's place. We must examine whom such a person sets up as the agent of salvation.

Know Christ, who saved us

Faith that knows the true Savior enables us to discern deception. Jesus did not make sinners buy salvation by offering their own merits. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and the lifelong sins of each one of us are also contained in them. Because He had those sins passed on to Him through baptism, Jesus received the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross. And He rose again from death and saved us. We receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

This salvation is not something newly obtained because some person claims to be the Christ. That is why the Lord said beforehand about the time of tribulation as well, *"If anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it" (Mark 13:21)*. When we know and believe what Jesus has accomplished, we clearly have the basis of the salvation that has already been given. Even if someone speaks of a great experience and tells us to entrust ourselves to him, that experience cannot replace Jesus, who bore the sin of the world. We also do not obtain from a person's forceful words the assurance that sin has been removed from our hearts, because

the object of faith is Jesus Christ, who received baptism from John and bore the judgment for our sins.

We must not stop at learning this gospel with our lips, but must believe it with our hearts. The more anxious we are, the more easily we go around looking for new and intense words, but at such times we must confirm all the more what we believe. When the fact that the remission of our sins is based on the salvation Jesus accomplished becomes clear, we no longer have any reason to entrust our souls to the words of other people who exalt themselves. The Lord's warning against deception is not a word meant to leave us anxious, but a teaching that keeps us in His truth.

When discerning the gospel, it is not enough just to check whether the words baptism, Cross, and resurrection are included. We must know who received that baptism from whom, what He bore, and why it led to death on the Cross. If we mix Jesus' bearing of sins with our religious acts, the object of faith becomes blurred, even though the words are familiar. The more clearly we learn the content of salvation, the clearer it also becomes that human experience or authority cannot take its place.

Also, we must not use the Lord's warning only for finding the faults of others. We ourselves are also easily moved in heart when we see or hear something new. When we experience something amazing, we may consider that the Lord is pleased, and when nothing happens, we may consider that the Lord has left. But since salvation is not something that is completed as our experiences increase, we must obtain assurance from believing in the work the Lord has accomplished. This is also why we need the service of the church, where we learn that word together.

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Do not mistake the beginning for the end

Let us read verse 7. *"But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet" (Mark 13:7)*. Jesus did not hide that wars would break out and rumors of wars would be heard. He also said that nations and kingdoms would rise against one another and that earthquakes and famines would occur. But He made it clear that these were the beginnings of sorrows. If we take the beginning to be the end, we end up following the conclusion that fear draws rather than the word of the Lord. We are now living in an age in which sorrows have begun. But because it is not yet the end, there is still much work left to be done.

This warning is different from a promise that there will be no hardship. Even though He knows that hardships will come, the Lord teaches us not to be dragged along by fear. The remission of sins Jesus accomplished does not collapse just because the world is in turmoil. Nor does hearing news of disasters mean that we may abandon the work entrusted to us today. In the word that follows, Jesus makes it clear, *"And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations" (Mark 13:10)*. Discerning by the word the times in which we live makes the life of faith we must live now even clearer.

Jesus spoke of both wars themselves and the rumors of wars. There are actual hardships, but there is also fear that grows as we hear about those things secondhand. We may hear news from faraway places and settle in our minds things that have not yet happened. Even so, we cannot live ignoring all news. While we examine the circumstances we need to know, we must not let that news have greater authority than the word of the Lord. We must place in the word both the standard for judging what is to come and the ground for guarding our hearts today.

When there are many who deceive and rumors
of wars are heard, whom will we believe?

In the word that called the sorrows a beginning, there is also the teaching that there is still time left for us to fulfill our work. When a great event happens, people think that everything is over, but the Lord also knows that the gospel will be preached after that. Therefore, the saints must not spend all their strength spreading fear, but must preach the news of salvation. To those who ask what they should believe in the midst of hardship, we must clearly make known the Savior, who bore our sins and rose again from death. When the knowledge that discerns the times leads to such actual service, the benefit of having learned the word is revealed.

We still have people who must hear and believe the gospel, and brothers and sisters with whom we will live while learning the word together. When anxieties surge in, let us ask the Lord, and let us fulfill by faith the work given to us. The word that Jesus, who knows the end, has given us today is to beware of deception and not to give in to fear. We are not people who move wherever rumors lead, but people who live by following the word of Jesus, who saved us. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The gospel that will be preached to all the nations even in the midst of persecution

< Mark 13:9–13 >

"But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

You will become witnesses even in the place where you are delivered up

Following Jesus does not mean being welcomed by everyone. Jesus said, *"But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver*

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you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them" (Mark 13:9). For the disciples, that was a frightening thing, but the Lord makes clear another thing that would happen in that place. It is that the disciples who were dragged away because of Jesus would come to testify of Him. The reason the intentions of the persecutors cannot determine the final outcome of the gospel is that the Lord makes Himself known even through those who stand in the face of threats.

In verse 9, Jesus said that the reason the disciples would stand before rulers and kings was Himself. Therefore, what they are to testify of in that place is also Jesus. If our hearts are completely taken up with pleading our grievances to people, we cannot look to the Savior who has given us life. We who have received the remission of sins have no need to change the basis of the salvation we received from the Lord just because the world condemns us. No matter whom we stand before, we can rely on what Jesus has done for us.

The word in which the Lord told the disciples to watch out for themselves must also be heard in this context. Watching out does not mean not revealing one's faith to anyone. It means knowing that one may be hated by people and making clear what one will rely on even then. When persecution arose, the disciples might have thought that it was because they had followed Jesus wrongly. But because the Lord had already spoken of those things, they could know that the gospel does not become false, and that the Lord has not failed, merely because suffering has come.

The mention of councils and synagogues and of standing before rulers and kings shows that the places of testifying do not stay in one location. One comes to stand because of Jesus both in nearby religious gatherings and before high authorities. We

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may want to speak of our faith only to people we are familiar with and to live like completely different people in other places. But the One who saved us does not change depending on the place. Although there is a need to speak wisely before people, we must not change the Savior we believe in into someone else, or hide the content of salvation in order to gain only our own safety.

The news of salvation that must first be preached to all the nations

Let us read verse 10. *"And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations" (Mark 13:10)*. While speaking of persecution, the Lord made clear the spread of the gospel. It means that even if things that oppose the gospel arise, the Lord does not give up His work of saving people. We who believe this word must not forget the work entrusted to us while talking only about how dark the world is. This is because there is news of salvation to be preached to those who do not yet know Christ.

What we preach is not a teaching that people become clean by themselves if they endure suffering. What human beings who have sin need first is the remission of sins. When Jesus received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The sins that you and I will commit throughout our lives are also included in that sin that was passed on to the Lord. Jesus, who was hung on the Cross bearing that sin, received the judgment in our place by shedding His blood and dying, and He rose again from death. Those who believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins and become children of God.

It is precisely this news that the people of all nations need. This is because, even though the places where they live and their languages differ, people cannot erase their sins by their own goodness. We must preach the salvation Christ accomplished in a way that adults and children alike can understand. If we replace the gospel with words telling people to correct their behavior, we cannot preach the Savior who delivered us from the judgment for sin. Letting people clearly hear the basis of the remission of sins we have received is the testimony the Lord has entrusted to us.

The word about all the nations keeps us from narrowing the spread of the gospel to a matter only of those close to us. Just because we have already heard the gospel does not mean that the same opportunity has been given to everyone. We must let people who speak other languages know as well that their sins are included in the sin of the world that the Lord bore. We must not receive the news of the world only with worry, but must consider the fact that there, too, are souls who must hear the news of salvation. This is the will of the Lord that saints who examine the times must keep in their hearts.

Also, we cannot put off preaching the gospel to the next generation. Children do not automatically know the meaning of salvation just because they live together with saints. Even if they can follow the words of the church with familiarity, they may not know how their own sins were removed. We must explain sin and judgment and the Lord's salvation step by step so that children can understand. We must not think that we have fulfilled our love merely by providing a life without hardship, but must let them know the Savior on whom they can rely even in the midst of hardship. That faith must be received by the children with their own hearts.

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The Holy Spirit gives the words with which to testify

When we think of the moment of standing before those in authority, we become worried about what we should say. Jesus made it clear, *"Whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit" (Mark 13:11)*. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in those who have received the remission of sins by believing the gospel, causes them to testify of the Savior. We need not think that our own courage and eloquence must deal with all difficulties. The Holy Spirit Himself helps the witnesses the Lord has sent even in that moment. Because at that time the Holy Spirit burns like fire within those who have received the remission of sins, their faith becomes even stronger in that very place where it seems they would be afraid and tremble.

This promise does not mean that threats will disappear. In the word that follows, there is also this pain: *"Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death" (Mark 13:12)*. In a place where even the closest relationships are shaken, we cannot hold out by relying only on people's support, so we must rely on Jesus, who saved us. Since Jesus told of those hardships in advance, let us not conclude that the Lord has forgotten us even if we go through such things.

The promise that the Holy Spirit will give what to say at that time does not mean that we need not learn the word in ordinary times. The situation the Lord speaks of is the time when the disciples are dragged away and interrogated. He tells them not to lose their faith by worrying in advance about what words they will use to defend themselves at that moment. Therefore, while we stay close to the word in ordinary times and learn the gospel

correctly, we must lay down the burden of trying to control every moment of crisis with our own eloquence. The Lord can help His witnesses even in that moment.

The word that adversaries will rise up even within families sounds all the more painful. This is because we think that if we are understood by those close to us, we can endure other difficulties as well. But the basis of salvation is not cut off just because people's support is cut off. The promise that the Holy Spirit is with us is needed precisely at such a time. Saints encouraging one another's faith and letting one another hear the gospel again also becomes precious service amid such difficulties. When someone else is afraid, before rebuking him with harsh words, we must help him see together with us what the Lord who saved him is like.

The word He spoke, *"He who endures to the end shall be saved" (Mark 13:13)*, is not a demand that we remove our sins by the merit of having endured suffering. It is an exhortation not to abandon the One who saved us, but to believe His promise and follow Him to the end. Because the basis of the remission of sins is certain, we can keep that faith even in the midst of suffering. The Holy Spirit helps us, and the Lord brings His own people to salvation. Even if the voices that hate us grow louder, let us not be ashamed of the testimony of the gospel that Jesus has given us. Let us clearly preach this gospel, which will be preached to all the nations, to the people granted to us today. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Flee according to the warning and rely on the Lord, who shortened those days

< Mark 13:14–23 >

“So when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘Look, He is there!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.”

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Do not go back to get your clothes, but flee

Jesus said, *"So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains" (Mark 13:14)*. This means that, in the face of the tribulation in which the power of the Antichrist, who opposes God, is revealed, one must not delay by one's own judgment. It is not a time to go into the house to get things or to go back from the field to look for one's clothes. Things that are needed in ordinary times can, at that time, become what holds one back from following the Lord's warning.

In this way, Jesus did not merely say vaguely to be careful, but concretely taught what one should do when the tribulation comes. Even after hearing that word, we may trust our familiar way of life and our possessions more, but we must learn from the Lord what we must keep.

The Lord said, *"But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter" (Mark 13:17–18)*. He knows that fleeing is not equally easy for everyone. Jesus, who speaks of the tribulation that is to come, is the One who also knows the circumstances of the weak. Therefore, we who hear the word must become not people who make plans alone in fear, but people who ask of the Lord, who knows our circumstances.

The text contains the word telling the reader to understand. This means that the mere fact of having read it does not mean that one has accepted the warning, so it is a word that makes us look back on ourselves. Even if we are familiar with the words about the tribulation, our actual choices can follow our usual attachments. The wish to go down from the housetop and gather the things in the house, and the wish to go back from the field

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and get one's clothes, are both realistic wishes. But at that moment, following the word of the Lord comes first. If we regard what is useful in ordinary times as something we must surely hold on to even in a time of emergency, we will miss the warning of salvation.

The word that there is no time to come down from the housetop and no time to go back to get one's clothes means that the one who stands at that time is a cruel ruler who can by no means be overcome by human strength. The Lord does not deny the necessary preparations for living, but He warns against failing to follow the word because of those provisions. Even what has been prepared in order to serve the gospel cannot be placed in a more precious position than the will of the Lord. We are people who are to use what has been given to us, not people who are to bind our hearts to it. The standard for deciding what to leave behind and what to follow must be the word.

The word to pray that it may not be in winter shows that the Lord, who knows the things to come, also wants our prayers. We cannot conclude that, since everything has been determined, there is no need to ask for anything. This is because the Lord, who knows the difficulties, commanded prayer. We must learn about the things to come through the word and ask for the grace to endure them. We must also have a heart that prays together while thinking of the weak, and that considers their circumstances. The attitude that it is enough as long as one alone can move is not an attitude that fully hears this word.

He shortens the days for the sake of the elect

Let us read verse 20. *"And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake,*

whom He chose, He shortened the days" (Mark 13:20). This tribulation is not of a degree that can be endured by human strength. It is a tribulation so severe that the Lord has to shorten those days. So the Lord shortened them so that this would not last long, and caused such things to take place for only the three years and six months that Revelation speaks of. In this word that He shortens the days in this way lies the will of the Lord, who is mindful of His own people. The one who brings about the tribulation cannot determine how everything ends as he pleases, because there is the Lord, who looks after His own people.

Let us think about the basis on which the Lord made us His own people. We were not chosen because we were stronger than others. Jesus Himself saved us, who had been under the judgment of sin. When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, He bore all the sins of the world on His own body once and for all, and those sins also include the sins of our entire lives. Because He bore those sins, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment for sins, and He rose again from death. Jesus has given the remission of sins to us who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The One who saved us in this way remembers His own people even in the midst of tribulation. Therefore, our hope does not depend on how small the tribulation is. It depends on the Savior, who has made us His own. Those who believe in the Lord's care do not ignore the warning but flee according to the word, and they do not hide their weakness but ask for help. Faith is not an attitude of showing oneself off in the face of danger, but following the way that the Savior has taught.

The tribulation that Jesus spoke of is not of a degree that can simply be compared with the difficulties people have experienced before. Therefore, we cannot be confident merely from the experience of having endured something in the past.

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Someone may say that, because he has strong faith, he will not be afraid at any time. But the text shows, rather than human strength, the grace of the Lord, who shortens the days. What we need in order to endure is not to endlessly prove our own strength, but to believe in the care of the Lord, who remembers us.

The word that He does this for the sake of the elect must not be made grounds for boasting of one's own superiority either. By the grace with which the Lord gave life to sinners, we have become people who belong to Him. Therefore, we cannot belittle others while confidently declaring that we ourselves are safe. Those who do not yet know the gospel also need the same grace. Faith that prepares for the tribulation is not confined to looking for a way for only ourselves to survive, but makes us treasure the time when we can now preach the news of salvation.

Believe the word that was given before the signs

Jesus warned, *"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Mark 13:21–22).* When our hearts are pressed by the tribulation, a person who shows amazing things easily looks like a savior. But Jesus revealed precisely such things beforehand and said not to believe them. The amazement before our eyes cannot become grounds for overturning the word of the Lord.

The signs that false prophets show can look very convincing to a person who is desperate. This is because, when one experiences something extraordinary, one may come to regard even all that person's words as true. But the Lord said that even

such signs and wonders can become a means of deception. What we must discern is not only how amazing the things are that have happened. We must examine whom people are led to believe in through those things and what salvation is spoken of. If they lead us to leave Jesus, who has already saved us, and to rely on someone else, we must judge them in the light of the Lord's warning.

Because Jesus, who saved us, has already made Himself known through the gospel of the remission of sins, we have no reason to leave that gospel and go looking for a new savior. Let us not give our hearts over either to the magnitude of the tribulation or to the signs that people show. Remember the charge of the Lord, who said, *"But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand" (Mark 13:23)*. Let us believe that word and follow the warning, and rely on the care of the Savior, who shortens those days for us. What we must hold on to until the end is not a confidence that knows no danger, but the word of Jesus, who knows the danger and teaches us. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

After the tribulation, the Savior gathers His own people

< Mark 13:24–27 >

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven."

Even if the heavens are shaken, the Lord's promise stands

The light of the sun and the moon is a familiar order by which people live out each day. Jesus says, *"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken" (Mark 13:24–25).* Even the things we regard as eternal because we have always seen them have an end. This word makes us realize that the world we now see cannot become our final hope. When those who have received the

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remission of sins think about the end of the world, they must also look at Jesus, who will receive us at that end.

Of what comes after the heavens are shaken, Jesus said, *"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory" (Mark 13:26)*. Darkness does not end everything. Jesus Christ Himself comes. In the preceding passage, there were words that deceive people by saying that the Christ is here or there, but the text conveys that Jesus will appear in glory. We who believe are not people who will wander about looking for a hidden savior because of anxiety. We are people who wait for the Savior, who has revealed His own coming.

The text clearly states the order expressed in the words "after that tribulation." Even if the suffering the Lord warned of earlier seems to go on endlessly, there is something the Lord will do after it. In our eyes, what we are going through now seems to be everything, but Jesus knows what lies beyond it. Therefore, saints do not decide their own future by today's circumstances alone. They must not judge that the Lord's promise has also come to an end because the difficulties last long, but must have hope according to the order the Lord spoke of.

The word about the sun, the moon, and the stars was not given to make people spectators. We may have our hearts taken up with calculating how such things will happen. But the Lord does not explain at length how that change will take place, but speaks of the coming of the Son of Man. If one accepts this word as it is by faith, it becomes a great benefit to one's own faith, and if one does not accept it by faith, one loses something tremendous. Only a person who believes in this way comes to examine his relationship with the One who will come at that time. We must examine now whether we believe in Him as our Savior and whether we are people who belong to Him. If, while

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studying the future, one does not actually believe in Christ, one misses the center of the word.

The glory of the Son of Man, who bore our sins

When Jesus, who will come in glory, spoke this word, He was heading toward the Cross. The Gospel of Mark also conveys the word that Jesus taught, *"The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day" (Mark 9:31)*. Therefore, we must not misunderstand Jesus' humbling of Himself as powerlessness on His part. The Son of God, who has the authority to come again, first gave Himself up in order to save sinners.

Only when we clearly know what Jesus did to save us can we also hope for His coming. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. That sin of the world includes all the sins of our whole lives. Because our sins were passed on to Jesus, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment for those sins. And He rose again from death. To those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Lord gives the remission of sins and makes them His own people.

Jesus, who saved us in this way, will come again with power and glory. The Lord promised that He would come after we have been martyred in the last tribulation. The One we wait for in this way is not a stranger who does not know our sins, but the very Savior who accomplished atonement for us. Therefore, do not be afraid of His coming, looking only at your own shortcomings. What we need is not to hide our shortcomings, but to believe in the gospel of the Lord, who bore even those sins. The assurance

of the remission of sins makes us wait with joy for Jesus, who is to come.

We cannot separate Jesus' humbling of Himself from His glory and think of them as the works of different persons. The One who received judgment for sinners is the Lord, who has the authority to judge. Because He received the judgment in our place, we do not try to stand before Him by making ourselves qualified through our own deeds. The reason we can say that we are His people is not our own excellence, but His salvation, which He accomplished for us. Only when this relationship is clear will we neither invent fear nor have groundless confidence when we speak of His coming again.

Faith that waits for the Lord's coming is also different from an attitude that takes present sins lightly. If we know the Lord, who gave His own body to give us life, we cannot say that choices that go against that grace are right. If we are going the wrong way, we must turn back before the word. The fact that the One who will receive us is the very One who saved us makes us look back on our life today as well. The hope of the future does not remove present responsibility, but leads our hearts to live as people who have received grace.

He does not forget the people in every direction

Let us read verse 27. *"And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven" (Mark 13:27)*. Jesus sends His angels in order to gather His own people. At that time, the Lord will raise believers back to life and lift them up to Himself, and He will renew this heaven and earth and open the Millennial Kingdom with His own people. Being far apart from

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one another in the world does not mean being far from the Lord's hand as well. Wherever those who believe in the gospel live, the Lord, who knows them, gathers them. Circumstances of being scattered because of the tribulation cannot hinder His promise.

In the preceding word, together with the warning that the disciples could be handed over even by their own families, we heard the word He spoke, *"And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Mark 13:13)*. When we think of that suffering, we may feel as though we are being abandoned. But being rejected by people does not mean being forgotten by the Lord. Jesus promises to gather precisely such people to Himself. Those who know this promise do not accept the world's rejection as the final verdict on their lives.

The word that He will gather them from every direction, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven, tells us that no one is left abandoned outside the Lord's sight. Even when people want to help one another, if the distance is great, their hands cannot reach. When contact is cut off, it is hard even to know one another's circumstances. But Jesus knows His own people and sends His angels to gather them. Here lies the reason why, even when we cannot know all the circumstances of another saint, we can entrust him to the Lord and pray. The Lord's power and care are not confined within our limits.

This promise also gives strength to the heart that preaches the gospel to other countries. Among the people we have never met, too, there are those who will hear this gospel and become the Lord's people. Even if they cannot gather in the same place and do not speak the same language, those who believe in the same salvation belong to the Lord. Therefore, let us not narrow the work of the gospel by thinking only of the saints who are close to us. We must join our hearts so that even the small labors

of sharing the word and serving reach souls in faraway places. Because we believe that the Lord will gather His people from every direction, we can carry out the work of preaching the gospel to them in hope.

The gathering on that day is not a matter of our gathering in one place by ourselves to prove our strength, but of the Lord bringing His own people. Therefore, we cannot regard the hope of salvation as small because the number of saints visible now is small or because the influence in the world is weak. Even those who are not recognized in the world are people whom the Lord will gather Himself. Knowing this fact, we must treasure one another and walk the path of faith together.

Looking toward that day of the Lord's gathering, let us encourage one another's faith. When someone who serves the gospel with you becomes weak, let him hear the word that even if the world is shaken, the Savior does not forget him. Our final hope does not lie in how secure the things are that we have possessed on this earth. It lies in the promise that Jesus, who will come in glory, gathers us as His own people. Let us entrust today and the future into the hands of the Savior, who washed away our sins, and wait for His coming. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Carry out the work entrusted to you until the Master comes

< Mark 13:28–37 >

“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”

Know that it is near, but do not insist on a date

When leaves come out on the fig tree, we know that summer is near. The fig tree refers to Israel. Jesus taught about the last days through the history of Israel, in which that nation, which

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had disappeared, is established again and puts forth leaves. Those who have heard the word cannot remain asleep, feeling secure that the world will always be as it is now. They must look into the things the Lord has made known and prepare the faith to receive the One who will come again. Just as one knows summer by seeing a tree that has put forth leaves, the Lord said, *"When you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors" (Mark 13:29).*

Jesus affirmed, *"Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Mark 13:30–31).* What we must hold on to is the certainty of that word. But right after that, He says that only the Father knows that day and hour. Faith that is sure of what will be fulfilled and an attitude of claiming to know the date are different.

The fact that one does not know that time cannot be a reason for not having to prepare. Rather, Jesus said to watch precisely because one does not know that time. If we put off correcting our faith until a particular day comes, we will follow our own calculations instead of waiting for the Lord. Although we do not know when He will come, what is clear is that the time for His coming is at hand; therefore, those who believe the word that the Lord will surely come examine their own hearts and lives today.

Knowing that a season is near by seeing the changes in a tree is not the same as setting an exact date. The Lord kept His disciples from living like people who know nothing, yet He did not let them claim the time that only the Father knows as their own knowledge. We must believe and prepare for what He has clearly made known, and entrust to the Lord what He has not made known. Faith is an attitude that can rely on the One who has spoken, even while acknowledging what one does not know.

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Words claiming to know the time have the power to stir people's curiosity. But if our hearts are caught by such words, checking the date becomes more important than the work entrusted to us. As the expected day draws near, we become excited; when it passes, we are disappointed; and we look for a new calculation again. The waiting that the Lord taught does not wear us out in that way. Preparation is living today by believing the word so that we can receive Him whenever He comes. Therefore, if our interest in the future is clouding our present faith and service, we must reexamine its direction.

The work entrusted to the servant who has been saved

Jesus gave the parable, *"It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch" (Mark 13:34)*. The servants have work to do while they wait for their master. The house has not become their own house just because the master cannot be seen, nor has the work entrusted to them disappeared. Through this parable, we learn that a life of waiting for the Lord is not a life of doing nothing and only watching for the time, but a life of carrying out the work entrusted to us with what we have received from the master.

How did we become people who belong to Jesus? First, we must know the grace that saved us. For us, who were to be judged because of sin, Jesus received baptism from John, and through that baptism He bore all the sins of the world once and for all. Included there are also the sins we will commit throughout our whole lives. Because He bore those sins, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, and thereby received in

our place the judgment for sins, and He rose again from death. By believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we have received the remission of sins and become people who belong to the Lord. Then who is awake? The righteous, who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit through which they received the remission of sins and live by faith, are awake. Those who have not received the remission of sins are completely immersed in the world, so they cannot be awake.

Therefore, carrying out the work entrusted to us is not paying a price to obtain salvation. It is joining our hearts to the will of the Savior, who gave us life. We can offer our time and strength to letting people hear the gospel, to laboring together so that that work may continue, and to keeping our faith while learning the word. When a servant forgets his master's will, his heart is caught only by the pleasures and worries before his eyes. When we remember the grace of the remission of sins, we come to know clearly again what we must live for.

The master in the parable gave authority to his servants and entrusted each with his work. It does not say that he made all the servants do the same work. Each has his own work entrusted to him, and there is authority given to carry out that work. Therefore, while waiting for the master, there is no need to look only at another servant's place. If we ignore the work entrusted to us as small, or try to do only the work that others recognize, we are putting our own evaluation ahead of the master's will. Those who wait by faith faithfully carry out the work the master has entrusted to them.

The word that told the doorkeeper to watch also keeps us from forgetting who the master of the house is. A servant does not become the master of the house because he guards its door, and the authority entrusted to him is to be used for the master's will. So it is with our place in serving the gospel in the church.

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Just because we teach the word or have been entrusted with necessary work, we have not gained the right to move people according to our own will. We must serve so that the gospel of the Lord, who gave us life, may be preached rightly, and let the other saints enjoy that grace together with us.

Prepare your faith and your life together

Being awake does not mean not sleeping physically at all. It means keeping in our hearts the words the Lord has spoken and preparing for the work we will have to carry out in the future. To serve the gospel, we must also look back on our daily lives today with faith. Rather than trying to begin everything only when difficulties arise, we can now work and learn together and prepare for the work entrusted to us. Carrying out the necessary labor while asking the Lord for help does not conflict with the faith that entrusts the future to the Lord.

Let us not think that it is all right just because we are busily working, even while our hearts are drifting away from the Lord's will. On the other hand, we must not take lightly the work entrusted to us today while speaking of the Lord's coming. If faith and life are separated, we may forget the master even while we seem to be preparing. With a heart that believes in the gospel, let us look into what we must do today, and let us seek together and serve in what is hard to carry out alone. A heart that treasures the salvation the Lord has given must lead that labor.

Jesus said, *"Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—" (Mark 13:35)*. Here lies the reason why we cannot say that we are still awake merely by the memory that we were once zealous. Even when

life becomes familiar and the waiting grows long, we must keep the word close. A life of worshiping together, learning the gospel, and checking on the work entrusted to us is not only for special times, but is a practical service that keeps our faith today from growing dim.

Also, to prepare for the future, we must break away from the thought of trying to carry out everything by our own strength alone. When we learn from one another, share the work, and provide what is needed, we can serve the gospel longer. It means doing first what we can carry out now, rather than putting it off by saying that we will start only when our circumstances get better. The hope that the Lord will come again is not a reason to abandon our daily lives, but a reason to build our daily lives in accordance with the will of the gospel.

The Lord said, *"And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (Mark 13:37)*. This word is not an exhortation to be left only to others. Each of us must also hear that word and respond to it. A servant who does not know when his master will come faithfully carries out the work entrusted to him today. Let us, too, not boast like people who know the date, but live as people who know Jesus, who will come again. When the Lord comes, let us receive Him not as people who have forgotten His grace and fallen asleep, but as people who believe in the gospel we have received and serve. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away

< Mark 13:1–37 >

"Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.' Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?' And Jesus, answering them, began to say: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am He," and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows. But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for

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My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. So when you see the "abomination of desolation," spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not' (let the reader understand), 'then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or, "Look, He is there!" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together

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His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!'"

The word that the temple would fall was fulfilled exactly as spoken

Mark chapter 13 begins with one of the disciples boasting of the stones and buildings of the temple. It was the greatest and most solid building to the people of that time, and it was something to be proud of in the eyes of the disciple as well. However, Jesus said, *"Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Mark 13:2)*. It means that it would be completely shattered and disappear. Because it was such a tremendous word that a disciple who was there would have heard it as a word that the nation would perish, the four

disciples quietly asked Him on the Mount of Olives about the time and the sign.

The reason Jesus could speak in this way is that He is God. Jesus already knew what would become of that temple, and that word was later fulfilled exactly. And the Lord spoke of the falling of the temple and the falling of this world as one continuous line. The word He spoke about the temple before their eyes reaches even to what the disciples would suffer and to what will happen in the last days. Since the One who is God spoke of the past, the present, and the future, we must not hear this word as a spectacle of the distant future, but must receive it by faith.

So, at the end of this teaching, the Lord declared, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Mark 13:31)*. Even if the day comes when heaven and earth are shaken and the sun and the moon lose their light, not a single word of the One who foretold those things will be in vain. The person who is not shaken even when the world is shaken is precisely the person who has built his own faith on this word.

Deception comes from outside the word

To the disciples who asked about the sign, the Lord first urged, *"Take heed that no one deceives you" (Mark 13:5)*. Many will come in the name of Jesus, saying that they are the Christ, and will deceive people, and during the tribulation they will try to deceive even the elect with words saying that the Christ is here or there, and with signs and wonders. If the Lord said to take heed of the deception of people, it means that such a world will come in the last days, so the Lord warned of this first of all. Deception always comes from outside the word the Lord

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spoke—from the mouths of people and from the power that people display.

The reason such deception gains strength is that sin remains in people's hearts. Since their sins are not removed whether they believe this way or that way, they draw an image of Jesus in their hearts and pray to it over and over, or they entrust their hearts to someone who shows them amazing experiences. However, the fact that we have seen amazing things and the fact that our sins have been washed away are not the same. This is because if the problem of sin remains as it is, we cannot stand before God, even if an illness has been healed or fear has subsided for a while. We are people who see and believe the word of God, not images made by our own thoughts or the assurances of people.

Jesus did not come to give sinners a vague sense of relief, but came to receive in our place the judgment that we, who have sin, had to receive. Therefore, when we look at the Cross, we must know why Jesus received that judgment. It is because Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. The sins that you and I will commit throughout our whole lives are also included in all those sins of the world. Jesus, who had our sins passed on to Him in that way, shed His blood on the Cross while bearing those sins, received the judgment in our place, and died, and He rose again from death and perfectly accomplished our salvation.

This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we believe in. It is different from a person declaring that he has washed away his sins by himself, or thinking that his sins have disappeared because he has gained a strong emotional experience. Because Jesus actually had our sins passed on to Him and paid the price of those sins, there is the assurance of the remission of sins in the heart that believes. Since the basis of salvation lies in what the Lord accomplished, there is no reason

to change our Savior by seeking the power that other people display. If a person feels at ease only as much as his own appearance has improved, he ends up seeking a new method every time his weakness is revealed; but a person who believes in the truth of salvation, in which He had even those sins passed on to Him, does not shift the basis of his salvation to people's words or to his own resolve, even while acknowledging his own faults.

Establish your faith through the word

Jesus said not to be troubled even when we hear of wars and rumors of wars. While speaking of the earthquakes, the famines, and the nations rising against one another that would come, He made it clear that these are the beginnings of sorrows and not yet the end. It means that you must not conclude that everything is over just because you see terrible things. After that comes the tribulation in which the abomination of desolation stands; after that tribulation, the sun and the moon will grow dark; and at that time, the Son of Man will come in the clouds. The Lord told this order beforehand and said, *"But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand" (Mark 13:23)*.

Therefore, the time of hearing the word is not a time for gathering knowledge about the end times, but a time for establishing one's own faith. If we know through the word what age we are living in and what position we are in, we will not be pushed along by rumors and miss what we must do today. After something has befallen us, only the pain looks great, so our hearts are easily drawn to words we hear for the first time; but if we keep in our hearts the word we have learned beforehand, we can discern those events within the Lord's teaching. To a person

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who lets this word go in one ear and out the other, thinking, "It must be just that kind of word," it brings no benefit, but to a person who accepts it by faith, it becomes a great benefit.

Also, the Lord, who knows the severity of the tribulation, said that He would shorten those days for the sake of His own people. This word is not a promise that there will be no suffering; it means that by shortening that tribulation so that it cannot last long, the Lord does not forget His own people even when there are hardships. People can draw us with promises to remove our hardships right away, but Jesus does not hide what we will go through, and He gives us the word on which to rely in the midst of it. True comfort does not come from hiding reality, but from knowing the word of the Savior, who cares for us.

The One who will come according to that word is our Savior

Jesus said of the time after the tribulation, *"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory" (Mark 13:26)*, and He spoke of sending His angels to gather His elect. False people claim here and there that they are the Christ, but just as the word that the temple would fall was fulfilled, the word that He will come again will also be fulfilled exactly as spoken. Jesus, who had the sin of the world passed on to Him and accomplished salvation, gathers His own people. Those who believe in Him are not people who do not know whom they will meet at the end, but people who will meet again the Savior in whom they now believe.

Therefore, when we hear this word, we must examine our own hearts as well. The Lord saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and we must always look, in the present

tense, at whether that truth has entered our hearts and become one with them. Being able to explain the gospel with our mouths is different from believing that salvation as the remission of our own sins. If we are still holding on to the thought that sin remains in our hearts, we must first accept the word that our sins, too, are included in all the sins of the world that the Lord had passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John. If we have received the remission of sins, the problem of sin can no longer block our way.

Even when our faith is weak, let us not judge on our own and retreat from the word. Learn the word within the church where we believe in the gospel together, and examine before the gospel the reason your heart is shaken. The Holy Spirit lets the church hear the word of the Lord in this age. Rather than considering oneself firm by relying on human self-confidence, acknowledging one's weakness and receiving the word of the Savior is the path of faith.

Heaven and earth may pass away, but the word of the Lord does not pass away. Both the temple and the world will fall, but the word of the Lord, who saved us through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, and the promise that He will come again according to that word, stand as they are. Even when the voices of people change, the salvation the Lord accomplished does not change, so let us establish our faith on that word, which will not pass away, and abide in what is certain. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

The end is not yet, so there is much work for us to do

< Mark 13:1–37 >

"Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.' Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?' And Jesus, answering them, began to say: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am He," and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows. But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But when they arrest you and

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deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. So when you see the "abomination of desolation," spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not' (let the reader understand), 'then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or, "Look, He is there!" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. Now learn this parable from

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the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!'"

Do not hide the gospel while waiting for the end

While speaking of the end of the world, Jesus said that the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. When people hear of wars and famines, they easily set their hearts only on keeping what remains. But the Lord makes us see the people who must hear the news of the remission of sins before the end comes. The word that the end is not yet contains the meaning that the work entrusted to us still remains. If we hide the gospel and only wait because we know about the disasters, we will miss the purpose for which the Lord gave this word.

At the beginning of chapter 13, the stones and buildings of the temple are revealed as things that will fall, and the wars, the nations rising against one another, and the earthquakes and

famines that follow also tell us that the world cannot guarantee people endless peace. Yet the Lord called these things the beginnings of sorrows, and saying, *"Such things must happen, but the end is not yet" (Mark 13:7)*, He taught by distinguishing the beginning from the end. We are now living in an age in which the disasters have begun, but the tribulation in which the abomination of desolation stands has not yet come. So we can neither live as though we will stay in the world forever, nor abandon the work entrusted to us, thinking that everything has ended; we must accept the remaining days as an opportunity the Lord has given us.

What we use this opportunity for is important. The work of the gospel is not accomplished by knowing much about the state of the world and explaining its dangers to others. This is because the most urgent problem for people is their sin before God. Even if one escapes disasters for a while, if one does not receive the remission of sins, one cannot escape eternal judgment. Therefore, what we must preach to people who worry about the future is the gospel of Jesus Christ, who saved us from sin. The Lord causes this news of salvation to be preached to all nations.

The salvation to be preached to all the nations has already been accomplished

The gospel to be preached to the world is not a demand that people must become better in order to be saved, but news that makes known what Jesus accomplished for us, who were to be judged because of sin. No matter how much we prepare for disasters and live upright lives, we cannot remove the price of our own sins. People who hear ethical sermons and moral sermons know their own sins and yet do not gain the way to

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escape from those sins. The reason the gospel must be preached first is that the work of the Lord, who gives life to sinners, is within it.

Jesus had all the sins of the whole world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and all those sins of the world also include the lifelong sins of us who are now hearing the gospel. Because Jesus bore those sins, He received the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross; if He had not received baptism from John and had those sins passed on to Him, there would have been no reason for Him to receive the judgment for those sins on the Cross. And He rose again from death and perfectly accomplished our salvation. The remission of sins is given to those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is not the excellence of the one who preaches that removes sins; rather, the one who hears receives the remission of sins by accepting and believing in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross.

Therefore, we who preach must know the content of the gospel clearly. If we separate the work of His having those sins passed on to Him from the work of His receiving the judgment for those sins in our place, it is hard for those who hear to know why Jesus died on the Cross. Also, if we reduce the sins that the Lord had passed on to Him to only a part of people's sins, we end up placing on people the burden of having to solve the remaining sins again by themselves. We must preach, just as it is, the complete salvation that gave life to us ourselves. This is the news that people of every nation need.

Before the word He spoke, *"And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations" (Mark 13:10)*, we must first look at the people right before our eyes. Both adults and young children need the gospel of the remission of sins. Let us explain sin and

salvation to suit the level of those who hear, but let us preach the meaning of the gospel just as it is. Serving others so that they, too, may believe from their hearts the truth the Lord has given us is the work of preaching the gospel.

Prepare with the gospel instead of with fear

Jesus did not hide that there would also be persecution along the way the gospel is preached. Though the disciples would be delivered up to councils and beaten in the synagogues, the Lord spoke of that as an opportunity for testimony, saying, *"You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them" (Mark 13:9)*. Therefore, we cannot judge that the work of the gospel has ended just because opposition has arisen. People try to stop those who believe, but the Lord causes the truth of salvation to be made known even in that place.

When we think of such places, our weakness is seen first. But although we are afraid and tremble when we think of being martyred in the last days, those who have received the remission of sins become even stronger at that time. This is because the Holy Spirit, who is in their hearts, stirs up their faith like fire, telling them that the time has come to give glory to God. There is no reason to exhaust all our strength now by imagining suffering that has not yet come. In the time the Lord has now allowed, we need only do the work for now and entrust what we will face in the future to the Lord, who will be with us then as well.

So the preparation we must make today is not building up courage, but living together with the gospel and together with the righteous. If we hear the word and live serving the gospel within the church, we can stand boldly before the Lord when He

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comes. The weaker a person's faith is, the more he needs to receive the guidance of the church. This is because when the church preaches the word, the Holy Spirit gives faith to that heart. If, because the world becomes difficult, we hide our salvation in our hearts and live like people who have not been saved, then when the master returns and settles accounts, we will stand as servants who abandoned the work entrusted to them.

The word that hatred and hostility will arise even from family members does not hide the difficulty of this path. To that extent, faith that follows the Lord cannot take the welcome of people as its basis. Since the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished does not become void just because people who know us do not accept the gospel, we, who have received the certainty of salvation, endure because of that truth.

The Lord knows the end of the witnesses

In the tribulation, a power that stands against God appears, and those who believe in the Lord go through suffering. But Jesus shortens those days for the sake of the elect, and He promised that after the tribulation *"He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven" (Mark 13:27)*. Let us not confuse the fact that He allowed suffering with the conclusion that He has abandoned us. The Savior knows His own people to the end and will gather them in glory in the future. The life and the end of a witness do not depend on the judgment of those who persecute him.

Even if there is the threat of death, the salvation we have preached does not disappear. Jesus, who rose again from death, will come again, raise His own people, and gather them.

Revelation says of the multitude who passed through the great tribulation and stood before God, *"These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14)*. In the end, many people, just like us, will receive the remission of sins and enter the kingdom of heaven by believing in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross. Because there is that hope, the gospel we are now preaching is not in vain.

There are still days left for us to preach the gospel. Someone must hear the news of the remission of sins for the first time, and someone has heard it but does not yet know its meaning and is waiting for it to be explained again. It is still the beginning of sorrows and not the end; therefore, there is still much work for us to do. Without being afraid because of that day, I hope that you will join your hearts with those who have been saved together with you and use these days, when the door of the gospel is open, for the gospel that must be preached to all the nations. ✉

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Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

Live as people who are awake while the world is asleep

< Mark 13:1–37 >

"Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.' Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?' And Jesus, answering them, began to say: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am He," and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows. But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

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Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. So when you see the "abomination of desolation," spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not' (let the reader understand), 'then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or, "Look, He is there!" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—

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at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!'"

The meaning of the word to stay awake

Mark chapter 13 ends with the word to stay awake. In verse 33 the Lord said, *"Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is" (Mark 13:33)*; in verse 35 He said, therefore, to stay awake; and in verse 37 He again said to stay awake, saying that this word is said to all. This word does not mean to keep our eyes open without even sleeping, but means for our minds to be awake. A person who knows what will happen in the future and prepares beforehand, a person who gets ready for what is to come, is a person who is awake.

While telling us to know that His coming is near, at the doors, the Lord also said, *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:32)*. We must receive these two words together. It does not mean that we may live with our interest cut off because we do not know the day He will come, nor does it mean that we

know even the date because we have come to know the signs. Just as we know that summer is near when the branch of the fig tree becomes tender and puts forth leaves, the faith that is awake is to know that the time of His coming is at hand as we see the things the Lord spoke of happening, and to prepare beforehand.

Yet when we look around at the people of the world, there is no one who is awake. They are so busy just keeping up with the changes of the world that they have no time to prepare for what lies ahead, and they live completely immersed in the world and intoxicated by it. The disciples who heard the word that the temple would fall quietly asked about the time because it was such a tremendous word, but even when people who have not received the remission of sins hear the word that this world will fall, they cannot hear that word as their own matter. Therefore, the word to stay awake first makes us ask who can be awake.

Those who are awake are the righteous who have received the remission of sins

Even if one knows the changes of the world well, if one does not know the problem of one's own sins, one cannot be said to be spiritually awake. This is because the Lord comes to call the people who have been saved. The righteous, who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and who live by faith—the Lord's workers—are awake. Everyone else is asleep. Therefore, being awake begins with confirming whether we ourselves have received the remission of sins, and faith that can stand before God comes before the confidence of knowing what lies ahead faster than others.

Because we cannot make the basis of that faith by our own strength, Jesus Himself accomplished the work of salvation.

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Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. The lifelong sins of you and me are also included in them. Jesus, who bore all those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment for sin that we had to receive, and He rose again from death and perfectly accomplished our salvation. By believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we receive the remission of sins. The basis for standing before the Lord, who will come again, has been prepared by the Lord in this way.

For a person who has received the remission of sins, waiting is not a vague fear but the hope of meeting the One who saved us, and so the work the Lord has entrusted to us also takes on a new meaning. We are freed from the toil of trying to obtain the remission of sins by working well, and we come to serve while treasuring the grace we have already received. The faithfulness of a servant is not a price that substitutes for the salvation the master has given; it comes from the heart that believes in the Savior leading us to live as people who belong to the Lord.

Therefore, we must not take it lightly when our hearts drift away from the gospel. Having said that we have received the remission of sins, let us not think that it is all right to live now with our ears closed to the word of the Lord. A person's faith does not collapse overnight, but grows weaker little by little and then collapses one day. The word the Lord spoke, *"Lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping" (Mark 13:36)*, is a word given to us, and it is the word by which the Holy Spirit tells us today to stay awake. Do not hold on only to the memory that you know grace, but believe in that salvation with your heart today as well, and receive the guidance of the Lord.

Stay awake in the work of preaching the gospel

Then in what areas must we, who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, stay awake? In the work of preaching the gospel, we must stay awake by knowing what will befall us in the future and preparing beforehand. Earlier, Jesus said, *"There will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows" (Mark 13:8)*, and then went on to speak of a severe tribulation as well. When life becomes difficult, the believing heart can also be tested, and while saying that we want to serve the Lord, we can easily distance ourselves from the word, pressed by the immediate problems of living. Therefore, as we live in this age, we must faithfully prepare our lives so that we do not come to distance ourselves from the Lord because of the problems of food, clothing, and shelter.

Preparing does not mean that we will block every danger by our own strength. It means not lightly passing over the difficulties the Lord has made known to us, and faithfully fulfilling the work we can do now. Only if we prepare now while we are at peace can we preach the gospel without change even when difficulties come. The door to the spread of the gospel is still open, but when the disasters begin in earnest, a time will come when we cannot preach even if we want to. If we stop at plans for living comfortably, our goal is no different from that of the people of the world, but we have the work of making known to others the salvation we have received.

If we try to provide everything by ourselves, our worries grow. The Lord has given us the church, where we believe in the gospel and live together. Acknowledge your weakness, receive the guidance of the word, and fulfill together the work entrusted to you. When one person puts only his own judgment first, he

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easily becomes bound by his immediate circumstances and misses the work of the gospel, but when we hear the word together and consult with one another, we come to know again what we must live for. We must be awake spiritually and awake physically as well, so that even if the end comes, we live doing the Lord's work well in both spirit and body.

Let us live as those who are awake and meet the Lord

Concerning His own coming, the Lord spoke in a parable, saying, *"It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch" (Mark 13:34)*. The servants do not know when the master will return, but they know what work has been entrusted to them. What a servant needs is not the right to decide the time when he will work, but a heart that follows the will of the One who entrusted the work to him.

The time when the master returns may be in the evening, or at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning, so a servant must not be faithful only at the time he expects. Since the time of the Lord's coming is at hand, we must be people who are awake no matter when He comes. Even if the Lord is not seen now, the work He has entrusted to us is before us today. When you hear the word, receive its meaning in your heart, and when you serve, fulfill your service while thinking of the grace of salvation. Being awake is revealed in this way through daily faith.

Jesus promised that He would send His angels and gather His own people. He does not leave us in waiting forever. Because of that promise, today's faithfulness is not in vain, and the toil of

keeping the gospel in the midst of difficulties also has meaning. We must entrust today's worries to the One who shortens the days of tribulation for the sake of His own people, and rather than relying on our own preparation, we must rely on the Savior, who gives us the strength to live while preparing.

Even if the world is asleep, we who have received the remission of sins must be awake. Let us work with hearts that are sure of the gospel of the remission of sins, prepare our lives in order to serve the Lord, and, while doing the Lord's work well, meet the Lord as those who are awake. Although we do not know when He will come, the time of His coming is at hand, and it is clear whom we are waiting for. This word He spoke, telling us to stay awake, is the word He has spoken to us today. ✉

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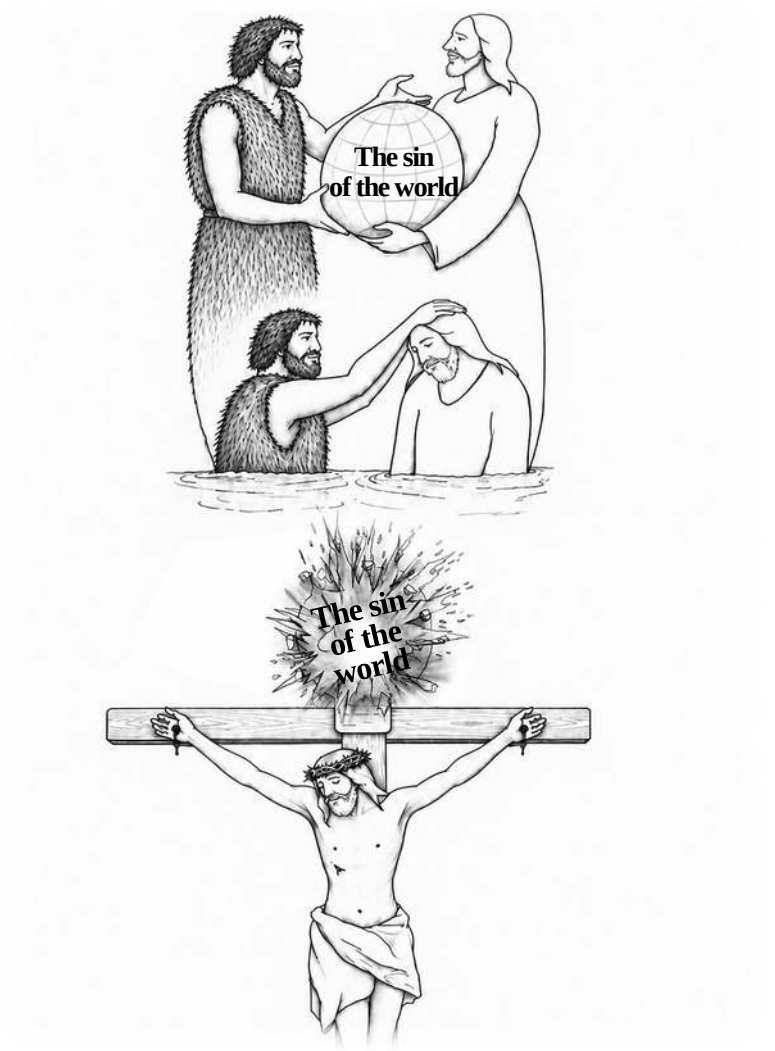

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The scheme to kill Jesus and the grace that gives life to sinners

< Mark 14:1–2 >

“After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death. But they said, ‘Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people.’”

The evil plot devised ahead of the Passover

The passage records, *“The chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death” (Mark 14:1)*. Two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the people who had been entrusted with the work of serving God sought to kill the Son of God. They worried that a disturbance would arise during the feast and tried to adjust the timing. However, being careful about people’s reactions does not make what they are trying to do righteous. Appearing to have no problem before people and being right before God are different.

This short word reveals that a religious position cannot make a person’s heart clean. Even if one is in the position of teaching

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the Scriptures, if he puts his own thoughts first, he goes against Christ. As we read of this event, we must not easily say that we are different from them. The heart in which our own judgment and interests come before the word of God is revealed in us as well. If we look for the grounds on which to establish ourselves as righteous before God in our church offices or our religious life, it is difficult to accept the word that reveals sin.

What they worried about was not turning back from the sin of trying to kill Jesus, but the problem of how they would carry out that plan. When a person first calculates how others will view him while committing sin, he becomes unable to take the sin itself seriously. What we need is not the wisdom of not having our wrongs found out. It is to acknowledge our own sins that God reveals, and to believe in Jesus, who will save us from those sins.

The record that it was just before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread cannot simply be passed by, either. The people were coming to the time of remembering the salvation God had bestowed. Yet the religious leaders, in the very place of preparing for that feast, sought a scheme to kill the Son of God. A great gap had arisen between the outward appearance of keeping the holy season and the matter of receiving God with the heart. We, too, easily think that because we are accustomed to worship and service, we have also prepared even the heart to hear the word. However, apart from whether we take part in events, we must examine whether our hearts are receiving Christ.

When they said, *"Not during the feast" (Mark 14:2)*, it did not mean that they had given up their plan. They were looking for another time when they could avoid an uproar of the crowd. The circumstances in which one has become unable to do wrong and a heart that has turned back from wrong are different. If a person stops for a while because of the eyes of people and then

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does the same thing again when an opportunity comes, the direction of sin remains as it is. The word makes us look back not only at whether we have carried out an action but also at what intent we are harboring. We must get out of the thought that it is all right because we were not found out, and open our hearts before God.

What is needed at this time is not dressing up one's own heart to look like a good person. It is acknowledging that we, too, have thoughts that go against the word. But the reason this acknowledgment is not easy is that everyone wants to be recognized and wants to keep his own place. When such a heart comes first, having a wrong pointed out feels like an attack on oneself. As a result, one may try to push away the person who speaks rather than listen to the word. While looking at the sin of the religious leaders, we, too, must guard against the heart that rejects the word of Christ in order to keep our own will.

The Savior who gives up His own body

When they sought to kill Jesus, Jesus was walking the way of saving sinners. Later in this chapter, while eating the Passover with His disciples, Jesus says, *"This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many" (Mark 14:24)*. We must not confuse the evil plan of people and the salvation of Jesus as having the same meaning. The scheme of the chief priests is sin, and Jesus' giving of Himself is the grace that gives life to sinners. The Lord did not give up the will of salvation because of the sin of people.

To give life to sinners, a Savior who will bear their sins is needed. Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and by

receiving baptism from John He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The sins of our whole lives are also included in those sins. Jesus bore the sins that were thus passed on to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and He rose again from death. The word that says, *"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5),* was fulfilled in this way. Through this gospel of the water and the Spirit, God accomplished the remission of sins. What we must believe in is not a way to hide our own sins, but the salvation in which the Lord removed those sins.

The Lord bore the sin of the world. Only when we clearly know this scope do we not increase or decrease the remission of sins according to our own condition. If Jesus had taken on only some of the sins that we recalled, we would have no choice but to worry about judgment again in the face of the sins we have not remembered or the sins we will commit in the future. But the Lord bore the sin of the world, which includes the sins of our whole lives. Therefore, our salvation does not depend on how thoroughly we have listed our sins. It depends on believing in what the Lord has accomplished.

That does not mean that acknowledging sin and turning back from it become unnecessary. We must not confuse the basis of salvation with the life of the saints. Salvation was accomplished by the Lord, but a person who believes in that grace cannot insist that the evil he does is right. It is just as the scheme of the chief priests did not become good merely because it came to light within the Lord's plan of salvation. As we look at the sins the Lord bore, we learn together both how serious those sins are and how great the love is that gave us life.

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Jesus' giving up of His own body was not a transaction that first set conditions for sinners. Nor did He begin salvation after waiting until the hearts of the religious leaders changed. Knowing what we needed first, He Himself accomplished that work. Therefore, the thankfulness of those who have been saved does not come from the boast that they themselves first made a good choice. It comes from the fact that the Lord first came to them, who had been sinners, and showed them grace.

When we look at what happened ahead of the Passover, we can see how different taking part in religious events is from believing in the Savior. People can oppose Christ even while observing the feasts. On the other hand, a sinner who acknowledges that he has no righteousness of his own receives the remission of sins by believing in the salvation that the Lord has given. Jesus did not give us an excuse to hide our sins, but gave us the gospel by which we are saved from sin.

The church that knows this grace and serves does not spend its strength only on keeping up people's outward appearance. When a wrong is exposed, rather than hiding it for the sake of saving face, it sets it right before the word. Rather than looking at what office each person holds, it examines together whether the content of salvation he preaches agrees with the word. This does not mean that we should quarrel while suspecting one another. It means that we should make it clear that the One who gives us life is Jesus, and let His word guide our relationships and our service as well.

If we do not have the faith that the Lord bore our sins, the recognition of people becomes too important. This is because only when others think well of us do we, too, feel like righteous people. However, if the basis of the remission of sins is clearly in the Lord, there is no need for us to defend our own appearance endlessly before people. While acknowledging our wrongs and

fulfilling the responsibilities we must bear, we can rely on the grace that gave us life. We must serve God, preaching to others as well the grace we have received in this way.

Therefore, before looking at the evaluations of people, we must set our hearts before the word of the Lord. Let us look back on whether, while saying that we serve God, we are pushing away the word in order to keep our own will. What has made us righteous is not our religious position but the grace of Jesus Christ. Those who believe in that grace can acknowledge their sins and can turn back even from the wrong way. Let us cast away the scheme that goes against Jesus, and give our hearts to the Savior, who gave Himself to give life to sinners. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The service of the woman who prepared for Jesus' burial

< Mark 14:3–9 >

"And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, 'Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.' And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.'"

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Jesus, who protected the woman in the face of the word "waste"

When Jesus was eating at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany, a woman poured costly fragrant oil on Jesus' head. The Lord is the One who goes to people who are lacking and full of sin like this, and we, too, were once sinners like lepers. Even when seeing the same act, the judgment of the people and that of Jesus were different. The people rebuked the woman, saying that if that fragrant oil had been sold, many poor people could have been helped. However, Jesus said, *"Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me" (Mark 14:6)*. Because the value of service cannot be fully explained by the price people set on it, we must learn from the Lord for whom it was done and what was done.

The people's words had the justification of helping the poor. Jesus, too, said, *"For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always" (Mark 14:7)*. However, the One the woman served at that time was Jesus, who would soon face death. If we compare all good works with one another and think that this work may be put off at any time, we may miss the opportunity for service that the Lord is allowing now.

The woman broke the flask and poured out the fragrant oil. The heart that held the Lord precious did not remain only in her thoughts but appeared in actual action. On the other hand, the people who saw that action calculated the value that could have been used elsewhere. Even regarding the same thing, the judgment differed depending on what one looked at first. Even when we serve the gospel, we may begrudge it, looking only at the decrease of our time and material possessions. Only when

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we see even what grace is conveyed to whom through that labor can we rightly judge the meaning of service.

The Lord said not to trouble the woman. It means that the rebuke of people cannot take the place of right judgment. When many people say the same thing, a person who serves alone can easily be intimidated. However, service that the Lord accepts as a good work does not become a vain thing because of the complaints of the majority. When someone devotes his strength to the gospel, we must not easily belittle that labor. We cannot conclude that even the heart of another saint is foolish merely because it does not fit our own calculation.

The fragrant oil for the body that the Savior would give up

Let us read verse 8. *"She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial" (Mark 14:8)*. Jesus explained the woman's act by connecting it with His own burial. The fragrant oil she poured was used to serve the body of Jesus. In other words, this woman prepared the gospel with all her strength, and pouring fragrant oil on Jesus' head was serving the gospel. People counted the price of the fragrant oil that was already gone, but the Lord made clear the relationship between the way of salvation He would walk and that service. Only when we know this relationship do we not regard the woman's act as mere waste.

The reason Jesus walks the way of death is our sins. Jesus received baptism from John and had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. The sins we commit throughout our whole lives were also passed on to Him at that time. So Jesus bore those sins, shed His blood and died on the

Cross, receiving in our place the judgment that we were to receive. Jesus, who was buried and then rose again from death, saved us. The gospel of the water and the Spirit in this way causes us to believe in Jesus Christ, who saved sinners with His own body.

The burial the woman prepared is connected precisely with the death this Savior would face. Think about what the Lord meant when He called the act of holding Jesus' body precious a good work. How could serving the Savior, who delivers us from sin and judgment, be in vain? We who have received the remission of sins through this gospel must get out of the judgment of the people who stopped at the price of the fragrant oil. When we know who Jesus is to us, we also come to know the meaning of the time, strength, and material things we offer for Him. This woman was a woman who knew why Jesus received baptism and why He would die on the Cross, and because she was thankful for the grace that had completely saved her, she poured the most costly thing on the Lord.

The Lord's words that she had prepared for His burial beforehand also show the importance of timing. There are things that can be done at any time, and there are things that cannot be done again in the same way once the time has passed. It was when the Lord was present there that the woman poured the fragrant oil. If we, too, keep putting off the service entrusted to us while only saying that we have good intentions, we may miss the work that we must undertake now.

We must not turn the word that one can help the poor into the meaning that the poor are not important. Rather than putting forward the poor as a justification for rebuking the woman's act, if we truly want to help a person, we must preach the gospel to him. What is important is not to push away the work of serving the Lord by setting it against other good works. Preaching the

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gospel of salvation is a service that makes known to people the grace they need most. Putting that purpose first, we must also fulfill the various responsibilities of life together with it.

The object of service that must be settled before the amount

When we hear of the woman's act, there is no need to think that everyone must offer things of the same value. Jesus said that she had done it with all her strength. What we need first is to decide what place the work of serving the Lord occupies in our lives. Even if a person has much, he can live only for himself, and even if he has little, he can treasure the grace he has received and give his heart to the Lord.

It is not that we offer something to the Lord in order to obtain the remission of sins. Because the Lord first gave Himself up and saved us, we serve His gospel with thanksgiving. Real labor is needed for the gospel to be preached. There is service that prepares opportunities to preach and hear the word and undertakes that work together. If one regards devoting his strength to that work as useless, he must think again about how precious the gospel of salvation is to people.

We easily think that we will serve when our circumstances become comfortable. However, people's needs and wishes keep arising even when their circumstances improve. If we try to serve the Lord only with what is left after fulfilling all our wishes, the time to serve seldom comes. *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21)*. We must first decide what value the gospel has in our lives, and then examine the time and labor we can undertake in the circumstances given to us. This does not mean to abandon the responsibilities of life,

but is an exhortation not to keep putting off the Lord's work while fulfilling those responsibilities.

Preaching the gospel does not need only those who preach the word. There is also need of the work of preparing a place so that listeners can come, of translating the word into other languages, and of helping necessary materials reach people. Some join in with prayer, and some offer the labor of their hands and feet. Even if that work is not readily visible, it is connected together within the service of preaching the gospel. We must not just wait to be served by others, but examine what we can help with by the strength given to us.

Also, we must not make the fact that we have offered many material things into our own righteousness. The One who praised the woman's act is the Lord, and the object of that service is also the Lord. When a person who has served exalts himself, he easily departs from the first heart with which he held the Lord precious. We serve because the grace we have received is great. If we place our joy in letting others share in that grace, we will not regard our own labor as vain, even if the praise of people is small.

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" (Mark 14:9)*. The Lord accepted the service that had been rebuked by people as something that would not be forgotten. Let us, too, not decide on our service by weighing only whether we are recognized by people. Let us put first what pleases Jesus, who washed away our sins, and serve with all our strength in the circumstances given to us. The labor offered with a heart that holds the Savior precious does not become waste before the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Are you trying to exchange Jesus for your own gain?

< Mark 14:10–11 >

"Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray Him."

He was near, but where was his heart turned?

Judas Iscariot was one of the twelve. The fact that he was a person who had gone about together with Jesus, close to Him, reveals this betrayal all the more painfully. He went to the chief priests to hand Jesus over, and they promised to give him money. After that, Judas looked for an opportunity to hand Jesus over. It is an event that shows that the outward fact of being beside Jesus and the heart that believes in Jesus and holds Him precious may not be the same.

Earlier, a woman offered her costly fragrant oil to Jesus. Here, a disciple agrees to hand Jesus over and receive money. The woman used what was her own for the Savior, but Judas tried to exchange the Savior for the gain that would come back to him. In the light of this contrast, we must look back on what we hold most precious. If, while saying that we know Jesus, we regard Him as a means of accomplishing our own will, then at a

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moment when there seems to be no gain for us, we will choose something other than the Lord.

The passage does not call Judas' plan a good opportunity. It became a joy to the people who sought to kill Jesus, but it was the way of betraying the Son of God. Not every way becomes right just because people welcome it and promise a reward. What our hearts are turned toward is revealed in whether that way exalts Christ or makes us forsake Him. We must not read this word only as a story of someone else's betrayal, but must examine our own faith.

The record that says, *"Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them" (Mark 14:10)*, shows where his direction was turned. In the preceding word, the chief priests were seeking a plan to kill Jesus, and it was precisely to them that a disciple who was close to Jesus went. Judas did not go to a place of asking the Lord about his own thoughts or of hearing His word, but added himself to the plan of the people who sought to get rid of the Lord. The matter of what one desires in his heart is revealed through the choice of whom he goes to and whose words he gladly listens to.

We must also think about the word that says, *"When they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money" (Mark 14:11)*. Just because someone is glad about us and needs us does not mean that the way is right. People easily justify their own actions in a place where they are welcomed. As we follow the will of people who recognize us and even promise us rewards, we may turn away from the fact that we are actually going against Christ. We must not ask only whether we are being treated well, but must ask how that choice is related to the word of the Lord.

Rather than how much Judas received, the passage conveys that after he was promised money, he looked for an opportunity

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to hand Jesus over. The intent within his heart led to the action of watching for an opportunity to put it into practice. We cannot think that it will be all right to harbor evil thoughts as long as the opportunity to act on them does not come. If one keeps harboring those thoughts, one eventually comes to see the surrounding circumstances in a way that fits that purpose. Conversely, a heart that holds the Lord's grace precious makes us look for opportunities to serve the gospel even within the same day. What we desire changes the direction in which we use opportunities.

The Lord said, *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21)*. Through this word we must examine who the master of our hearts is, rather than money itself. Material things can be used for preaching the gospel and fulfilling the responsibilities of life. However, if gaining material things becomes the greatest purpose, we may make even our relationship with the Lord an object of trade. The woman earlier used what she had for the Lord, and Judas tried to gain his own share by handing over the Lord. Though they were dealing with the same material things, the center of their hearts and the results were completely different.

The One who was delivered up by people saves sinners

The reason we know how precious Jesus is, is that we know how He resolved our sins. Mark records, *"Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan" (Mark 1:9)*. When Jesus received this baptism, He received the sin of all mankind upon His own body once and for all. Within that sin are also the sins of our whole lives. Jesus bore that sin, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the

judgment for our sins, and He rose again from death. The gospel of the water and the Spirit, through which we receive the remission of sins by believing, is precisely this news of salvation.

In Gethsemane the Lord said, *"Behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners" (Mark 14:41)*. People sold Jesus and handed Him over, but He accomplished the work of saving sinners. This grace does not turn Judas' betrayal into a good deed. Rather, before the Savior, who gives Himself for sinners, the wickedness of people is revealed all the more clearly. Therefore, looking at Judas' sin, we cannot boast of our own goodness, but must only believe in the salvation of Jesus, who overcame sin and gave us life.

The fact that the Lord walked the way of salvation even though He knew of the betrayal makes us lay down the thought that a sinner must first become good in order to receive grace. We, too, were people who had no righteousness to put forward before the Lord. The grace of salvation was not given as a reward after our hearts became perfect. It is the work the Lord Himself accomplished to give life to sinners. Therefore, if we have now realized our own evil hearts, we must not spend our strength hiding them, but must come to the Savior, who bore even that sin.

Accepting grace and using grace as an excuse are different. If we say that any choice is all right because the Lord bore sin, we go against the will of the Lord, who received the judgment for us. The remission of sins is not a permission that lets us keep living in betrayal, but a blessing that makes us know the grace of salvation and hold the Lord precious. When we come to know that we have chosen a wrong way because of our own gain, we must turn back before the word and must not avoid the responsibilities we must bear, either.

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What we gain in the world cannot wash away our sins. Even if we get money into our hands, it cannot remove the judgment before God, and even in an exalted position we cannot resolve the sin of the heart. However, Jesus Himself bore that problem which we cannot resolve on our own. A person who believes in the One who gave the remission of sins has received a salvation more precious than his own life. When we know that value, we realize how foolish the heart is that tries to exchange the Lord for a small gain.

Even in a life of serving the Lord, if we think only about what we can gain, our hearts easily grow weary. We may be zealous when we are praised by people or when our lives become comfortable, and then feel hurt when the results we expected do not come. However, the value of the gospel is greater than the gain that comes back to us right away. This is because the Lord has already resolved our sins and given us new life. A person who thinks first of the grace he has received can undertake for the Lord even labor that looks like a loss.

That does not mean that we should not ask the Lord for the needs of life. Because we are weak people, we must ask for help. However, even while asking for what we need, we must not regard the Lord as One who must move according to our demands. We must learn what our Savior delights in, and examine our own plans under that word as well. The faith that holds Jesus precious is revealed, beyond the record of having been near the Lord for a long time, in what choice we make today in response to that grace.

Judas looked for an opportunity to hand Jesus over. As we hear that word, let us examine what we use the opportunities given to us for. Do not let your record of having been near Jesus take the place of your faith, but look back on whether you actually believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Let us hold

precious in our hearts the Savior, who accomplished salvation even while being delivered up, and use today as an opportunity to serve with the grace we have received from Him. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The Passover table prepared according to the word

< Mark 14:12–16 >

"Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, 'Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?' And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, 'Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, "The Teacher says, 'Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'" Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us.' So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover."

The Lord, who knows the way before His disciples ask

On the day they killed the Passover lamb, the disciples asked Jesus where He wanted them to prepare the meal. Jesus sent two disciples and told them about the person they would meet in the city and the house they would enter. In that house there was a large upper room in which places had been set out. When the disciples actually went there, it was just as the Lord had said, and they prepared the Passover there. Those who had been

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asking what they should do came to know what they had to do by following the word of the Lord.

Even while the plan to kill Jesus is under way, Jesus has His disciples prepare the table He will share with them. He is not One who is swept along by events without knowing anything. He knows the place and the meeting that the disciples have not yet seen, and there He prepares a place where they will hear the word He is to preach. Through this fact we learn the will of the Lord, who was facing His suffering. Jesus set His heart on teaching His disciples salvation and making known the work He would do.

The disciples did not move only after confirming everything in advance. They went out after hearing the words Jesus had spoken, and they found it just as that word said. This order is important for us as well. A person who learns the will of the Lord does not insist that everything must first be visible to his own eyes before he will follow. He asks what the Lord wants, accepts the work He has spoken of, and fulfills it. The obedience that takes part in the work the Lord has had us prepare comes from the faith that knows Him.

Jesus did not tell His disciples to go and look around vaguely. He said, *"Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him" (Mark 14:13)*, and told them to convey His word to the master of the house that the man would go into. What the disciples had to do was not to find a good place they themselves knew and change the Lord's plan, but to follow the instructions they had received, confirm them, and prepare. Here there is no need to make up meanings hidden in the water pitcher or in the shape of the house. The fact that they actually followed the way the Lord had made known to them explains the passage.

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The disciples had to ask the master of the house in the name of the Lord. They were not people putting themselves forward as deserving some kind of hospitality, but people conveying the words of their Teacher. In serving the Lord as well, our authority does not come from ourselves, so we must convey accurately the word entrusted to us and work according to the meaning of that word. We must not exalt our own thoughts as if they were the Lord's commands, or add our own demands to the Lord's word to move other people.

The word *"he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us" (Mark 14:15)* contains both a prepared room and the work the disciples were to do. The fact that something had already been prepared did not mean that there was no longer anything for them to do. The Lord knew the way and opened up the place for them, but the disciples went and prepared the Passover. We, too, must not make our faith that the Lord works a reason for not laboring. Rather, we must know that there is work the Lord has entrusted to us and devote our hearts to carrying it out. The disciples' labor was obedience that took part in the grace the Lord had prepared.

The meaning of salvation He would make known at the table

What they prepared was a place to eat food, but at that table Jesus would make known His own body and the blood of the covenant, saying, *"Take, eat; this is My body" (Mark 14:22)*. This scene of preparing the Passover is connected with the word of salvation that follows. While the disciples were preparing the food and the room, the Lord was walking the way on which He

would give Himself up for sinners. The reason we, too, serve by following Jesus' word is that we know what He has done for us.

The Lord said, *"My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed" (John 6:55)*. The reason Jesus' body gives us life is that He bore our sins with that body. When He received baptism from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. That sin of the world also includes the sins of each one of us throughout our whole lives. Bearing the sins that were passed on to Him, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, received in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and rose again from death. We receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. The word of the body and the blood that He would preach at the table makes this very salvation known.

The disciples' preparation was not what produced that salvation. Jesus Himself accomplished the work of remitting sins. Yet the Lord also entrusted to His disciples the work they were to carry out that day. The service of those who believe in grace is just like this. If we had to produce salvation in the Lord's place, we could not bear the task, but because our service is believing in the salvation the Lord accomplished and doing the work He has entrusted to us, we can carry out even small labors with thankfulness.

When we think of the table the Lord had them prepare, we also come to know how precious a place to hear the word is. People can gather and eat together and yet end up only sharing their circumstances and thoughts with one another. But Jesus made His salvation known to His disciples. The purpose of our preparing a gathering today and serving someone, too, does not lie merely in hosting the occasion well. It lies in helping people learn and believe, in that place, the salvation the Lord

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accomplished. The actual preparation and the purpose of the word must be joined together.

Saints who have received the remission of sins do not set the small things of life apart merely as things unrelated to the gospel. The labor of providing what is needed so that the word can be heard looks different from preaching directly. But it is used for the same gospel. Just because we do not do conspicuous work does not mean that we are excluded from service. When we know and carry out the work the Lord has entrusted to us, the labor of each person together supports the work of preaching the word. The table the two disciples prepared also became the place where the Lord spoke to His disciples.

Move your hands according to the word you have received

"So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover" (Mark 14:16). The disciples did not stop at marveling that it was just as the word said, but did the work Jesus had entrusted to them. Let us, too, not be satisfied merely with having come to know the word. The joy of having received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel must lead to actual service. This means preparing a place to hear the word together, carrying out the labor needed for preaching the gospel, and not avoiding the work the Lord has given us.

The experience of finding it just as the word said would have become a reason for the disciples to trust His later words as well. However, we must not turn this scene into a guarantee that all our life plans will work out just as we expect. What the disciples confirmed was not their own wishes, but what Jesus had

specifically instructed. Therefore, we must not conclude that whenever our own plans go well, that is the Lord's will, or judge that whenever difficulties arise, the Lord is not leading us. We need the faith that follows while distinguishing between the word and our own wishes.

When we work together, we must share our hearts so that others, too, may know the same purpose and serve. If we tell people simply to follow unconditionally without explaining what needs to be prepared, service easily becomes nothing but a burden. On the other hand, if we know together the grace of salvation the Lord has given us and look into what is needed so that this gospel may be spread, we can understand one another's labor. We must work according to the word we have received from the Lord, and value the people who serve together with us within that word.

We easily divide the work entrusted to us only into big things and small things. But the work the disciples had to do that day was to go to the place Jesus had directed and prepare the table, and they served the Lord by moving according to that word. Let us also learn from the Lord and carry out the work entrusted to us today. We can serve because we believe in the One who accomplished salvation, and we can take our steps because we believe in the word that leads us. Let us live with the faith that asks the will of Jesus and prepares according to His word. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Even at the same table, examine the heart that believes in the Lord

< Mark 14:17–21 >

“In the evening He came with the twelve. Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me.’ And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, ‘Is it I?’ And another said, ‘Is it I?’ He answered and said to them, ‘It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.’”

The warning that came to the disciples sitting at the table

When evening came, Jesus sat down at the Passover table with the twelve disciples. But while they were eating, He spoke unexpected words. That is, He said, *“One of you who eats with Me will betray Me” (Mark 14:18)*. It was not a word about a distant enemy, but a warning about a person who had been eating bread at the same table and listening to the Lord’s word. This is

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the reason the disciples, being sorrowful, pointed to themselves one after another and asked.

Jesus said that this person was one of the twelve and one who dips with Him in the dish. This word reveals how close the place is where betrayal takes place. Time spent with the Lord or the name of disciple cannot set right even that person's heart. Today, we, too, cannot explain our own faith merely by the fact that we have attended church for a long time. Going beyond whom we have been with, we must examine what it is that Jesus accomplished which we are believing.

The time when Jesus revealed the betrayal was while they were eating together. Being gathered at the table did not mean that all the hearts there were the same. This is because visible closeness cannot take the place of the faith of the heart. Even while worshiping and serving together with other saints, we can neglect believing with our own hearts in the salvation the Lord accomplished. We can lean on the faith of the people around us and think that we, too, believe. But the word of the Lord also comes to us ourselves, who are there together.

Scripture records, *"And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, 'Is it I?'" (Mark 14:19)*. When we read this question, we first need to lay down the desire to find out who the other person is. The passage does not teach a knack for finding out who is suspicious, but rather makes us examine our own hearts before the Lord. We must look back on why we are following the Lord, and whether we believe in Him as our Savior or are using Him as a tool for our own will. The ability to spot other people's faults quickly does not guarantee our faith.

The Lord said that it was one who dips with Him in the dish. The fact that the betrayal came out of the very place where grace had been heard and received up close is revealed all the more painfully. The more a person hears the word, the easier it is for

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him to forget the weight of that word because of familiarity. When we hear the same gospel again and again, we must not close our hearts with the thought that we already know it. We must newly confirm for whom that gospel was accomplished and what we believe and live by.

The Lord, who goes the way that was written, and the responsibility of the betrayer

The Lord said, *"The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him" (Mark 14:21)*. It means that the death that was to come afterward was not a failure He suddenly suffered through Judas' scheme. But immediately He said that there is woe to the man who betrays the Lord. The fact that God accomplishes salvation does not turn the betrayer's evil choice into a righteous act. We can neither say that Judas has no responsibility because the Lord knew, nor say that Judas accomplished salvation because he handed Him over.

The word that He goes just as it is written corrects the idea that Jesus did not know what was to come. Judas looked for an opportunity to hand Him over, but the Lord already knew about it. However, we must not use the fact that the Lord knows to put down people's evil deeds as something that could not be helped. In the same place, Scripture also clearly speaks of the betrayer's responsibility. Even while believing in God's plan of salvation, we cannot justify our own sins. We must read the Lord's grace and the wickedness of man together.

The warning that it would have been better if he had not been born keeps us from taking the consequences of betrayal lightly. Gaining money for a while or achieving what one wanted does not mean that the choice is beneficial to the very end. Rather

than looking at the reward given before our eyes, we must examine what that act is before God. Our judgment easily stops at what we gain right away, but the Lord knows even the end of a person. That is why listening to the Lord's warning is for our true benefit. We must not push that word away because it sounds uncomfortable.

The One who saved us is Jesus. When Jesus received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. Those sins also include all the sins we commit from the time we are born until we die. Because He was bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, received in our place the judgment for sin that we should have received, and rose again from death. *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23)*. The remission of sins is not a reward for our faithfulness, but grace received by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord accomplished. In this gospel we can know the will of the Lord, who went the way of salvation even though He knew of the betrayal.

Faith in the remission of sins does not arise from analyzing one's own heart in detail and finding good parts in it. When we examine our hearts, weakness and evil thoughts keep coming to light. If each time we try to find the qualifications for salvation within ourselves, we cannot enjoy peace. It is necessary to know one's own sins rightly, but after that we must know how the Lord bore those sins. When the work of the Lord becomes the basis of faith, we can be sure of salvation even while honestly acknowledging what we are.

Even after hearing the gospel that the Lord bore all sins, we may think that some sins are so great that they cannot be included in that grace. But we cannot set the scope of sin anew ourselves. As great as our wickedness is, so much more

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desperately do we need the Savior. At the same time, we cannot keep planning a path that goes against the Lord while merely saying that we will receive that grace. True faith makes us accept salvation instead of hiding our wickedness, and makes us turn back before the word.

Examine what you believe before the Lord

As we read about the sorrow of the disciples, we come to think of the instability of our own hearts. But if we stop at confirming that instability, then even after hearing the Lord's word we end up looking for the answer only within ourselves. The basis that makes salvation certain does not lie in our resolution that we will never be shaken. Just as the word says, *"The chastisement for our peace was upon Him" (Isaiah 53:5)*, the work of Jesus, who bore our sins and received the judgment, is that basis. We must lay down the heart that puts forward its own righteousness and believe in this salvation.

The time we spend together in the church must in this way become a time of setting our own faith before the word. If we cover up wrongs unconditionally because we are close to one another, or do not ask about the content of one another's faith because we have known each other for a long time, the place where we are together may remain merely a familiar gathering. We have not gathered to suspect people and drive them into a corner. We gather to confirm together the salvation we have received from the Lord and to help one another live according to that grace. We need the love that shares the word rightly.

Also, we must not hide our worries, but work them out within the word. If, because our hearts are afraid, we try to resolve it by vowing greater loyalty, we end up relying on ourselves again.

We must hear what the Lord has accomplished and believe that this salvation is for us. Thankfulness comes from a heart that believes in grace, and from that thankfulness also comes the strength to serve the Lord. The purpose of examining our faith is not to create endless anxiety, but to make clear the One in whom we are to believe.

The warning of this passage is necessary even for saints who already believe in this gospel. We must not take greed or falsehood lightly just because we are in the church. This is because we cannot rationalize choices that go against the Lord by saying that we have received grace. We must acknowledge our wrongs and turn back before the word of the Lord. Let us treasure the place where we are together with the Lord, who has given us life, cast away the heart that tries to use the Lord for our own purposes, and serve the gospel He has entrusted to us. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The body and the blood of the covenant given up for us

< Mark 14:22–25 >

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, ‘This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.’”

The salvation He made known while giving the bread and the cup

While eating with His disciples, Jesus broke bread and gave it to them. He said that the bread was His body, and after giving the cup He said that it was His blood of the covenant, which is shed for many. The disciples were sitting before the Lord, who would soon be arrested, and the Lord made known to them beforehand the meaning of His death. It was not a life taken away because He had no power, but the body and blood He gave up to give life to sinners.

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For us who receive the bread and the cup as well, what we must remember and believe is important. By the actions of receiving the bread with our hands and drinking the cup with our mouths alone, we cannot know why the Lord gave up His body. If, while taking part in the Lord's Supper, we do not know how Jesus bore our sins, we may still try to solve the problem of sin by our own strength. To receive by faith the body and blood the Lord gave, we must know what was accomplished in that body and what that blood is for.

Look at the word *"Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them" (Mark 14:22)*. He also gave them the cup after giving thanks. The One who gives is Jesus, and the disciples are those who receive. When we think about this order, the grace of salvation also becomes clear. It was not that the disciples first prepared a way of salvation and presented it to the Lord. The Lord made known His body and blood and caused them to receive that grace. We, too, when we begin our life of faith, must listen to what the Lord has given rather than first calculating what we must offer in order to be saved.

Concerning the cup, the Lord said, *"This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many" (Mark 14:24)*. This death was not an event belonging only to the life of the Lord, but a work for sinners. If we think of the Cross merely as an event in which a good man died unjustly, we cannot know the relationship between ourselves and that death. It must be explained all the way to why the Lord died for us and what we must believe in the face of that death. The reason He spoke of the body and the blood together also lies in making us know the work of salvation completely.

The blood of the covenant is the blood the Lord shed in fulfilling God's Old Testament promise to send the Savior through the Seed of the woman to bear sin and die: He bore our

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sins through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again. Therefore, we cannot decide the effect of salvation by our own feelings. It is not a salvation in which sins disappear if our hearts are joyful today and come back to life if we are discouraged tomorrow, but a salvation based on the blood the Lord Himself gave. Faith is receiving that promise with the heart. When we hear the word that the Lord gave Himself up, we must not go back to ourselves and try to create more certain feelings, but must rely on the One who spoke it.

The body in which He bore sin, and the blood by which He received the judgment in our place

Jesus came to this earth in a human body, said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and received baptism from John. At that time He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. Not only our sins of yesterday, but also our sins of today and the sins we will commit until the day we die are included in that sin of the world. With the body that had borne our sins in this way, the Lord was hung on the Cross. Therefore, His shedding of blood and death cannot remain merely at the explanation that they were unjust suffering undergone by One without sin. It is the event in which Jesus, who bore our sins, received in our place the judgment we were to receive.

Jesus rose again from death and became our Savior. When we believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we come to receive the Lord's body and blood as the very salvation for us. The Lord said, *"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life" (John 6:54)*. Eating that flesh and drinking that

blood is eating and drinking by the faith that believes in the baptism the Lord received at the Jordan River and the blood of the Cross. Making our hearts clean and showing them to the Lord does not come first. We receive the remission of sins by believing the word that the Lord took our sins upon Himself and paid the price of those sins. If we think of the baptism and the Cross separately, it is easy to miss why the Lord had to shed His blood. Because He bore sin, He also received the judgment for that sin in our place.

This is the reason we must believe together in the baptism by which He bore sin and the Cross on which He received the judgment for sin. If our sins had never been passed on to the Lord, we could not clearly know why the Lord received the punishment of the Cross. Conversely, if He had had our sins passed on to Him but had not received the judgment, the price of sin would not have been paid. The Lord did not accomplish only one side, but completely accomplished salvation for us. Therefore, we do not set part of our sins aside and try to wash it away by some other method.

Believing in what the Lord accomplished is also different from merely hearing facts about Jesus and thinking well of them. It is receiving with the heart the word that our sins are included in the sins He bore, and that the judgment He received was the judgment we were to receive. It is hard to say that we fully believe in the Lord's redemption while thinking that we still have to pay for our sins ourselves. We must believe in Jesus, who is the One who accomplishes salvation, and in His work as our own salvation.

When we remember the grace of the Lord's Supper, our past lives may come to mind and we may feel ashamed. But to remove that shame, we do not have to count the good things we have done. We must believe the word that the Lord bore even

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those sins, and give thanks. While acknowledging our wrongs and turning back, we must not move the basis of salvation to the score of our lives. The place of remembering the Lord's body and blood is not a place for confirming one's own righteousness, but a place for believing in the grace of the Savior, who gave life to sinners.

Every time we observe the Lord's Supper, it is not that sins are newly passed on to the Lord or that the Lord dies again. It is remembering the salvation He has already accomplished and giving thanks by faith. Therefore, the Lord's Supper cannot be a place for boasting of one's religious life. It is a place for confirming together the grace of the Lord, who gave up His body and blood to give life to us, who have no merit at all.

That day when He will drink it new in the kingdom of God

The Lord said, *"I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25)*. At the table, with death before Him, He spoke of the day of the kingdom of God. The suffering the disciples would soon see was not the end of their life with the Lord. The Lord's salvation not only rescues us from the judgment of sin, but also makes us look toward the joy of the kingdom of God.

His speaking of the day when He would drink it new in the kingdom of God makes the disciples see beyond the sorrow they were about to go through. They would soon see the Lord being arrested and dying. But at the table the Lord had already spoken of the joy to come. Death is not the end of the Lord, nor does the salvation received from the Lord end in vain because of the disciples' failure and fear. Through that promise we learn that

the grace of salvation continues from the remission of sins today to eternal hope.

When saints who have received the same grace remember together the meaning of the bread and the cup, the heart with which they look at one another must also change. Instead of competing over who has done more work, they come to know that all are people saved by the body and blood of the Lord. Though the weaknesses of each one differ, the basis of salvation is the same. Therefore, when another saint is shaken, rather than boasting of our own loyalty, we must let him hear the gospel we received together. What binds us together as one is not the boasting of people, but the grace of salvation that the Lord has given.

Therefore, as we think of the Lord's death, we do not remain only in sorrow. We give thanks to the Lord, who has given us life, and wait for the kingdom He will give. We can offer up our lives today, too, as befits people who have received grace. Let us also preach to others the meaning of the body and blood the Lord gave up, so that they may enjoy the same salvation and hope. The Lord has accomplished salvation for us. Living with faith and thankfulness for that salvation is the fitting response to the grace we received at the Lord's table. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Walk the path entrusted to you while praising the grace of salvation

< Mark 14:26 >

"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."

The praise that followed at the Lord's table

At the Passover table, Jesus spoke of His own body and the blood of the covenant. Then, singing praise with His disciples, He went out to the Mount of Olives. Today's passage is short, but it shows where the path the Lord walks is heading. On the Mount of Olives He will say, *"All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night" (Mark 14:27)*, and the prayer of Gethsemane and His arrest follow. Even while knowing that path, Jesus praised God.

The passage does not explain with what words they sang praise or how fervent the disciples' emotions were. What we should pay attention to is the path the Lord walked after singing praise. The Lord's praise and His steps following the will of the Father were not separate from each other. We, too, must think about what that grace is while we praise grace. More than the

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fact that we sang a song, what the One who receives praise has accomplished for us must be clear in our hearts.

Let us consider the one step that leads from the table to the Mount of Olives. After making His body and blood clear to His disciples, the Lord went forth on the path where He would actually give up that body. He did not explain love only with words and then stay in a safe place; rather, He now went to the place where betrayal and arrest would soon be waiting. The Lord's praise was not the light song of a person who does not know suffering, but praise set on the path on which He was accomplishing salvation according to the will of the Father.

There are times when we think that we can thank God only after all our difficulties have been resolved. When our circumstances improve, we acknowledge grace, and when problems remain, we cannot find a reason to give thanks. However, as we look at the path the Lord goes, we come to think again about the basis of thanksgiving. God's will to give us life does not disappear just because suffering is before our eyes. The thanksgiving of the saints, too, must be rooted not only in their immediate circumstances but also in the salvation they have already received and in the Lord's promise.

That does not mean, however, that we must forcibly get rid of a sorrowful heart or a fearful heart. In Gethsemane, which follows, Jesus prays, saying, *"My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death" (Mark 14:34)*. The fact that the Lord sang praise does not mean that the pain He goes through in a human body became false. We, too, can ask God for help when our hearts are troubled, without hiding our situation. Thanksgiving and supplication do not push each other out. To ask for the help we need now while remembering the grace that saved us is the life of faith.

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Know the grace that gave life to sinners, and give praise

We believe that when Jesus came to this earth and received baptism from John, He had the sin of the whole world transferred to Him once and for all. The sins we commit throughout our lives are also included in the sin that the Lord bore at that time. Because He bore that sin, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment for our sins. It is exactly as the word says, *"By His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).* And He rose again from death. A person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit knows that the Lord bore all his sins and paid the price of sin, and he receives the remission of sins.

When we know this salvation, the reason to give thanks to God becomes clear. We do not give thanks only on days when we have done many things well. Even on a day when we discover our own faults, we can acknowledge the grace of the Lord, who gave us life, and give thanks. This is not because we take sin lightly, but because we know what the Lord did to remove that sin. The reason we who have been saved sing praise does not lie in trying to reach salvation by making our own hearts fervent. It lies in believing in the salvation already given to us and exalting that grace.

When we offer praise, we must examine both the words of our lips and what we believe in our hearts. If we sing that Jesus washed away sin and yet do not know how He bore our own sins, we need to learn more about the meaning of the song. Only when the fact that sin was passed on to Him through the Lord's baptism and the fact that He received in our place the judgment for that sin are clear does the object of our thanksgiving also become clear. We must not be satisfied with singing a familiar

melody, but must believe that the salvation confessed in that praise is our own salvation.

As the word says, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16)*, we praise the Lord because He saved us first. It is not that we first sang praise beautifully and moved the Lord's heart, and then obtained salvation. If this order is reversed, even praise becomes something that proves our own zeal. On days when our emotions are fervent, our faith seems good, and on days when our hearts sink, we may feel as though even our salvation is shaken. However, since the Lord's salvation does not depend on whether our singing goes well, our praise is to believe in that unchanging grace and to give thanks.

In the place where we praise together, we confirm that we are people who have received the same grace. Although the circumstances we have lived through and the work entrusted to us differ from one another, there is one Savior who gave us life. Therefore, we must not judge the size of someone's faith by a voice louder than others' or by richer expressions. What is important is whom we believe in and what we give thanks for. Rather than evaluating the expressions of other saints, we must remember together the grace we have received from the Lord and give thanks with one heart.

Let the thanksgiving of your lips lead to actual service

The confession that we thank the Lord must lead to a heart that treasures His will in our daily lives. If, even while praising the Lord's grace, we always try to meet our own needs first, then the grace we confessed with our mouths is not leading our lives. The Lord said, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His*

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righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). We who have been saved must learn what pleases the Lord. We must take an interest in the work of causing souls who have not heard the gospel to know and believe in salvation, and examine what labor we can undertake for that work.

After singing praise in worship, we, too, return to the places of our daily lives. There are tasks to do and difficulties to endure there. The faith that praised the Lord makes us rely on the Lord's grace even in those places. When we fulfill the labor entrusted to us and serve the gospel with one heart together with other saints, the thanksgiving we confessed with our lips continues in our lives as well. We do not supplement the Lord's salvation with our labor; rather, we serve His work with the joy of having been saved.

To serve in practice, we must set aside our time and set our hearts on it. Someone prepares a place to preach the word, and someone prepares materials with which to share the gospel. The work of meeting people, listening to their circumstances, and explaining the word of salvation is also needed. Such labor is not a religious activity separate from praise. It comes from the same faith that treasures the Lord, who gave us life. The more we know and give thanks for the grace we have received, the more we come to wish that other souls, too, may enjoy that grace.

When we begin to serve, there are times when things do not work out as well as we expected. At such times, if we cling only to our disappointment at not being recognized by people, our initial thanksgiving may grow dim. We must think again about why we began that work. If we serve because of the grace of the Lord who saved us, the value of the gospel does not diminish even if people are slow to respond. We can learn the wisdom we need, share strength with other saints, and keep serving. This is

continuing the praise we offered to the Lord in the patience and labor of our lives as well.

We cannot compare the path of suffering that the Lord walked with our labor as if they were of the same size. The Lord received in our place the judgment for sin that we could never bear by ourselves. As people who have received that grace, we walk the path given to us today. When our strength is lacking, let us ask the Lord for help and, remembering that He has saved us, give thanks again. We offer praise to the Lord, who gave Himself for us. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

The promise of the resurrection that came before the disciples' bold claims

< Mark 14:27–31 >

"Then Jesus said to them, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: "I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered." But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.' Peter said to Him, 'Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.' Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' But he spoke more vehemently, 'If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!' And they all said likewise."

The promise He gave while knowing that they would stumble

Jesus said that the disciples would all forsake Him. He let them know what was soon to happen, saying, *"For it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered'" (Mark 14:27).* It was a word that the disciples found hard to accept right away, but the Lord already knew their fear and

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weakness. He did not expect that the people standing beside Him now would remain in the same place to the end.

However, the Lord's word did not end with announcing the scattering. He promised that after He had risen He would go to Galilee ahead of them. He spoke of the meeting after the resurrection even before the disciples failed. This promise contains both the power of the Lord, who would rise from death, and His grace toward the disciples, who would be scattered. It is not the disciples' courage that gives the Lord life; rather, the Lord, who conquered death, would stand before the disciples again.

In the word that when the shepherd is struck the sheep will be scattered, the disciples heard about their own future. The Lord did not guess how they would act, but let them know through the written word. Yet the disciples' answer moved toward asserting the confidence of their own hearts rather than accepting that word. We, too, easily push back when, while listening to the word, we come upon a part that does not agree with our own assessment. To believe the word is to truly accept not only pleasant promises but also warnings that reveal our weakness.

After speaking of the scattering, the Lord went on to give the promise of the resurrection. He revealed beforehand that the disciples' failure was not the whole story. In the night of suffering they would come to know how weak they were, but the Lord would rise from death with a power greater than that. This promise was not a measure barely prepared only after they had failed, but a word that the Lord gave first while knowing their weakness.

In the word that He would go to Galilee ahead of them, there is grace that lets us know that the initiative lies with the Lord. He did not say that He would meet the disciples only if they corrected all their failures and found Him. The risen Lord goes

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first. Our hope, too, does not begin only after we have fixed all our shortcomings. When we believe in the salvation the Lord accomplished first and the promise He gave, even we who are weak can rely on that grace and walk the path of faith again.

The Lord's word, more certain than Peter's bold claim

Peter said that even if all the others forsook Him, he would not. Comparing himself with the other disciples, he was confident of his own loyalty. However, Jesus spoke specifically, saying, *"Today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times" (Mark 14:30)*. Peter said even more vehemently that even if he had to die, he would not deny Him, and the other disciples also said the same thing. Even though the force of their words grew stronger, the reality that the Lord knew did not change.

We, too, make such bold claims. Looking at the failures of others, we think that we will be different from them. However, holding firmly to our own resolve and believing the Lord's word are not the same. If we believe the Lord's word, we must also accept the warnings that let us know our weakness. Rather than claiming that we are sufficient on our own, we must ask for help before the word. A heart that loves the Lord cannot be a reason to exaggerate one's own ability.

Peter's words contain a comparison: that he was better than the other disciples. That is, even if all forsook Him, he would not. People sometimes come to trust the zeal they have even more while looking at the weaknesses of others. However, having made a greater resolution than others does not mean that one knows all about one's own flesh. Rather, because of such a

comparing heart, one may lose the room to hear the warning the Lord gives. When we see the failure of others, we must not conclude that we are safe, but must rely on the word together.

Jesus spoke of Peter's denial as a specific event of that very night. It was not merely a possibility that might perhaps happen in the distant future. Yet Peter spoke even more vehemently, saying, *"If I have to die with You, I will not deny You" (Mark 14:31)*. The more specifically the Lord let him know, the more strongly he asserted his own resolve. We, too, may defend ourselves with greater promises when we hear a word that makes our hearts uncomfortable. What is needed then is not strong expressions but an attitude of listening to why the Lord spoke in that way.

The other disciples also said the same thing. The fact that several people made the same resolution did not keep that resolution from collapsing. Encouraging one another within the community is precious, but we cannot overcome temptation merely by making bold claims together. Rather than only telling one another that we can do it, we must urge one another to seek the Lord's word and help together. Building up together a zeal that relies on our own ability is different from learning together a faith that relies on the Lord.

What gives us life is the salvation the Lord accomplished

Jesus did not begin salvation after confirming our loyalty. To give life to us, who were to perish because of sin, He said, *"Permit it to be so now" (Matthew 3:15)*, received baptism from John, and bore the sin of the whole world once and for all. The sins we will commit throughout our lives are also included in

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that sin. The Lord, who bore that sin, shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and He rose again from death. We believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins. If the basis of salvation had been our own unchanging loyalty, no one could have been at ease.

Even after being saved, if we look more at our own loyalty than at the Lord's love, our hearts are easily shaken. On days when we think we served well, we may judge others, and on days when we fail, we may feel that there is no hope for us. However, the basis of salvation does not lie in what we are like on any given day, but in the Lord, who bore our sins and received the judgment. If we first know that love, we will not boast even on days when we did well, and on days when we fail, we can seek grace instead of making excuses for ourselves.

A heart that loves the Lord must therefore show itself in an attitude of learning His word. We cannot say that we love the Lord while accepting only the words that fit our own thoughts. In particular, a word that lets us know our weakness is given not to tear us down but to make us rely on the Lord even more. Our learning, praying, and receiving help from other saints is not a sign that we lack faith. It is the way of relying on grace, knowing that we cannot stand by our own strength alone.

Saints who remember the promise of Galilee do not make failure the final word even when they deal with other people. Wrongs must be corrected, but saints must also let that person know the Savior on whom he must rely. The most precious thing we can do to help one another is not to press each other to prove their own ability again, but to preach the gospel so that they may believe in the salvation of the Lord, who first gave us life. Within that grace, a new walk of service can also begin.

A person who knows this grace does not take wrongdoing lightly, because he knows the judgment the Lord received for his sins. At the same time, he does not become bound only to his failed self and forget the Lord's promise. In today's passage, the Lord spoke of both the scattering of the disciples and His own resurrection. We, too, must know ourselves rightly and rely on the Lord more. Rather than multiplying bold claims, let us listen to the word, and rather than in our own resolve, let us believe in the Lord, who promised, *"But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee" (Mark 14:28)*. Let us place our hope in the salvation that He, who knows our weakness, accomplished to the end. ✉

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Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

The prayer in Gethsemane led to obedience for sinners

< Mark 14:32–42 >

"Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.' He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.' Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. Then He came the third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.'"

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The Lord, who prayed while exceedingly troubled

Having come to Gethsemane, Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him. Greatly troubled and sorrowful, the Lord said, *"My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death" (Mark 14:34)*. This tells us that the suffering of the Cross was not a play put on for outward show. The Lord, who came in a human body, actually went through the pain He was about to suffer. We must not think that because the Lord is the Son of God, He must also have felt the pain lightly.

Jesus fell on the ground and asked that this hour might pass. Then He prayed, *"Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:36)*. It was not because He did not know the suffering that He obeyed; rather, though He knew its weight, He gave Himself for the salvation that the Father would accomplish. When we read this prayer, we come to think about how deep a path of love the path was by which Jesus gives us life.

The Lord told the disciples to stay here and watch. While the Lord prayed, they, too, had a reason to stay awake. However, it was not that the disciples would share in receiving the judgment for sin that the Lord would bear. Though they could stay by the Lord's side and pray together with Him, they could not take His place in the work of salvation. When we know this difference, as we look at the Lord's lonely prayer, we will not think merely of the regret that the disciples could not help Him. The work of giving life to sinners was the work that the Lord Himself undertook.

The confession that all things are possible for the Father and the prayer to follow the Father's will go together. Believing in His power is different from an attitude that demands that things

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must change in the way we want. Even while asking that the cup be taken away, the Lord put the Father's will first. Prayer is not hiding one's own wish, nor, at the same time, is it setting up one's own wish as the final command. It is telling the Father what is in one's heart and relying on His will.

The record that the Lord prayed again with the same words is also precious. He did not say that, since He had prayed once, there should be no more anguish of heart. We may think that if we pray again and again about a difficult matter, it means we lack faith. However, the Lord laid the same words before the Father again. We, too, can pray again and again, not to press for an answer but to ask for help and to follow the Father's will. We must not give up even the path of prayer just because anguish of heart remains.

The suffering He received because He bore our sins

Before coming to Gethsemane, the Lord had already borne the sin of the whole world once and for all as He received baptism from John. The sins we commit throughout our lives are all included in that sin of the world, without a single one missing. As the One who had borne sin in that way, Jesus had the path of the Cross before Him. It was we who had to receive the judgment for sin, but because the Lord bore that sin, He shed His blood and died in our place. The Lord rose again from death, and we receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Therefore, if, as we look at the Lord praying in Gethsemane, we try only to learn a way of enduring hardship, we cannot fully understand the meaning of that love. The Lord went to receive

the judgment for sin for us. It is not that we contribute to that salvation by enduring our own pain well. First, we must believe that our sins, too, are included in the sin the Lord bore. Because we are people who have received that grace, we can pray, relying on the Father's will even in the midst of hardship.

The fact that He bore our sins reveals the weight of this prayer. The judgment for sin was not merely a matter of being distressed in heart. Since the word says, *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23),* it was the work of the Lord receiving in our place that death which we should have received. The Lord actually passed through suffering in order to accomplish that work. Therefore, our salvation does not depend on how much we have endured hardships. Nor does the suffering we have endured pay the price of sin. The judgment the Lord received in our place is the basis of salvation.

A saint who knows that grace can pray to live according to the Father's will. If we try to obey first without knowing the love with which the Lord gave us life, God's will may always feel like a demand that takes things away from us and oppresses us. However, when we know the Savior, who bore our sins and gave us life, we can believe and learn His will. This does not mean that we have enough strength in ourselves to obey. It means asking the Lord, who loved us, for that strength too, and following Him step by step.

Do not trust only the willingness of your heart, but pray

When Jesus returned, the disciples were sleeping. Even Peter, who a little earlier had said that he would not deny the Lord even if he had to die, could not stay awake for one hour. The Lord

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said, *"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38)*. He did not deny the disciples' good intentions, but let them know that they could not overcome temptation by those intentions alone.

We, too, often find that our desire to do something and our strength to actually carry it through are different. Even if we want to serve the gospel, when difficulties come, we may think only of our own circumstances and draw back. Therefore, it is not the time to boast of our own resolve, but the time to ask the Lord for help. Prayer is not showing God our ability, but acknowledging our weakness and relying on the Lord's word and help.

It says that when the disciples fell asleep again, they did not know what to answer. This is different from the way they had spoken so confidently before. Their tired flesh did not follow their own words. Through such things, we learn that although we need not ignore the willingness of our hearts, we cannot trust it absolutely either. If we have good intentions, we must actually pray and also examine our lives so that we can carry out those intentions. Not all preparation is finished merely by a resolution made in words.

Even when we hear the exhortation to watch and pray, we must rightly understand the Lord's will. It is not a word telling us to count the hours of sleep we have given up and boast of our faith. It means to cast off the attitude of trusting in one's own strength and seeking no help at all even though temptation has come near. We must know our weakness, keep the word close, and open our hearts to the Lord. When other saints become weak, too, rather than simply driving them into a corner by saying that their will is weak, what is needed is the help of praying together and sharing the actual labor.

Having finished praying, the Lord said that the hour had come, and said, *"Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand" (Mark 14:42)*. Even though the disciples were not ready, the Lord knew the path He would go. Knowing that the betrayer had come near, He went forward from that place onto the path of accomplishing salvation. Through this, we see that the end of prayer does not lie merely in obtaining comfort of heart, but continues all the way to actually taking steps by relying on the Father's will. We who have received grace must also ask for help so that we may follow, in today's choices, the word we have learned in prayer.

Let us believe in the Lord, who walked that path for us. A person who relies on His salvation does not overestimate his own strength in the face of temptation. Let us give our hearts to the Lord, who accepted the Father's will in Gethsemane, and let us also fulfill the work entrusted to us today, asking for His help. ✉

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Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

Even on the night when all fled, the word of salvation is fulfilled

< Mark 14:43–50 >

"And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, 'Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him away safely.' As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, 'Rabbi, Rabbi!' and kissed Him. Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him. And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.' Then they all forsook Him and fled."

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People who betray with a kiss and seize with swords

While Jesus was speaking to His disciples, Judas came with a multitude. The people sent by the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders carried swords and clubs. Judas had set a kiss as the signal for the arrest, and the Bible records, *"As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, 'Rabbi, Rabbi!' and kissed Him" (Mark 14:45)*. An act that expresses intimacy became a means of betrayal. We cannot know a person's heart toward the Lord by the courtesy he shows outwardly alone.

When the multitude seized Jesus, one man who was standing nearby drew a sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. It was a moment when it seemed as though the way for the disciples to protect the Lord lay in the sword. However, the path of salvation the Lord walked was not one to be accomplished by preventing His arrest through armed force. At that very scene, the Lord spoke of the Scriptures being fulfilled. He set His eyes on the word of God rather than on the power that people wield.

The text again calls Judas one of the twelve. Although he is with the multitude that came to seize the Lord, the place where he originally belonged was among Jesus' disciples. When we know this relationship, the betrayal of the kiss becomes all the clearer. One cannot guard one's own heart merely by the record of having heard the word up close and followed Him. We must examine whether the title by which we call the Lord and the path we actually choose agree with each other. It is the heart of man that could hand Him over to His enemies even while calling Him Teacher.

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Judas had told them in advance, *"Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him away safely" (Mark 14:44)*. The act of drawing near to Jesus and greeting Him was not a chance meeting but a planned signal. A person can behave courteously on the outside while harboring another purpose inside. We, too, must not concern ourselves only with appearing to be people who serve the gospel, but must look back on what we actually want. If, while speaking words that exalt the Lord, we seek only to gain our own profit in His name, our words and our hearts are moving in different directions.

The man who drew his sword took active steps at that moment. He may look braver than others. However, an action is not in accordance with the Lord's will merely because it is an active one. Jesus did not command a fight to prevent the arrest. In the face of difficulties, we easily think that quickly doing something is faith, but we must first also examine whether that action follows the will that the Lord is accomplishing. Zeal cannot replace the word, and powerful means cannot become the power of salvation either.

Treating the One who taught daily like a robber

Jesus said, *"Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me?" (Mark 14:48)*. These were people who had not seized Him when He taught daily in the temple. Their actions did not fit the Lord's actual work. It was not a scene of arresting Him by revealing the fact that He had committed a crime, but a scene of dragging Him away by force after having already decided to seize Him. However, Jesus did not regard His mission as ended by this, but accepted this arrest as the way of fulfilling the Scriptures.

The word that He taught daily in the temple reveals that Jesus' work was not a hidden crime. They had the opportunity to hear the Lord's word, but they did not seek the truth before it. Now they seize Him with a multitude carrying swords and clubs. A heart that does not accept the word sometimes tries to show that it is right with even greater force. However, the fact that many people are together and have powerful means does not make their actions righteous.

What Jesus said, *"But the Scriptures must be fulfilled" (Mark 14:49)*, tells us that there is a will greater than the situation at hand. Although people seized the Lord, they did not become the masters of salvation. The Lord was going the way He had already spoken of. When we read this scene, if we fix our eyes only on the meticulous plan of the wicked people, we will miss the Lord's work. We should see their wickedness correctly, yet we must see Jesus, who accomplishes the salvation that gives life to sinners even in the midst of it.

Our salvation, too, was not accomplished by people's swords or the disciples' courage. At the age of thirty, Jesus received baptism from John and had the sin of the whole world transferred to Him once and for all. The Lord, who bore even the sins that each one of us commits throughout our lives, shed His blood and died on the Cross because of those sins and received the judgment for sin in our place. And He rose again from death. By believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we receive the remission of sins. The Jesus who was seized is not One who was overpowered by sinners and failed at salvation, but the One who gave Himself up to save sinners.

The fact that the Scriptures were fulfilled does not turn Judas' betrayal and the injustice of the multitude into good things. Their wickedness is revealed as it is, and even in the midst of that wickedness, the salvation that the Lord accomplishes does not

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stop. The One in whom we believe is not One who declares even people's wicked choices righteous, but the Savior who judges sin, yet bore that judgment Himself and gave life to sinners.

This fact does not mean that we should simply accept every injustice we experience as right. The Lord's atonement is not the same thing as the general endurance entrusted to us. Nor can we wash away people's sins in their place if we endure and suffer unjust things. We must distinguish between the salvation that the Lord alone accomplished and what saints shoulder in their daily lives. We can avoid calling evil good and yet also not think that even the Lord's salvation has collapsed because of an evil situation.

Faith that relies on the Savior also tells us what we must guard in the midst of difficulties. If we spend all our strength preventing our own reputation and plans from collapsing, we can forget the very gospel we must preach. However, if the fact that the Lord has resolved our sins is clear, we will not make our own safety alone our final goal. Even while seeking the help we need and acting wisely, we must guard our hearts so that we do not use words denying the Lord as a means of protecting ourselves.

Look to the Lord in the place where all fled

The text ends with the words, *"Then they all forsook Him and fled" (Mark 14:50)*. These were people who, just a little while before, had said they would be with Him even in death. Neither the zeal of the moment the sword was raised nor the resolutions made with their mouths enabled them to stand to the end. Seeing this scene, we cannot point out only the weakness of others. This is because it is our flesh that can act by following fear rather than faith when its own safety is threatened.

Before the word that all fled, there is no room left to compare who was the stronger disciple. Those who had made confident assurances together also revealed the same weakness. Therefore, we must not show off our own faith while seeing the failures of other saints. If we know the weakness of people, we can help one another by letting one another hear the word and by praying. Helping one another remember the grace that the Lord has bestowed is the way to build one another up. Words that boast of one's own strength may be of no help at all in the face of the next temptation.

Even in that place, the Lord went the way of salvation. Therefore, our hope does not lie in how strong we are in a crisis, but in Jesus, who accomplished salvation to the end for us. Saints who believe in that grace must not be overconfident that they will protect the Lord by their own zeal, but must rely on the word. Even in the face of difficulties, let us seek help from the Lord and hold our place as those who testify of the gospel that the Lord accomplished. ✉

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Sermon 11 by Paul C. Jong

The steps of following the Lord are not sustained by our own courage

< Mark 14:51–52 >

“Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.”

The young man who was following also fled when he was seized

The preceding verse records, *“Then they all forsook Him and fled” (Mark 14:50)*. After that comes today’s short scene. A young man was following Jesus with a linen cloth wrapped around his naked body. When people seized him, the young man left the linen cloth behind and fled naked. The one who had been following, when it came to the point that he himself was being seized, cast away even what he had been wearing and ran away.

The Bible does not tell us the young man’s name or the circumstances by which he came to be there. Therefore, rather than stopping at imagining who he might have been, we must look at the recorded actions. Even after the disciples fled, someone was still following Jesus, but that person also ran away

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in the face of the crisis. This short record shows how afraid people were on the night Jesus was seized. Even the steps that had been following the Lord became steps that fled to save one's own body at the moment of being seized.

The young man was not someone who had been far away from the beginning. The Bible says that he was seized as he *"followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body" (Mark 14:51)*. But for him, following and sharing in the danger of being seized were not the same thing. At the moment the multitude seized him, that difference was revealed. We must not think that, merely because we have been near the Lord, we can keep our faith in any situation. Even while hearing the word, we must examine whether we are trusting in our own strength or relying on the Lord, who holds us.

The record, *"He left the linen cloth and fled from them naked" (Mark 14:52)*, shows the urgency of that moment. Getting out of that place was more urgent than having time to gather his clothes or to tidy his appearance before people. There is no need to attach to this action a hidden meaning that the Bible does not speak of. Just by looking at the recorded picture, we can know how hastily fear moves a person. At the moment one feels the danger so greatly as to let go even of what one usually considered important, a person's resolve can easily be shaken.

Yet we cannot judge the young man's whole life by this one scene either. Here the Bible does not say what kind of person he became afterward. What we know is the fact that on that night he followed and then fled. We must be wary of the attitude that, on seeing another person's single failure, thinks it knows everything about that person. We should discern wrong actions, but we cannot condemn even the heart and the future that the Bible has not revealed.

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We, too, easily say when things are calm that we will live by faith. But when loss or danger draws near before our eyes, the heart that wants to protect itself arises first. Before regarding the young man's behavior as strange or mocking it, we should look back at what our flesh fears. We cannot guarantee our walk of faith by our own courage alone. Herein lies the reason we must rely on the Lord, hear His word, and seek help.

Salvation accomplished even in the place that people had left

People fled, but Jesus continued on the way of salvation. The Lord was able to save us not because the people who remained at His side protected Him to the end, but because the Lord Himself accomplished God's will toward sinners. When we know that salvation, we do not despair at confirming people's weakness, but come to look to Jesus.

In the preceding scene the disciples forsook Jesus and fled, and now the young man who had been following behind also left. People's actions are emptying the place beside the Lord one after another. It was just as the Lord had said beforehand, *"I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered" (Mark 14:27)*. However, the record of the Gospel of Mark does not end by following them, but continues by following Jesus, who was seized, and lets us see where salvation is accomplished. Even though people's loyalty collapsed, the will of salvation that God had determined did not collapse with it. This is because the Lord is the One who would accomplish that will.

We often think that the Lord can save us only if we do well to the end. If we think that way, every time we find weakness in ourselves, we regard even our salvation as uncertain. However,

if we place the beginning and the completion of salvation on our own actions, we cannot correctly understand what the Lord has done. Because the salvation that will give life to sinners cannot come from sinners themselves, only when the Lord first takes our sins upon Himself and pays the price of those sins for us can we obtain the remission of sins.

Jesus *"was baptized by John in the Jordan" (Mark 1:9)* and bore the sin of the whole world on His own body once and for all. All the sins of our lifetime were also passed on to the Lord at that time. Because He bore those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and He rose again from death. The reason we receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit is that the Lord has accomplished all of this salvation for us. The power that saves us is not in us, who are weak, but in Jesus Christ.

Believing in this grace does not mean that we can call fleeing out of fear right. Rather, as people who know themselves well, we must seek the Lord's help and keep our place of faith. Even when we see the weakness of other saints, rather than exalting ourselves as being different, we must help them to rely on the word together with us. This is because all of us are people who live by the salvation that the Lord has accomplished.

Clearly knowing the basis of salvation in this way is also important in our actual life of faith. A person who trusts only in his own boldness can easily be disappointed with a weak saint or rebuke him when he sees him. On the other hand, a person who knows that his own salvation, too, is entirely grace comes to think about what word that saint needs. This does not mean that we should cover up wrongdoing. It means that we should lead him to turn from his wrongdoing and rely on the Lord, yet

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not forget that the power to raise a person up again lies in the gospel.

Pretending to be fine by oneself when fear arises is not the right solution either. We must lay our weaknesses before the Lord, share the word together in the church, and carry out the tasks entrusted to us. If difficulties arise while we serve the gospel, we can discuss those circumstances together. Rather than trying to prove that we are people who will overcome every danger, faithfully doing the work we must carry out today by relying on the Lord's grace is the walk of faith.

Also, we must not read this scene and conclude that it does not matter at all if we fail. The fact that the Lord went the way of salvation to the end does not become a reason for us to be indifferent. Rather, because we know that love toward us, we come to treasure the Lord's work. A person whose heart had been captured only by protecting his own body can now also care about others hearing the gospel. The grace of salvation changes the concerns and choices of our lives.

The Bible does not relate the rest of this young man's story, but it clearly relates what Jesus, who was seized, accomplished afterward. The basis of the salvation we are to believe in also lies in His work. Both on days when we feel our hearts are strong and on days when our weakness is revealed and we are ashamed, let us rely on the Lord, who went the way of salvation to the end in the place everyone had left. Relying on that grace, let us hear the word again today and walk the path of serving the gospel. ✉

Sermon 12 by Paul C. Jong

The One whom people condemned is the Christ, who bore our sins

< Mark 14:53–65 >

"And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree. Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, 'We heard Him say, "I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands."' But not even then did their testimony agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, 'Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?' But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' Jesus said, 'I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you

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think?' And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, 'Prophesy!' And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands."

Testimony sought after the conclusion had already been set

The Bible records, "*The chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death" (Mark 14:55)*. It was not a gathering assembled to find out the truth. The purpose of killing Him had been set, but they did not obtain the testimony to support that purpose. Many people bore false witness, but their testimonies did not agree with one another. The testimonies of the people who claimed to have heard Him say that He would destroy the temple and build it again in three days did not agree either. The text records those words as false testimony, but the word the Lord had spoken, that if they destroyed this temple He would raise it up in three days, was a word spoken about the resurrection of His own body, and the witnesses twisted it and reported it as though the Lord had said that He would destroy the temple.

In the council, the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes had gathered. The fact that many people and those holding offices of authority were in one place does not make their judgment truthful. What the text reveals again and again is the fact that the testimonies did not agree with one another. Even if there are many who testify, if their words are not true, they cannot prove any sin of the Lord. That is the reason we must first examine whether testimony is true rather than looking at the number and status of people.

The words about the temple must also be read by the same principle. People claim to have heard Jesus' words, but the Bible introduces them as those who bore false witness. Therefore, rather than teaching the words they twisted and reported as though they were Jesus' own words, we must see how the word the Lord spoke concerning the resurrection of His own body was distorted. When we read the Bible, we must also see who is speaking to whom and for what purpose. This is because not every word written in the text is a claim that God has acknowledged as right.

Their purpose did not lie in knowing and believing in Jesus, but in obtaining the words needed to kill Jesus. Even when hearing the same word of the Bible, if we hear it with a heart that wants to defend our own thoughts, we end up pushing away the meaning of the word. We, too, must not pick out and hold on to just a few verses to prove that we are right, but must examine the context before and after together to see what the Lord is revealing. To learn before the word means to be ready to correct our judgment when our thinking is wrong.

When a person puts his own conclusion first, it is difficult for him to accept the truth even when he hears it. Religious positions and the agreement of many people cannot make such a heart right. When we approach the word, we must examine whether we are seeking only grounds to justify the thoughts we have already settled on. To know who the Lord is, we must hear the word He Himself spoke.

Jesus, who clearly revealed that He is the Christ

Jesus, who had kept silent in the face of the false testimony, clearly answered the question of whether He was the Christ, the

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Son of the Blessed, saying, *"I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62)*. Before the people who were judging only by His bound appearance at that moment, the Lord spoke of His true identity and of the power that would be revealed in the future.

Look at the Lord's silence and His answer together. Jesus did not aim at refuting the lies one by one and being released from that place. However, when faced with the question asking who He was, He did not hide the truth. Nor did He describe Himself by another name in order to avoid people opposing Him more fiercely because of that answer. Even in the humbling of the Lord, who was going the way of salvation, the truth that He is the Son of God was clear.

That He spoke of the right hand of the Power and the clouds of heaven reveals that what was then before their eyes was not all there is to the Lord. Though people seem to be judging the Lord, He is the One who will come in power in the future. If we judge the Lord's authority only by the forces and circumstances of the moment, we cannot accept this word. Instead of drawing a conclusion while looking only at His bound appearance, faith accepts the identity and the promise that He has revealed. The suffering Savior and the Lord who will come in glory are the same One.

When the high priest heard that answer, he tore his clothes and said that it was blasphemy, and the Bible records, *"They all condemned Him to be deserving of death" (Mark 14:64)*. However, their verdict cannot make Jesus a false Christ. That verdict was nothing more than people rejecting the Son whom God had sent. The Lord is not One who becomes the Son of God by people's recognition. When we believe in Him, too, we must

follow the word in which the Lord revealed Himself rather than the world's evaluation.

He stood in the place of condemnation and gave life to sinners

In this trial, no sin of Jesus' own was revealed. Nevertheless, the Lord walked the way of being condemned like a sinner. To know the reason, we must know what the Lord had accomplished beforehand. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. All the sins we commit throughout our lifetimes were also passed on to the Lord at that time. As the One who bore those sins, He was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. The basis on which we who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins is this very salvation that the Lord accomplished.

When we know the relationship between the baptism and the Cross, how this suffering is connected to us also becomes clear. Merely by grieving over the fact that Jesus died unjustly, one cannot know the basis of the remission of sins. We must know whose sins the Lord took upon Himself and in whose place He was judged. Because the Son of God, who bore our sins through the baptism, paid the price of those sins, those who believe in this salvation can have the faith that their sins have been resolved.

The One in whom we believe is not One who stops at being the example of a man who endured suffering well, but Jesus Christ, who actually saved sinners. If we resolve to imitate the Lord's patience but do not believe in the remission of sins He accomplished, we miss the center of the gospel. It is a person

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who has first become righteous by that grace who lives learning the Lord's heart. We do not endure suffering in order to be saved; rather, because we know the grace of salvation we have received, we endure even the difficulties we face because of the gospel by relying on the Lord.

Therefore, we must distinguish between people's unjust condemnation and the Lord's atonement. The Lord did not die because people's false testimonies were right. Even in the place where their wickedness was revealed, the Lord went the way of salvation as the Savior who bore our sins. The Lord, who is greater than the verdict of the world, humbled Himself for sinners.

This fact also holds our hearts when we preach the gospel. The salvation that the Lord accomplished does not change just because someone mocks it or many people do not accept it. Yet there is also no need to speak harshly with a heart that wants to defeat the other person. What we must do is preach the Lord's work accurately and help that person hear the word. When we do not make people's reactions the standard for measuring the truth of salvation, we can continue that work without being swept away by discouragement or boasting.

People mocked Him: *"Some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him" (Mark 14:65)*. They had no heart to hear the word the Lord had spoken. But saints must not forget who the Lord is even in the midst of that mockery. The One who saved us is the Christ, who is at the right hand of the Power and will come again. Let us believe in His grace and not be ashamed of the gospel because of the world's contempt. Rather than being swept away by people's evaluations, let us clearly testify of the Son of God, who revealed Himself, saying, "I am." ✉

Sermon 13 by Paul C. Jong

The promise of salvation given even though He knew that Peter would deny Him three times

< Mark 14:66–72 >

"Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, 'You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.' But he denied it, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you are saying.' And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, 'This is one of them.' But he denied it again. And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, 'Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.' Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know this Man of whom you speak!' A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' And when he thought about it, he wept."

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The words “I do not know” led to three denials

When Jesus was being interrogated, Peter was in the courtyard below. One of the servant girls of the high priest, that is, a maidservant, saw Peter warming himself at the fire and said that he had been with Jesus of Nazareth. Peter denied it, saying, *“I neither know nor understand what you are saying” (Mark 14:68)*. The man who had confidently declared that, even if he had to die with the Lord, he would not deny Him tried to avoid having his relationship revealed.

Peter was a man who had followed at a distance and come all the way into the courtyard of the high priest’s house. But when he heard there the question of whether he had been with Jesus, he could not acknowledge his relationship. Between the fact that he had followed the Lord all the way there and the act of confessing the Lord before people lay his fear. How close he had been before and how great a resolution he had made could not take the place of faith in that moment. This is why we cannot vouch for who we are today on the basis of our past experiences of faith alone.

What the maidservant said first was that Peter had been with Jesus. That relationship, which was a fact for Peter, now became something he wanted to avoid. Even a person who treasured being with the Lord may try to hide that relationship if he fears that it will turn to his disadvantage. We must look back on whether we say that we believe the gospel only in comfortable places. When receiving a good evaluation from people right away dominates our hearts, we end up avoiding, of our own accord, the opportunities to speak of the grace we received from the Lord.

Even after he went out to the porch, Peter’s denial did not stop. When the maidservant spoke again to those standing by, he

denied it again. A little later, when even other people said that he was one of Jesus' company, he *"began to curse and swear, 'I do not know this Man of whom you speak!'" (Mark 14:71)*. In trying to protect his first lie, he denied the Lord with stronger words. When we, too, try to protect ourselves without acknowledging our wrongs, our words and actions can lead to deeper wrongs.

In response to the repeated questions, Peter's words became stronger, but they did not become that much more truthful. Even with curses and oaths added, the fact that he had been with Jesus did not disappear. From this scene we learn that strong words do not become evidence of faith. What matters is not how forcefully we state our own assertions but whether those words agree with the word of the Lord. Once we begin to spend our strength defending our wrongs, we end up rejecting even the opportunity to acknowledge the truth.

Therefore, we must not take a lie lightly because it is a small one. Acknowledging one's wrong from the beginning may be shameful, but it is more right than the path of making up bigger words to hide it. Saints were not called in order to appear as perfect people to others; rather, they live as people who have received the remission of sins by the grace of the Lord. When we come to know that what we are and the word differ, the attitude of faith is to return before the word rather than to defend our own words.

The word of the Lord that the rooster's crow brought to mind

"A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster

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crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' And when he thought about it, he wept" (Mark 14:72). The word of the Lord was fulfilled exactly. The Lord knew him more accurately than he knew himself. He could no longer hold on even to his own words, with which he had strongly objected in the face of the Lord's warning.

The word reveals our true selves. It tears down the heart that insisted on how strong our will is, and makes us know that we are people who need help. This is not a revealing meant to lock us up in despair, but a revealing that makes us turn from self-confidence and rely on the grace of the Lord. Jesus, who had let Peter know of the scattering to come, had also already given the promise, *"After I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee" (Mark 14:28)*. Together with this, we must remember the fact that the Lord, who knew of his failure, also spoke of a meeting to come.

It was not by the rooster's crow alone that Peter came to see himself. Because he heard that sound and remembered the word the Lord had spoken, he could see his own actions rightly. This is different from merely having feelings of unease or shame arise. When the word and his own actions came to mind together, the fact that the Lord's warning had been right and his own confident declaration had been wrong was revealed. We, too, need a standard by which to judge ourselves. Rather than a heart that considers itself all right by comparing itself with others, the word of the Lord tells us our actual condition accurately.

The Lord did not make Peter His disciple without knowing what kind of person he was. Although He knew of his denial beforehand, He promised a meeting after His resurrection. If we separate these two words, we may either hear only the warning and despair, or hold on only to the promise and take our wrongs lightly. Before the warning we must humble ourselves, and

before the promise we must believe in the Lord. Because it is the grace given by the Lord who knows us, we can come to Him even after our weakness has been revealed.

Put your hope not in tears but in the Lord's salvation

Peter wept because he realized what he had done. But the fact that tears have increased does not mean that the price of that sin is paid. We must distinguish between sorrow over sin and the salvation that removed sin. We, too, may deeply regret our wrongs, but we cannot make ourselves righteous by that regret. The One in whom we must believe for the remission of sins is Jesus, who bore sin in our place.

Jesus had all the sins of the whole world passed on to Him at one time as He received baptism from John. Included in them are also the sins of our entire lives, the sins of having lied out of fear and having been ashamed of the Lord. Because the Lord bore those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive. This was the fulfillment of the prophecy that said, *"He was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5)*. And He rose again from death. By believing this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we receive the remission of sins. The Lord's salvation does not depend on the amount of our tears or on the size of a resolution we have newly made.

There are people who try to soothe their hearts with yet another resolution every time they think of their own sins. Their saying that they will do well this time may be sincere, but that resolution cannot remove the sins already committed. If we look for the solution to sin within ourselves, we return to the same

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fear every time our resolution wavers. To believe in the salvation the Lord accomplished is to turn our eyes to the One who solved the problem of sin. It is to accept the work of the Lord, who bore our sins, instead of looking for words to defend ourselves.

That faith also makes clear our responsibility to correct the wrongs in our lives. If we have caused someone difficulty with a lie, we must reveal the facts and set things right. If we have avoided serving because we were ashamed of the gospel, we must acknowledge that heart and take part again in the work entrusted to us. Such actions are not the price paid to buy the remission of sins, but the response of a person who treasures the grace he has already received. A heart that used to hide its own failures gains the strength to turn back honestly when it believes in the Lord's love.

We who believe in that grace do not need to hide our wrongs. We must acknowledge our sins before the word and turn back. Also, we must not keep holding on to our own failures and deny the salvation the Lord accomplished. Let us come down from the place where we boasted of our own loyalty and give thanks to the Lord, who knew us and still saved us. The strength for the saints to live by faith again comes not from self-justification but from the salvation the Lord accomplished and from His word. ✉

Sermon 14 by Paul C. Jong

People calculated the price, and the Lord gave Himself without price

< Mark 14:1–72 >

“After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death. But they said, ‘Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people.’ And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, ‘Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.’ And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.’ Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and

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promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray Him. Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, 'Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?' And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, 'Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, "The Teacher says, 'Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'" Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us.' So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover. In the evening He came with the twelve. Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me.' And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, 'Is it I?' And another said, 'Is it I?' He answered and said to them, 'It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.' And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.' And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: "I will strike the

Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered." But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.' Peter said to Him, 'Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.' Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' But he spoke more vehemently, 'If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!' And they all said likewise. Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.' He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.' Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. Then He came the third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.' And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, 'Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him

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away safely.' As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, 'Rabbi, Rabbi!' and kissed Him. Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him. And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.' Then they all forsook Him and fled. Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked. And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree. Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, 'We heard Him say, "I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands."' But not even then did their testimony agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, 'Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?' But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' Jesus said, 'I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'What further need do we have of

witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?' And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, 'Prophesy!' And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands. Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, 'You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.' But he denied it, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you are saying.' And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, 'This is one of them.' But he denied it again. And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, 'Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.' Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know this Man of whom you speak!' A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' And when he thought about it, he wept."

Three prices set within one chapter

In Mark chapter 14, words about price come up again and again. Concerning the fragrant oil that a woman poured on Jesus, people were indignant, saying, *"It might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor" (Mark 14:5)*. When Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests to betray Jesus, they were glad and promised to give him money. And at the Passover table, Jesus, giving the bread and the cup, spoke of His own body and blood, which He was giving for many. Within the

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same chapter, people calculated a price for the Lord, and the Lord gave Himself without receiving any price. On which of these sides are we standing?

The difference between the woman who poured the fragrant oil and the people who criticized what she did did not lie in whether or not they knew how to count money. The people knew the price of the fragrant oil, and the woman knew who the One receiving that fragrant oil was, why He had received baptism, and why He was going to die on the Cross. Concerning what she did, Jesus said, *"She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial" (Mark 14:8)*. That woman treasured the Savior, who was soon going to die, more than the most precious thing. One cannot know the meaning of this act by knowing only how expensive the fragrant oil was. We must first know for whom Jesus intended to accomplish what work.

Judas stood on the opposite side. A man who, as one of the twelve, had listened to the word at the Lord's side agreed to receive a price for handing the Lord over and looked for an opportunity. The chief priests and the scribes had been seeking a way to seize Jesus and kill Him even before that, and when they heard Judas' words, they were glad. Paying the price to kill the Lord was a joyful thing to them. Between the people who sought to get rid of the Lord and the man who exchanged the Lord for money lies the service of one woman. The heart that treasures the Lord and the heart that reckons the Lord in terms of price parted ways in one place.

The Lord, who gave His body and blood without receiving a price

That night, Jesus broke bread and gave it to the disciples, saying that this was His body, and gave them the cup, saying that it was the blood of the covenant shed for many. His calling it the blood of the covenant means that it is the blood by which He fulfills exactly what He promised in the Old Testament, that He would send the Seed of the woman and save sinners. With death before Him, the Lord did not demand to receive anything. The hand that broke the bread and gave it and the hand that passed the cup were not hands seeking to receive a price, but hands giving without price. He gave His own body and blood. The 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)*. Our remission of sins is accomplished not by what we have given to Jesus, but by what Jesus gave for sinners.

That body is the body of the One who bore our sins. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus bore all the sins of the world on His own body once and for all and became the One who would pay the price of those sins. The sins we commit throughout our lives are also included in that sin of the world. Because He bore that sin, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we should have received, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. Those who believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins. Without demanding a price from us, the Savior Himself paid the full price of sin.

Only when we know this grace does our giving also begin rightly. If we think about what we must give for the Lord to wash away our sins, giving becomes a fearful transaction. But if we believe in the salvation that has already washed away all our sins,

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we can give with thanksgiving. The reason we give precious things is not to buy salvation, but because we know that Jesus, who brought us to life, is truly precious and that His gospel brings others to life as well. What must be clear before the amount we give is the object of this faith.

The Lord knew that the one who would betray Him was at the same table. He also said beforehand that the disciples would all be scattered and that Peter would deny Him. Knowing all of people's sins and weaknesses in this way, He gave His own body and blood. When we, too, look back on ourselves, we do not have much to boast of in having served the Savior. Yet the grace of salvation was not given on the basis of our boasting. The more we know the love of the One who bore sin, the more we give thanks to the Lord rather than putting forward our own righteousness.

Salvation is not obtained by calculation

The people who criticized the pouring of the fragrant oil, the chief priests who promised money, and Judas, who agreed to receive that money, all made their own calculations. Who the Lord is was not included in those calculations. To them, Jesus was One on whom a price could be set, One who could be sold. But the Lord was not One to be bought and sold, but One who gave Himself for sinners. A person who makes Him an object of calculation does not recognize the salvation He gives without price.

Calculation can also come into our faith. It is thinking that because we have given this much, the Lord must repay us this much, or thinking that because we are this lacking, the Lord must not have remitted our sins. Both are hearts that see salvation as

a transaction. But Jesus did not give His body and blood because He looked to see whether we had anything to give. The work in which He had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and paid the price of those sins on the Cross was already accomplished before we gave anything. Therefore, we must not try to obtain the remission of sins by calculation, but must believe in the salvation given without price just as it is.

That night, the disciples had given nothing to the Lord. Even at the word to watch, they fell asleep and heard the word, *"Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour?" (Mark 14:37)*. And when the Lord was seized, they all forsook Him and fled. Yet the Lord did not ask any price of those disciples, but gave His body and blood first. Seeing the salvation given to people who had given nothing, we, too, must lay down the heart that calculates our own merits.

The life of a person who treasures the Savior most

A person who has received without price does not regard that grace as cheap. The woman who poured the fragrant oil did not give it to buy salvation, but gave it because she treasured the Savior. We, too, stand in the same place. We give our time, effort, and material things not to receive the remission of sins, but because the One who gave us the remission of sins is precious. Whether we have much or little, we need only serve with thanksgiving with what the Lord has allowed us. It is wrong to think that our lives are useless if we lack material things, and it is also wrong to think that because we have given material things, we do not have to set our hearts on the Lord. Because the heart that treasures the Lord is revealed in the order of our lives, even

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while we take care of our families and do the work entrusted to us, we must not lose the direction of serving the gospel.

The salvation received without price must be preached without price. The Lord gave this charge, saying, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19)*. When we preach the gospel, we also do not reckon how well prepared the other person is or how much he can repay. This is because the Lord did not reckon us that way. The remission of sins that Jesus accomplished through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection is a gift given to anyone without price. A person who does not begrudge the time and effort it takes to preach this gospel is a person who truly treasures the Lord.

At the end of chapter 14, Jesus did not leave the way of salvation, even while suffering false testimony and insults and being denied by a disciple. The One who was sold for a price in the eyes of people is, to us, the Savior who paid the price. When we decide what we will treasure, let us not forget this Jesus. People calculated the price, and the Lord gave His body and blood. For those who believe in that grace, the most rewarding thing is to give thanks for the remission of sins they have received and to take part in the Savior's work of salvation. ✉

Sermon 15 by Paul C. Jong

The salvation of Christ that remains in the face of broken vows

< Mark 14:1–72 >

“After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death. But they said, ‘Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people.’ And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, ‘Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.’ And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.’ Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and

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promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray Him. Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, 'Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?' And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, 'Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, "The Teacher says, 'Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'" Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us.' So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover. In the evening He came with the twelve. Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me.' And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, 'Is it I?' And another said, 'Is it I?' He answered and said to them, 'It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.' And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.' And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: "I will strike the

Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered." But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.' Peter said to Him, 'Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.' Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' But he spoke more vehemently, 'If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!' And they all said likewise. Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.' He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.' Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. Then He came the third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.' And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, 'Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him

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witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?' And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, 'Prophesy!' And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands. Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, 'You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.' But he denied it, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you are saying.' And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, 'This is one of them.' But he denied it again. And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, 'Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.' Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know this Man of whom you speak!' A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' And when he thought about it, he wept."

The words that he would die with Him and the three denials

How much can we trust our own hearts? When we say that we love the Lord, it seems that our hearts will not change no matter what difficulty comes. However, in Mark chapter 14, the words the disciples spoke and their actual actions were different. Peter said that even if he had to die with the Lord, he would not deny Him, but that night he said before people that he did not know Jesus. The other disciples also confidently said the same

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together, but when Jesus was arrested, they all forsook Him and fled. This chapter makes us look back on where we should place the basis of our faith.

When Peter made his bold assurance, the Lord had already said that he would deny Him. Because the Lord fully knew the hearts of His disciples, it was never the case that He had expectations of them and was later disappointed. At the very moment Peter was sure of himself, the Lord knew that he would fall. Nor, for that reason, did He forsake him and give up the way of salvation. We must first look at what the Lord knows and what He accomplishes, rather than at how firm a person's will is.

The same problem is revealed in Gethsemane as well. The Lord told His disciples to keep watch, but the Scripture reports, *"And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy" (Mark 14:40)*. The body did not always follow just because the heart was willing. Even a person who had stepped forward saying that he would protect Jesus revealed his weakness in keeping watch with the Lord. If we regard our own resolve as the guarantee of salvation, our faith, too, can only collapse along with it in the face of such failures. We must not build the remission of sins on our changing hearts.

The body and blood He gave first, knowing their weakness

Before the disciples were scattered, the Lord gave them the bread and the cup at the Passover table. *"Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it" (Mark 14:23)*. He did not give them after confirming their loyalty to the end; rather, in a place where there were those who would betray Him, those who would deny Him,

and those who would flee, He spoke of His own body and the blood of the covenant. In this order, it is clearly revealed in whose hands salvation lies. It is not a disciple who accomplishes the remission of sins by offering himself; rather, the Lord accomplishes it by giving Himself up for sinners.

To believe in the body and blood that Jesus gave, we must know how our sins were entrusted to that body. When Jesus received baptism from John, He bore the sins of the whole world on His own body once and for all. The sins of our entire lifetime that we commit from the time we are born until we die are also included in that sin of the world. Because Jesus bore that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins not by the strength of their own vows but by the salvation that Jesus accomplished.

Even the sin of Peter, who said, *"I do not know this Man of whom you speak" (Mark 14:71)*, does not lie outside the sin of the world that Jesus bore. We, too, must not reduce the scope of the sins the Lord washed away when we see the faults revealed after we have been saved. If He had taken on only the sins of the times when we believed well and had left the sins of the days when our faith grew weak, it could not be the complete remission of sins. The Savior knows us more precisely than we know ourselves, and He bore the sins of our entire lifetime. That is why even a person who cannot boast of his own righteousness can believe in His salvation.

Believing this fact does not mean that what was done wrong turns into what is right. Peter's denial of the Lord was clearly a sin, and the disciples' act of forsaking the Lord was not loyalty either. Those who believe the gospel acknowledge their own faults, but they do not create another way of salvation to wash

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away those faults. This is because a resolution made anew or a firmer vow cannot replace the judgment of the Cross. While acknowledging our sins, we need to believe together the fact that the Lord bore them.

Look back on yourself through the word of the Lord

When the rooster crowed the second time, Peter thought about the word Jesus had spoken and wept. The word he remembered was a word he had heard on the night when the Lord gave His body and blood, and the thought by which he had regarded himself as a strong person collapsed before that word. Before that, even after hearing the Lord's warning, he had declared his self-confidence all the more loudly. But only after he had actually denied Him did he realize how accurate the word the Lord had spoken was. We, too, rather than striving to defend our own hearts, must accept what we are like as the word reveals it.

Such self-discovery is not meant for us to remain in despair. Only when we lay down the confidence that we built up without knowing ourselves well can we rely on the Lord, who knows us and saved us. When we try to prove our loyalty with words, it is easy to think that we are better than the other disciples. However, when we stand before the word of the Lord, we know that all of us are people who need grace. Even when we see the weakness of a brother, rather than judging him by putting forward our own bold assurances, we must hold fast to the gospel together.

The vows of the disciples lie between the covenant given at the table and the resurrection that was to take place three days later. After giving His body and blood, the Lord said, *"All of you*

will be made to stumble because of Me this night" (Mark 14:27), and at the end of those words, He said that after He had risen, He would go before the disciples to Galilee. The vows of people collapsed in between, but not one part of the Lord's covenant and promise placed before and after them collapsed. When we read of the weakness of the disciples, if we leave out this word, we will miss the hope that the Lord gave.

If we try to find the basis of our hope in ourselves, we become proud on the days we do well and become discouraged on the days we do wrong. However, our condition on a given day neither accomplishes the salvation of Jesus nor makes it void. The fact that the Lord took on the sins and the fact that He bore the price of those sins do not change according to our emotions. When our assurance of the remission of sins is shaken, we must not try to hold onto our own hearts more tightly, but must look again at what the Savior, who gave His body and blood, has accomplished.

The watchful life of a person who believes in grace

Is it all right to regard lightly the word to watch and pray on the grounds that we rely on the Lord? Rather, because we know our own weakness, we must seek the Lord's help. The disciples heard the word *"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation" (Mark 14:38)*. While they thought that they could overcome sufficiently by their own strength, that word would not have sounded urgent to them. We must acknowledge that we ourselves can fall, give our hearts to the Lord, and follow the word.

The grace of the remission of sins does not become an excuse for removing the responsibilities of life. We must not try to cover

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the place where we have collapsed like Peter with a firmer vow, but must acknowledge our own faults and set them right. If we have neglected the work entrusted to us, we must faithfully carry it out again. This is not to wash away our sins by it, but to live as befits people who believe in the Lord, who has already washed away our sins. When we do not confuse the basis of salvation with the path we are to walk after being saved, we can obey with thankfulness.

As we live a life of faith, we discover once again what we are like. Pride or fear that we did not know at first may be revealed. Each time, let us not leave the Savior and hide within a new vow. Even though speaking stronger words may seem to make our hearts feel secure, it is not those words that bore our sins. We must come before the Lord just as we are, hear His word, believe in the salvation He has already given, and carry out the work entrusted to us today.

Mark chapter 14 ends with Peter's tears, but that does not mean that even the promise of the body and blood given before that has disappeared. Even in the place where the vows of people collapsed, the way that Jesus goes for sinners remains. What we must rely on is the complete work of that Savior. Put your faith not in broken vows, but in the salvation that Christ has accomplished. Within that grace, let us honestly acknowledge our weakness and live again according to the word. ✉

Sermon 16 by Paul C. Jong

Believe in the Son, who received the cup of suffering

< Mark 14:1–72 >

“After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death. But they said, ‘Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people.’ And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, ‘Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.’ And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.’ Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and

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promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray Him. Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, 'Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?' And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, 'Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, "The Teacher says, 'Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'" Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us.' So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover. In the evening He came with the twelve. Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me.' And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, 'Is it I?' And another said, 'Is it I?' He answered and said to them, 'It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.' And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.' And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: "I will strike the

Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered." But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.' Peter said to Him, 'Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.' Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' But he spoke more vehemently, 'If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!' And they all said likewise. Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.' He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.' Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. Then He came the third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.' And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, 'Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him

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away safely.' As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, 'Rabbi, Rabbi!' and kissed Him. Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him. And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.' Then they all forsook Him and fled. Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked. And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree. Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, 'We heard Him say, "I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands."' But not even then did their testimony agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, 'Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?' But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' Jesus said, 'I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'What further need do we have of

witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?' And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, 'Prophesy!' And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands. Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, 'You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.' But he denied it, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you are saying.' And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, 'This is one of them.' But he denied it again. And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, 'Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.' Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know this Man of whom you speak!' A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' And when he thought about it, he wept."

The Son of Man being betrayed into the hands of sinners

In Mark chapter 14, the movement to kill Jesus is revealed more and more concretely. The chief priests seek a plan to seize Him, and Judas seeks an opportunity to betray Him. At last a crowd comes with swords and clubs and seizes Jesus. Outwardly, it seems that the plan of sinners has succeeded and that the way of Jesus has been blocked. However, after finishing His prayer in Gethsemane, the Lord spoke first, saying, *"Are you still*

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sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners" (Mark 14:41). The master of that night was not the crowd holding swords, but the Lord, who knew the hour and went forward on that path. Everything that happened that night was just as the Lord had said beforehand.

At the table as well, Jesus said that there was someone who would betray Him, and He said that the Son of Man goes as it is written. People are responsible for their own sins, and the Lord, even in the midst of that evil deed, accomplished His will to save sinners. To understand this event rightly, we must look not only at what people plotted but also at the salvation that the Lord accomplishes.

We sometimes try to judge whether the word of God is right by looking at our circumstances. When things go well, we believe the promise, and when things become difficult, we think that the Lord has forgotten us. However, in this chapter, the word of salvation is fulfilled without any welcome from people. The Lord walks according to the word while suffering betrayal, arrest, and false testimony. Therefore, we must not judge that the work of the Savior has failed by looking only at the suffering before our eyes.

The cup He gave at the table and the cup He received in Gethsemane

The cup appears twice in this chapter. At the Passover table, Jesus gave the cup to the disciples and told them, *"This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many" (Mark 14:24)*. And in Gethsemane, He prayed to the Father to take this cup away from Him. The disciples all drank from that cup, and

the Lord alone fell down before the cup of Gethsemane. The cup the disciples received was the cup of salvation, and the cup the Lord received was the cup of suffering. Those two cups are not separate from each other. It is because the Lord received the cup of suffering that the cup of salvation has been given to us.

To see why that suffering became the Lord's cup, we must look from the Jordan River. By receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, Jesus had all the sin of mankind passed on to Him once and for all. The sins that each one of us will commit throughout our lives are also within all those sins of the world. Because Jesus, who is without sin, bore those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in their place the judgment that sinners had to receive. And He rose again from death and became our Savior. The cup of Gethsemane was the very judgment of the Cross that the One who bore that sin of the world was to receive. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins through the salvation that God has accomplished.

We cannot fully know salvation if we separate the body of the Lord, who bore our sins through baptism, from the blood He shed on the Cross. If it were a death that had nothing to do with our sins, the judgment we must receive would still remain. But because Jesus shed His blood as the One who had already borne our sins, that death becomes the very atonement for our sins. The Lord did not merely look at the plight of sinners and feel vague pity; He took on the sins and actually bore even the price of those sins.

Because this salvation was not something the disciples gathered and agreed upon, the Lord went alone to receive that cup even when the disciples did not yet know the meaning of that cup. Even if our understanding is slow and our faith is weak, what God has accomplished does not become incomplete

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because of that. Rather, we must return before that word and learn the fact of salvation. Not what we have gone through, but what the Lord has accomplished for us is the basis of the remission of sins.

The cup He received according to the Father's will

The Scripture records of the Lord in Gethsemane, *"And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed" (Mark 14:33)*. He told His disciples that His heart was exceedingly troubled, even to death, and He fell on the ground and prayed. We must not pass over too lightly the statement that the Lord suffered. The salvation for us was not something accomplished without any pain, but the work in which the Son actually received that suffering and fulfilled the Father's will.

Even while asking for the cup to be taken away, Jesus prayed that it would be not as He willed but as the Father willed. In this prayer, we see what will the Lord followed to the end. He did not put avoiding suffering first, but accepted the Father's will. To fulfill that will to save sinners, Jesus went forward on the path of being arrested. The remission of our sins is not separate from this obedience of the Son.

After praying, the Lord said that the one who would betray Him had come near. Even when the crowd that came with Judas seized the Lord, the Lord did not abandon the way of salvation in the face of people's attacks. The fact that Jesus suffered unjust things does not mean that He became One who has sin. Nor does the fact that He was seized by the hands of people mean that His salvation was bound to the decisions of people. The Lord obeyed the Father's will as the Savior who bore sin. In Gethsemane the

disciples were asleep, and after His arrest they all fled, but the Lord alone received that cup. The more we think about the path He walked to give us life, the less we can regard lightly the grace we have received.

His own name, which the One who received the cup revealed

That cup contained even the false testimony, condemnation, and insults of the council. People had already resolved to kill Him and looked for words that fit that intention, but the testimonies did not agree with one another. However, when the high priest asked, *"Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" (Mark 14:61)*, Jesus made it known that He was the One. He also said that He would sit at the right hand of the Power and come with the clouds of heaven. The One who was being spat upon and struck with fists revealed Himself to be the Son of God. The Lord did not choose the way of avoiding the cup by hiding His identity; in the very place where He received that cup, He made it clear who He was.

Therefore, let us, too, not change the gospel of salvation according to the evaluation of many people. We must believe that, through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our entire lifetime, passed on to Him once and for all. It is believing the word that because He bore those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross, received the judgment and died in our place, and rose again from death. Just because someone ridicules it, the cup the Lord received does not become vain, nor does sin return to us again. The assurance of the remission of sins does not come from the agreement of people but from believing in the work that God has

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accomplished. Only when our hearts, too, are firmly established by this word can we preach the hope of salvation to those who are in difficulty.

The cup given at the Passover table leads, through the prayer in Gethsemane, the arrest, and the trial, to the cup of suffering that the Lord received. On that path, Jesus did not withdraw His will for sinners. Believe in the Son, who received the cup of suffering to give us life. *"That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16)*. On a night filled with human schemes and lies, the Lord alone received that cup, and through that cup our salvation was accomplished. We who believe in that salvation must give thanks for the remission of sins and live relying on the word of the Lord in any circumstance. ✉

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CHAPTER

15

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

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Why the King who bore our sins was silent before Pilate

< Mark 15:1–5 >

“Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. Then Pilate asked Him, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ He answered and said to him, ‘It is as you say.’ And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, ‘Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!’ But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.”

The King who came bound

The Bible describes the beginning of this trial, saying, *“Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate” (Mark 15:1)*. Because many people believed in and followed Jesus more than the teachers of Judaism who taught the law, those teachers feared that Judaism would collapse, and so

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they framed it as though a rebellion had broken out in Israel, which was then a vassal state of Rome, and handed Jesus over to the Roman governor. Pilate asked Jesus whether He was the King of the Jews. Jesus answered that what he said was right. In people's eyes, the sight of being bound and interrogated and the identity of a king do not seem to fit together. However, the fact that He was bound by the hands of people did not change the true identity of the Lord.

People could bind Jesus and hand Him over, but they could not determine His identity. When Pilate asked whether He was a king, the Lord answered, *"It is as you say" (Mark 15:2)*. The Lord did not choose the way of denying His own identity in order to be released. In today's passage, we must distinguish between the answer the Lord gave and the answer He did not give. The Lord made clear who He was, but He did not plead His case against the accusations pouring in on Him in order to secure His own safety.

When we hear the word "king," we usually picture someone who gives orders while being guarded by many people. But our King gave Himself up to save sinners. He was not seized by the hands of people because His authority was lacking; rather, He stood in that place according to the purpose for which He had come. If we read this only as a scene in which a powerless person is helplessly dragged away, we cannot know the heart of the Lord. To know the Savior, we must not think only of how strong His authority is, but must know what He accomplished for sinners.

Jesus is God, who came to this earth clothed in human flesh, and He is the King who saves us. The reason He stood in this court is not that He tried to gain power to reign over people and failed. He had come to save people who would perish because of sin, and at that time He was walking the way that would

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accomplish that salvation. We must not judge the power of the Lord by looking only at His bound appearance, but must know why He stood in that place.

Why He did not plead His case in the face of the accusations

The chief priests accused Jesus of many things. Pilate told Him to look at those many accusations and demanded an answer, and the Bible says, *"But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled" (Mark 15:5)*. This is because, while it is the way of ordinary people to look for excuses that will save themselves, Jesus did not do so.

If a person who is accused of many things says nothing, it can turn against him, yet Jesus braved that risk and did not answer. This is because the One who was accomplishing salvation for us did not make it His aim to get only Himself out of that place. Isaiah recorded this scene beforehand as follows: *"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7)*. The Lord was silent because, like a lamb led to the slaughter, He was on the way to receive the judgment for our sins.

This does not mean, however, that keeping silent in the face of every accusation is always faith. This passage conveys the work of Jesus, who came to save sinners. We must understand the reason the Lord was silent in this place together with the work of salvation that He undertook. Rather than imitating only the outward form of the Lord's actions, it is important first to know the meaning of salvation contained in those actions.

This silence was not an admission that everything in the accusations was right. The Lord did not stand in this court because He had sin; rather, as the One who bore our sins, He went to receive the judgment in our place. This is because Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all when He received baptism from John. The sins we will commit from the day we are born until the day we die were also passed on to the Lord at that time. Because He bore those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and He rose again from death. By believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we receive the remission of sins.

The baptism He received from John and the shedding of His blood on the Cross are not separate events. The One who took on sin through the baptism He received from John also received the judgment for that sin. If we leave out the fact that He bore sin and look only at the Cross, we cannot explain why the sinless Jesus received the judgment in our place. Conversely, if we speak only of the fact that He took on sin and pass by the death in which He received the judgment, we cannot fully preach the work of salvation either. We must believe what the Lord accomplished for us according to that relationship.

The scope of that grace includes not only the few sins I remember but all my sin. The Lord knew all of them, even the sins we have forgotten and the sins we will commit because of the wickedness of our flesh that has not yet been revealed. When we believe the gospel that He bore all the sins of our lifetime, our assurance of the remission of sins is not bound to our memory or our own assessment of ourselves. The scope of the sins the Lord bore and the salvation He accomplished are the basis of our assurance. We come before God with the faith that accepts that salvation.

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When we know the fact that He bore sin through the baptism He received from John, we can understand the silence of the Lord as He went toward the Cross. The Lord, who was without sin, did not choose the way of getting only Himself out of that place. He gave Himself up to pay the price for our sins. Our King Himself received the punishment that His people should have received. This is the love that the Lord has shown us.

Remember the suffering that our King underwent

There are times when we pass by that grace indifferently because we know the gospel. While we rejoice in the fact that we have received the remission of sins, we may fail to think deeply about the suffering the Lord underwent to accomplish that salvation. Today's word makes us look again at the fact that our King was bound for us. When we think of the Lord, who stood in that place for us, we come to know how great a grace salvation is.

Remembering His suffering is not something that ends with pitying the plight of the Lord. Rather, as it is written, *"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5)*, it means knowing that it was suffering He received for us and giving thanks. Sympathizing with someone who has no power to save us is different from worshiping the King who has saved us. Because the Lord is the Savior who rose again from death, the One we rely on and pray to is also the Lord, who is alive now. The more we read the record of His suffering, the more we must come to know, together with it, the love He has shown and His power of salvation.

Such a thankful heart also shows itself in our attitude toward the gospel. We do not listen carelessly, thinking it is a story we already know, but think again about what price the Lord paid. When we preach it to others, too, we do not reduce it to a few useful lessons, but clearly preach how He bore sin through the baptism He received from John, His death on the Cross, in which He received the judgment, and the salvation of the resurrection. The reason the labor of spending time so that even one person may realize this grace looks precious is that this person, too, is a sinner whom the Lord wants to save.

The saints who have been saved can believe this grace with their hearts and give thanks with their lips. We do not obtain more remission of sins by giving thanks, but it is right to know and express the love we have received. Let us give thanks that the Lord suffered for us and accomplished salvation for us. I hope that this thankfulness will lead today to a heart that preaches Jesus, our King, and His salvation to others as well. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Look at the Lord, who was delivered up in our place where Barabbas was released

< Mark 15:6–15 >

"Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, 'Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?' For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. Pilate answered and said to them again, 'What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?' So they cried out again, 'Crucify Him!' Then Pilate said to them, 'Why, what evil has He done?' But they cried out all the more, 'Crucify Him!' So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified."

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A decision made to satisfy the crowd

At the feast there was a custom of releasing one prisoner whom the people requested. Among those who had been seized after committing murder in the rebellion at that time was Barabbas. Pilate asked the crowd whether they wanted him to release Jesus because he knew *"that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy" (Mark 15:10)*. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas.

To the question of what he should do with Jesus, the crowd shouted for Him to be crucified. Even when Pilate asked, *"Why, what evil has He done?" (Mark 15:14)*, they made the same demand even more loudly. A loud voice was not evidence of sin, but Pilate made his decision following his desire to satisfy the crowd. He released Barabbas, scourged Jesus, and handed Him over to be crucified. This scene shows what result is brought about by a heart that follows the demands of people even while knowing right from wrong.

Pilate knew the fact that the chief priests had handed Jesus over because of envy. It was not because he knew nothing that he went along with their demand. Though he understood the problem well enough to ask what evil Jesus had done, he chose the satisfaction of the crowd. The human heart lies between knowing what is right and acting according to that knowledge. If we are afraid of how people will react, we can push aside even the truth that we know.

We must also look carefully at the answer of the crowd. Instead of explaining what Jesus' sin was, they shouted their demand to crucify Him even more loudly. The same words do not become the truth just because more people repeat them. We must not leave even our judgments of faith to the mood of the majority. We must examine what the word of the Lord reveals

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rather than who raises a louder voice. Words that satisfy the hearers and the truth that saves them are not always the same.

This is also a necessary caution for us who preach the word. If we keep only the parts that people would like and take out the word concerning sin and salvation, we may get a comfortable response. However, with words changed in that way, we cannot accurately preach the salvation that the Lord has accomplished. Only when the one who preaches first treasures the word can he introduce that truth to the hearers as well. If we love a person, we must treasure his hearing the true gospel more than an immediate favorable response.

The Lord, who gave Himself up to save people who have sin

Barabbas was released even though he had sin. The Bible makes this clear, saying, *"And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion" (Mark 15:7)*. The one who had sin was set free, and Jesus was delivered up to the place of death. Through this event, we come to think of the grace of the Lord, who received the judgment in our place. We cannot stand before God with the claim that we are better than Barabbas. This is because, even if we have not outwardly committed the same crime, we have our own sins, and we cannot escape the judgment for those sins by ourselves.

Comparing myself with Barabbas and saying that I am not a sinner to that degree does not solve the problem of my sin. Among people there are differences in responsibility according to what one has done, but there is no one who can say that he has no sin before God. Even if we hide the sin in us behind the

greater wrongs of others, that sin does not disappear. To believe the gospel, we must first acknowledge that we, too, are people who cannot escape the judgment for sin by ourselves.

Receiving the remission of sins is not being recognized as someone who originally had no sin. It is believing how the Lord saved us, who actually have sin. Therefore, our hope does not lie in the ability to explain our own past favorably, but in the fact that the Lord bore those sins and paid the price of sin for us. This is the reason we can rely on grace even when our own wickedness is revealed, and the reason we cannot boast of our own righteousness even after being saved.

To save us, such as we are, Jesus, who is God, came in a human body, and by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. All our sins from our past days and today up to the day we die are also included in them. According to the righteous law of God, which says, *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*, the Lord, who had our sins passed on to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place. In the human court it was an unjust trial, but before God it was a just trial. And He rose again from death. By believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we receive the remission of sins. The basis on which we are set free is not our own innocence but the atonement that the Lord accomplished.

The release of Barabbas is recorded in this passage, but whether he believed this gospel is not recorded. Spiritually, we ourselves are Barabbas. We, who stood against God and sinned every day and so could not help but die, were set free, and the Lord was delivered up in that place instead. This scene, in which a person who had sin was set free and Jesus went to the Cross, shows before our eyes the sacrifice the Lord made to save us,

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who are like Barabbas. The salvation the Lord accomplished is for the whole world, but it is the person who hears that gospel and accepts in his heart the word that He bore all sins who receives the remission of sins. We must preach both the scope of salvation and the faith that accepts it.

Because the scope of the sins the Lord took on is all the sins of the world, no one needs to conclude in advance that his past is so wicked that he has been excluded from this salvation. At the same time, no one can say that he does not need this salvation because he is better than others. All sinners need the atonement of the Lord. This is also the reason we preach the gospel to others. We must not pick out those who are to hear of grace by people's outward appearance or social reputation.

Do not take lightly the salvation you have received freely

The fact that we receive the remission of sins freely does not mean that salvation is light. The Lord was actually scourged and delivered up to the place of death. The Old Testament says, *"He who is hanged is accursed of God" (Deuteronomy 21:23),* and the reason Jesus, who is God, hung on the tree of the cross, by which the most wicked were put to death, was to receive in our place the punishment for our sins. We must think together about the fact that we have no merit and the fact that the Lord underwent great suffering. Then the thankfulness within the words "We have received grace" grows deeper.

A heart that tries to calculate grace in terms of a price also clouds thankfulness. As long as we think that we deserve to be saved if we do this well, it is hard to accept what we have received from the Lord as a gift. Conversely, when we know that

the Lord suffered to save us, who have no merit, thankfulness does not come out of calculation but becomes the response of our hearts to the love that saved us. The service of the saints must begin precisely from that thankfulness. Rather than a heart that labors to be seen by others or a heart that intends to repay a debt to the Lord, what is needed is a heart that seeks to share with others the salvation it has received.

We who know this grace cannot exalt our own righteousness by condemning others as wicked people like Barabbas. This is because we know that we ourselves are people who have been brought to life through the atonement of the Lord. We must preach this salvation even to those who do not yet know the gospel. Let us give thanks to Jesus, who gave Himself up to save us, who have sin. Let us treasure the word of the Lord, who saved us, more than the evaluations and demands of people, and let us live a life that serves that grace. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Believe in Jesus, who was mocked, as the true King

< Mark 15:16–20 >

“Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.”

The soldiers who despised Him while calling Him King

The soldiers led Jesus into the courtyard and called together the whole garrison. After clothing Him with a purple robe and twisting a crown of thorns and putting it on Him, they greeted Him, saying, *“Hail, King of the Jews!” (Mark 15:18)*. They imitated the courtesy due to a king, but there was no reverence in their hearts. Striking Him on the head with a reed, spitting on Him, and kneeling were all mockery as well. While putting the

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word “king” on their lips, they actually despised the Lord. Since Jesus had said that He was the King of the Jews, they sought to put Him to death by pinning on Him the charge of being a rebel against the Roman emperor, and this mockery was a preliminary preparation they carried out before crucifying Him.

In the actions of the soldiers there were elements that outwardly looked as if they were honoring Him. They clothed Him with a robe, put a crown on Him, greeted Him, and bowed down. However, the meaning of all those actions did not lie in giving glory to the Lord. It was mockery carried out together with striking His head and spitting on Him. In this way, because one cannot judge the heart only by the outward form of actions or by religious words, what matters is a heart that knows what it believes and before whom it stands.

They did not know that the One they were mocking was the true King. A heart that does not know the identity of the Lord does not recognize His humbling of Himself either. Since He did not use His power outwardly, they regarded Him as someone they could treat any way they liked. However, the fact that Jesus did not show His power and subdue them immediately does not make their judgment right. We must not interpret the long-suffering of the Lord as the Lord’s lack of ability. If our judgment is bound only to the might and forces before our eyes, we cannot see the purpose of this humbling. Therefore, as we read the record of the Bible, we must examine what the Lord did together with the purpose for which He came. Then we come to see that the love that saves sinners is contained in this path of suffering.

In light of this scene, we must also examine ourselves. Being familiar with the name of Jesus does not mean that we know Him rightly. If we think of Him only as someone from whom we get comfort for our hearts in hard times, we may not sufficiently

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know who the Lord is and why He came. The Lord is not One who came to make our feelings comfortable for a moment. He is the Savior who actually rescued us, who were under sin and judgment. The faith that knows Him also accepts the work He has accomplished.

When we read this scene, we come to think about how great a humiliation the Lord suffered. However, if we think only of how great the pain was and move on, we will miss who it actually was who received that pain. In the eyes of the soldiers He was a prisoner whom they could mock as they pleased, but Jesus is God, who made all things, and the true King who came to save sinners. The Gospel of John testifies of Him, saying, *"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3)*. Looking at Him in the way we would pity a powerless person cannot be called believing in the Lord rightly.

The humiliation that God suffered for sinners

The Lord came in a human body because the people He had made were going to perish because of sin. Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all as He received baptism from John. At that time He also bore the sins that each one of us commits throughout our lives. Therefore, the Lord went toward the Cross as the One who bore those sins. He shed His blood and died, receiving in our place the judgment for sin that we should have received, and He rose again from death. We who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins.

The confession that God saved people clearly shows who the One who saves is. It was not that a more excellent person among

us saved the rest. We could not help but perish because of sin, and the One who made us saved us Himself. Therefore, the salvation we believe in does not stand leaning on human goodness or ability. The grace of salvation is certain for us who believe in the work that the Lord accomplished through the baptism He received from John and through the Cross, and that, too, is because He is the true God.

Nor must we lightly pass by the fact that the Lord actually suffered in a human body. If we think that, because He is God, the humiliation and pain would have meant nothing, we cannot properly see the love that humbled itself for us. The reason this passage describes in concrete detail how they put the robe on Him and took it off, struck His head, and spat on Him is that salvation was not a favor bestowed in words only. The Lord actually walked that path of suffering to save sinners.

When we know this salvation, the heart with which we look at the humiliation the Lord suffered also changes. We come to know that the Lord is not a pitiable One to whom we must offer comfort, but God from whom we must receive the grace of salvation. Because He loved us, He humbled Himself. He walked that path to receive in our place the judgment for our sins. What is written in the book of Isaiah, *"The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5)*, is this very event. Therefore, the sorrow we feel as we look at the suffering of the Cross must lead to believing who the Lord is and what He has accomplished for us.

The passage closes this scene, saying, *"And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him" (Mark 15:20)*. For them, once the mockery was over, it was time for the execution, but the Lord was accomplishing the salvation that saves sinners. The contempt of people could not stop the love of the Lord. The

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fact that God Himself did this for us makes this salvation all the more precious.

Fill the title on your lips with faith

The soldiers, too, called the Lord King. However, those words were not a confession of faith. Today, when we call Jesus Lord, we, too, must know the meaning of that title. We must believe in Him as the One who made us, solved the problem of our sins, and rescued us from death. We must have a heart that accepts the salvation He has accomplished.

We cannot confess that we believe in the Lord and yet leave out or change part of the work He accomplished as we please. If we skip over how He took on sin through the baptism He received from John and hold on only to the sight of His suffering, we cannot know how our sins were passed on to Him. If we skip over the resurrection and stay only at the scene of His death, we cannot fully testify of the Savior who is alive now. Our lips that call on the name of the Lord must contain the content of the true salvation to which that name points.

That faith also carries over into our attitude in worship and praise. While we repeat familiar words and motions, our hearts can be somewhere else. At such times, rather than looking for greater expressions to adorn ourselves, we must think again about the salvation that the Lord accomplished for us. When we remember the grace by which He bore our sins even though He knew them, the reason to give thanks becomes clear. Worship that comes from faith is not made by the splendor of its form but comes from a heart that knows the Lord.

The saints who believe in the living Lord can ask Him even when they face hardships. The Lord Himself said, *"If you ask*

anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:14). God, who saved us, is not unaware of our circumstances. Rather than doubting His love because things are not resolved immediately as we wish, we must believe in the care of the Lord on the basis of the salvation we have already received. We can ask for the wisdom we need, seek ways to serve together, and walk step by step following the word. The Lord, who was mocked, is the true God who hears our prayers today.

We can acknowledge what the Lord has accomplished and give thanks, and even when we face difficulties, we can pray to Him, who is alive. This is because the Lord is not a powerless One who needs our sympathy but the Savior who takes care of us to the end. Let us give thanks by faith to the true King, who suffered humiliation for us. No matter how the world evaluates Him, let us preach that He is God and our Savior. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Why did Jesus not come down from the Cross?

< Mark 15:21–32 >

"Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it. And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS. With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!' Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.' Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him."

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He was hung on the Cross at Golgotha

Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming out of the country and passing by, was seized and was made to bear the cross of Jesus against his will. The soldiers dragged Jesus to Golgotha and crucified Him. However, the fact that Simon bore the wooden cross does not mean that he became the Savior who bore our sins. The One who receives the judgment for sin in our place is Jesus, who hung on the Cross. We must distinguish between the labor of man and the atonement that the Lord accomplishes.

Simon was passing by and came to bear the cross at the demand of the soldiers. The passage does not explain in detail what his heart was like or what he realized through that event. The fact that we must clearly see here is that Simon's carrying of the cross and Jesus' receiving of the judgment on that cross are different from each other. We must not distort the Lord's salvation into a work completed with human help.

The service of the saints must also stand on this distinction. To preach the gospel, we can offer our time and material possessions and take on various tasks. However, that labor does not wash away people's sins. The One who accomplished the remission of sins is Jesus, and we serve by preaching to others the salvation He accomplished. If we know our own role correctly, we do not exalt ourselves even while we labor, nor do we regard ourselves as worthless because we have been entrusted with small tasks.

What happened at Golgotha is written as follows: *"Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it" (Mark 15:23)*. The Lord was crucified just as He was, and even His garments were divided among the people who cast lots for them. We may be heartbroken while looking at this suffering, but instead of remaining in sorrow, we must go on to know why

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the Lord went through this. The fact that the Savior, who bore the sins, was receiving the judgment in our place is the center of understanding this passage.

On the inscription of His accusation it was written that He was the King of the Jews, and it is written, *"With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left" (Mark 15:27)*. The Lord's being crucified together with robbers shows that in this world there are people who recognize Jesus and believe, and people who fail to recognize Him and so not only do not believe but also mock Him. The Gospel of Mark records that both of them reviled the Lord, but the Gospel of Luke reports that one of them finally recognized the Lord. People wrote the name "King of the Jews" as His charge and executed the Lord, but the One who hung there was truly the King who saves us. We must not judge the Lord to be one of the sinners merely from the sight of Him hanging side by side with sinners. In people's eyes, the sight of Him hanging on the Cross must have looked far from the victory of a king, but in that very place that looked like defeat, the judgment for our sins was carried out. Therefore, the saints must not judge the work of God only by visible success and failure, but must know through the word what the Lord has accomplished.

The people who made His coming down the condition of faith

Those who passed by wagged their heads and insulted the Lord, saying, *"Save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" (Mark 15:30)*. The chief priests and the scribes also mocked Jesus, saying that He had saved others but could not save Himself. Those who hung there with Him also reviled the Lord.

The insults of those who passed by also contain the saying about destroying the temple and building it in three days. The words that had been presented as false testimony at the earlier trial were now used for mockery. People did not try to examine the truth of those words but used them to belittle the Lord. When words that have been conveyed wrongly go from one mouth to another among many people, they can sound as if they were confirmed facts. Faith must grow not by relying on such rumors but by examining what Scripture actually testifies.

The chief priests and the scribes said, *"Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe" (Mark 15:32)*. However, the condition they put forward did not fit the purpose of the salvation that the Lord was accomplishing. They demanded that the Lord, who was receiving the judgment for sin as a substitute, try to escape from that place. If we place the One who accomplishes salvation under our own judgment and set conditions for Him, we cannot accept the grace of the Lord. True faith turns from the attitude of acknowledging Him only if He acts in the way we want, and accepts what the Lord has accomplished.

Their words contain the image of the Savior that they themselves had decided on. That is, if He has power, He must escape the suffering at once and must reveal His strength in a way that is visible to their eyes. However, the purpose for which Jesus came did not lie in proving His power to suit their demands, but in saving people from the judgment of sin. Those who put forward His coming down from the Cross as the condition of faith did not know why the Lord bore the Cross.

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The judgment He received to the end because He had borne the sins

The fact that the Lord did not come down from the Cross had already been determined at the Jordan River. When Jesus began His public ministry, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John, and all the sins that we commit throughout our lives were also passed on to the Lord at that time. Because He bore those sins, He had to receive even the judgment for those sins in our place. Therefore, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, bearing the judgment that we were to receive, and He rose again from death. We receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. His remaining on the Cross was not because of powerlessness, but to accomplish the work of saving us.

When we know this fact, we come to see the Lord in exactly the opposite way from the words of those who mocked Him. They saw that He could not come down and judged that He had no power to save, but we believe that on that very Cross the Lord paid the price of our sins. Because the Lord received in my place the judgment that I should have received, I have received the remission of sins and have come to live. We must not set the standard of salvation on whether something amazing happens before our eyes, but on how the Lord has settled our sins.

Believing in the Lord who remained on the Cross is also acknowledging that salvation is not a matter of proving our own strength. We could not remove the judgment of sin by ourselves, and the Lord bore that judgment. Therefore, those who have been saved cannot say that they came to live because they were smarter or stronger. They are people who have come to live by the grace with which the Lord, who said, *"I lay down My life for*

the sheep" (John 10:15), humbled Himself and received even death. If we remember that fact, then even when we deal with other sinners, we come to have a heart that wants to preach the gospel rather than a sense of superiority.

It is right for us to ask the Lord for the needs of our lives. However, we cannot take the meeting of those needs as the evidence of the remission of sins. Our circumstances may get better and then become difficult, and the things we hope for may also be delayed. Such changes do not change the scope of the sins that the Lord has already borne. We should tell the Lord about the circumstances of our lives, but we must place our assurance of salvation in the atonement that the Lord has accomplished. Only then can we give thanks to the Lord and ask Him for help even in the midst of difficulties.

Let us not judge the work of serving the gospel only by the results that are immediately visible, either. Even if the other person does not believe right away after we have preached the word, we must not change the truth. We must explain step by step so that the person can understand the meaning of salvation, and we must keep praying. When we think of the Lord who did not come down from the Cross for us, our labor, too, can break free from seeking only immediate recognition. The work of preaching that grace to the souls that the Lord wants to give life to has been entrusted to us.

We, too, sometimes harbor a heart that says we will believe if He first changes our circumstances. However, the love of the Lord is not determined by whether our demands are granted right away. We can know that love in the salvation by which He has already received the judgment for sin for us. Let us believe in that grace, ask the Lord for our needs, and rely on Him. Giving thanks to the King who received even death on the Cross to give

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us life, we must also let other souls know why the Lord did not come down. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The veil of the temple torn from above when the Lord breathed His last

< Mark 15:33–41 >

“Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, ‘Look, He is calling for Elijah!’ Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, ‘Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.’ And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, ‘Truly this Man was the Son of God!’ There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.”

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The Lord's cry heard in the darkness

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour, darkness came over the whole land. At the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34)*. Among those who were nearby, there were also some who said that He was calling for Elijah.

Those who stood by heard the Lord's cry and said that they should see whether Elijah would come and take Him down. The act of giving Him sour wine is also recorded together with those words. They watched to see what more would happen before their eyes, but they did not rightly understand the meaning of the suffering that the Lord was receiving. Merely having stood near the Cross does not mean that one comes to know even the meaning of salvation. Between seeing and believing, a heart that understands the work the Lord accomplished is needed.

We, too, must distinguish between knowing the scene of the suffering well and believing that the suffering was for us. We may be able to explain the event and yet still think that we must remove our own sins by ourselves. Then we are keeping ourselves apart from the sins that the Lord bore. Knowing the Cross correctly is knowing that Jesus received the judgment not because of His own sins but because of our sins, and accepting that salvation.

This cry shows how deep the pain that the Lord went through was. Because Jesus had no sin, He was not forsaken because of His own sin. As the One who bore our sins, He received the judgment for sin that we were to receive. If we forget that meaning, we come to see the Cross only as a tragic death. We must know for whom that death was and why He received that judgment.

The reason the sinless Son cried out that He had been forsaken by the Father lies in what happened at the Jordan River. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and the sins that each one of us commits throughout our lives were all included in them. Because He bore those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for those sins in our place. And He rose again from death. We receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord's death is not a misfortune unrelated to our sins, but the atonement that delivered us from the judgment of sin.

Because the One who bore our sins also received the judgment, the basis of the remission of sins is complete. If the Lord had taken on only a part, we would have to settle the remaining sins ourselves, but the gospel conveys that the Lord bore all the sins of the world. He knew even the sins that we would commit throughout our lives and paid their price. Those who believe this fact need not think that their salvation has collapsed every time they discover their own weakness. They should acknowledge their own wrongs and turn back, but they must place the basis of salvation in the work that the Lord accomplished.

Knowing that grace does not mean that we can regard sin lightly. If sin had been no problem at all, there would also have been no reason for the Lord to receive judgment like that. The Cross shows both the seriousness of our sins and the love of the Lord. We give thanks because the Lord bore the price that we could not pay. Those who know this gratitude come to think about how to use their saved lives for the Lord rather than rationalizing their own cravings.

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The veil torn from above

When Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed His last, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. It was not a way that man had opened little by little from below. This event, which took place together with the Lord's death, means that God had finished all that He had intended to do to save mankind, and it shows that He made it possible to receive the remission of sins and opened the door of the kingdom of heaven so that whoever believes it may enter the kingdom of heaven. This is because the Lord resolved the problem of sin that had blocked sinners. Hebrews explains this way as follows: *"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh" (Hebrews 10:19–20)*. When the body of the Lord, who bore our sins, was torn on the Cross, the veil that had blocked the way between God and sinners was also torn.

We are not people who make a way to reach God by building up our own self-cultivation and good deeds. We are people who receive the grace of salvation that He opened for us, by believing that the Lord bore sins and even received the judgment. If, while believing in the salvation of the Lord, we think that we must achieve something more to remove sins, we cannot fully enjoy this grace. We should acknowledge our own shortcomings, but we must not regard even the salvation that the Lord accomplished as lacking.

Think about who opened the way of salvation as you read the record, *"Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mark 15:38)*. It is not that we finally made a way after gradually drawing nearer to God through our efforts. Because the Lord resolved our sins, we have become able to come before

The veil of the temple torn from above when the Lord breathed His last

God. Therefore, the center of a life of faith also does not lie in counting how much we have built up, but in believing what the Lord has accomplished and living in that grace.

We must remember this fact also when we pray. We may become bold because we are pleased with how we are today, and then feel that we cannot come to God because we see our shortcomings. However, if we place the basis of prayer on such changes, our hearts are always shaken. The One who opened for us the way to come is Jesus. We can bring even our own shortcomings before the Lord and ask for wisdom and help because He has resolved the problem of sin.

The faith that recognizes the Son of God

The centurion, who stood facing Jesus, saw the Lord breathe His last and said, *"Truly this Man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39)*. He confessed that the One who had been mocked by the name of king just a little earlier was the Son of God. To see the Cross rightly, we must know who the One who died on it is. God, who made us, came in the body of a man and accomplished salvation for us. You must not stop at merely offering Him sympathy, but must believe in Him as your own Savior.

What we should take note of in the centurion's confession is whom he called the Son of God. It was that very One who had been mocked by people and had breathed His last on the Cross. Because the Lord's humbling of Himself did not take away His true identity, we must know the Savior who is God even while we see Him suffer. When we believe that He gave Himself for us, the Cross does not end as a scene of despair but testifies of the grace of salvation.

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If we acknowledge Jesus only as a great teacher or an unjustly treated victim, we cannot say that we know all of His work. The One who made us came in the body of a man, bore sins, and rose again. Therefore, He does not remain an object of our sympathy, but becomes the Savior in whom we believe and on whom we rely. He is also the One to whom we entrust our lives and pray today. If we know who the Lord is, we can trust the power of the salvation that He accomplished.

There were also women who watched this from afar. They were people who had followed and ministered to the Lord from Galilee, including Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome. The Lord's death that they watched was something that actually happened. Therefore, our salvation does not lie in a story made up for comfort in our hearts, but in the sins that the Lord actually bore, the judgment that He actually received, and His resurrection.

Let us give thanks to the Lord, who opened for us the way to come to God. We must preach this salvation also to those who are afraid because of their own sins. We must let them know that the Lord bore all sins and received the judgment for those sins as a substitute. The One on whom we rely is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died for sinners and rose again. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, who was laid in the tomb, is the Savior who paid the full price of our sins

< Mark 15:42–47 >

"Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was laid."

Joseph, who boldly asked for the body

Scripture introduces him, saying, "*Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the*

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kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus" (Mark 15:43). On the day Jesus died on the Cross, Joseph boldly asked for the body of the Lord. A choice that could not be known merely by looking at his position as a council member was revealed through his action. He intended to take the body of the Lord and bury it.

Scripture does not record Joseph's long deliberation or the conversations he had with the people around him. It only says that he boldly went in and asked. This is because what he actually did in the face of a concrete need is important. A heart that regards the Lord as precious appears as service that suits the time. We, too, must look at what is needed now for the gospel and must not put off the labor that we can undertake.

Joseph stepped forward at the time of which it is written, *"Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath" (Mark 15:42)*. Joseph's service was exactly what was needed at that time. The work of taking the body of the Lord and burying it was not accomplished merely by regarding it as precious in one's heart. He had to go in to Pilate and ask, and after receiving permission, he had to prepare fine linen and lay the body to rest. The passage conveys those actions in order. Service must have, along with a heart that knows what is right, hands that take care of actual needs.

The introduction that Joseph was a person waiting for the kingdom of God is also important. It shows that his concern was not bound only to his own position and immediate circumstances. A heart that hopes for what God will accomplish is not separated from present actions. We, too, must not put off all of today's service while speaking of the hope of being with the Lord in the future. When our hope is clear, the reason to use the time and material possessions we now have for the work of the Lord also becomes clear.

That does not mean, however, that all the saints must do the same work. In this passage, Joseph asked Pilate and laid the body of the Lord to rest, and the women saw the place where the body of the Lord was laid. The position each person was in and the things each could do were different. We, too, must not look only at the roles of others and regard the work entrusted to us as small. Helping those who preach the gospel, preparing the necessary materials, and praying for those who will hear are labors that are also connected with one another.

The burial carried out after His actual death was confirmed

"Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time" (Mark 15:44). Only after confirming it in that way did he grant the body to Joseph. Joseph bought fine linen, took the Lord down, wrapped Him, and laid Him in a tomb hewn out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw the place where the body of the Lord was laid.

When Pilate received the request to give the body, he did not grant it right away but confirmed it with the centurion. In the passage, the actions of the one who made the request, the one who confirmed the death, and the one who buried the body are recorded separately. The death of Jesus was not something conveyed only by rumor. The body was granted after the death was confirmed, and an actual burial took place. What is important is not whether the Lord died early or late; we must remember that He had to die in that way because He had borne all our sins. If we follow this process as we read, we can clearly

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know what kind of death the resurrection that will be reported in the next chapter came after.

After laying Him in the tomb, he rolled a stone against the door. And it is written, *"And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was laid" (Mark 15:47)*. These people, who saw the place of the burial with their eyes, later went to that very tomb to anoint the body of the Lord with spices. The records of the burial and the resurrection are connected in this way. There is a person who confirmed the death, there is a person who took the body down and buried it, and there are people who saw the tomb. Scripture does not tell a vague story of life while leaving the scene of death blurred. Nor is it a story of One who seemed to be dead and then woke up. It conveys that the Lord, who actually died and was buried, rose again from death.

The death that paid the price of our sins

The reason the Lord went even into the tomb was to resolve the problem of our sins. At the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus received baptism from John and had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and at that time He bore even all the sins that we would commit throughout our lives. Because He bore those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment that we were to receive. The Lord, who was buried, rose again from death, and we receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. The death and resurrection of the Lord are the actual work that accomplished our salvation.

When we think about the fact that the Lord went into the tomb, we come to see the actual form of His love toward us. He

did not merely say in words that He would help sinners, nor did He treat the responsibility for sin as though it did not exist. The One who took on sin received its judgment, and His body that had died was buried. Scripture says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23)*. The fact that we receive the remission of sins freely does not mean that there was no price of sin. It is because the Lord paid that price in our place. If we know this difference, we do not come to regard grace as something to be taken for granted.

Our hearts sometimes try to judge salvation according to our emotions. On days when we feel deep regret, it seems that our sins must have disappeared, and then on days when our hearts have grown dull, we again feel as though sin remains. However, the death of the Lord is not an event that appears and disappears according to our emotions, but the judgment He actually received in our place. Faith is accepting that fact. Every time our emotions change, we must not try to make up a new salvation, but must look to the work that the Lord has already accomplished.

Therefore, when we think of Jesus, who was laid in the tomb, our faith must not remain only in sorrow. We must know that the price of our sins was paid through that death. He did not let sin go lightly, but gave us life by receiving the judgment in our place. Instead of waiting until their hearts become clean enough, those who have been saved can believe in the salvation that the Lord has already accomplished and give thanks.

Likewise, the resurrection is the event in which the One who actually died rose again. It cannot be reduced to meaning that we remember the Lord and do not forget Him, or that His teachings have remained in people's hearts. Jesus, who was buried in the tomb, rose again from death, and we believe in that living Savior.

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Therefore, while clearly conveying the weight of death, the record of the burial does not lock us in eternal sorrow but leads on to the resurrection recorded in the next chapter.

For those who believe in the fact of salvation, service does not become only a burden. Because I know what the Lord has accomplished for me, I come to want others also to know that grace. We cannot meet every need alone, but we can find the work that we can take on now and handle it together. Just as Joseph acted when it was needed, we, too, must turn the gratitude in our hearts into actual labor. Saying that the grace we have received from the Lord is great can lead to the choice to value the gospel today.

Joseph did not take the place of the Lord's atonement; he only laid the body of the Lord, who had died, to rest with all sincerity. Our service, as those who know grace, is the same. We do not make salvation, but we can value the salvation that the Lord accomplished and offer our hearts and labor to the work of the gospel. Our Savior did not remain in the tomb but rose again. Let us believe in the living Lord and carry out the service given to us today. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The righteous salvation of God accomplished behind an unjust trial

< Mark 15:1–47 >

“Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. Then Pilate asked Him, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ He answered and said to him, ‘It is as you say.’ And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, ‘Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!’ But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled. Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, ‘Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?’ For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. Pilate answered and said to them again, ‘What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?’

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So they cried out again, 'Crucify Him!' Then Pilate said to them, 'Why, what evil has He done?' But they cried out all the more, 'Crucify Him!' So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified. Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it. And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS. With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!' Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.' Even those who were crucified with Him reviled

Him. Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, 'Look, He is calling for Elijah!' Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, 'Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.' And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this Man was the Son of God!' There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem. Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was laid."

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A trial full of the unrighteousness of people

The trial in Mark chapter 15 shows the unrighteousness of people from beginning to end. The chief priests bound Jesus out of envy and delivered Him to Pilate, and the crowd, unable to answer the question of what evil He had done, only shouted to crucify Him. Although Pilate knew that Jesus had no sin, he released Barabbas and scourged Jesus and handed Him over in order to gratify the crowd. The soldiers mocked Him, and those who passed by insulted Him. Not a single person who was there judged rightly.

However, at the place where this unjust trial ended, the veil of the temple was torn, and the door of the kingdom of heaven was opened to sinners. How could a salvation that saves sinners come out of a place where the unrighteousness of people had piled up? We cannot know the answer by looking only at the wrong judgments of people. We must see what God was doing behind this trial. To people it was an unfair trial, but before God a righteous salvation was being accomplished.

Barabbas was the one *"who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion" (Mark 15:7)*. He was released not because it had been shown that he had no sin, but because Pilate followed the demand of the crowd. This scene, in which a man with sin is set free and the One without sin receives punishment, cannot be explained by human law. Yet it was in this very place that God accomplished the work of saving sinners righteously. This is also the reason why the Lord did not argue His case in the face of that unjust trial.

The judgment He received according to the law because He had sin passed on to Him

God is not One who pretends not to see sin. The One who established the law that says, "*The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*, could not break that law Himself and simply let sinners into the kingdom of heaven. That is why Jesus, who is God, came clothed in human flesh and stood in the place of sinners. When Jesus began His public ministry, He received baptism from John at the Jordan River and thereby had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. At that time, not only our past sins but even the sins of our whole lives that we would commit in the future were passed on to the Lord.

The One who had sin passed on to Him must receive the judgment for that sin. That is why the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, paying the price of sin in our place, and rose again from death. Pilate's trial was unjust, but that the One who bore the sin of the world received the punishment for that sin was a righteous thing done according to the law of God. The Bible says, "*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')" (Galatians 3:13)*. By the law of Rome, He died as the most wicked person who had opposed the emperor, but by the law of God, the One who had the sin of the world passed on to Him received the curse of that sin in our place. The remission of sins that we who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit receive is not a matter of covering sin up; it is believing in the salvation in which Jesus had sin passed on to Him and even received its judgment in our place.

If we leave out the fact that the sin of the world was passed on to Jesus, we cannot explain what relationship the Cross has with us. Mere sorrow that a great person died unjustly does not

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resolve the judgment of our sins. But when I know that Jesus took upon Himself all sin, including my own sin, I can believe that His death is the atonement made for me. The Lord suffered in silence not because He lacked the power to save, but in order to fulfill according to the law the judgment for the sins that had already been passed on to Him.

Therefore, it is not that we must make salvation all over again from the beginning every time we discover our own sins. We must believe that Jesus took our sins upon Himself without leaving any out and paid the price of those sins in our place. This faith is different from a heart that takes sin lightly. A person who knows that the Savior actually received judgment because of sin cannot boast of his own sins. Acknowledging his faults, he comes to rely on the grace that saved us righteously.

The reason He did not come down from the Cross

The soldiers clothed Jesus with purple, put a crown of thorns on Him, and mocked Him. Even after He was hung on the Cross, those who passed by and the chief priests insulted Him, telling Him to come down so that they could see. However, if the One who had our sins passed on to Him had left the Cross without paying the price of sin, the problem of the judgment of sinners would have remained as it was. Because the righteousness of God is satisfied only when the price of sin is paid, Jesus, rather than avoiding the suffering and revealing Himself, paid that price to the end.

The Bible records, *"Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last" (Mark 15:37)*. Only after confirming the death with the centurion did Pilate give the body to Joseph, and Joseph laid the Lord in the tomb. The judgment He received

because of our sins was an actual death. Therefore, we must not reduce the sacrifice of the Savior to a mere vague sign of love. This is because, through that death, the price on which our lives depended was paid according to the law of God.

When we keep this fact in our hearts, our gratitude after being saved also grows deeper. Even while knowing that the price of sin was paid according to the law, we can overlook the suffering of the One who paid that price. But at the very moment we enjoy the joy of the remission of sins, we must remember the One who received judgment in our place. The suffering the Lord received is not an old story separate from our salvation, but the grace that has caused us to live today as children of God without sin.

Believe in the salvation given righteously

When Jesus breathed His last, it is recorded that *"the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mark 15:38)*. God did not say to come into the kingdom of heaven with sin left as it was; rather, He opened the way after having His Son bear that sin and its judgment. In the place where the unrighteousness of people went on, God solved the problem of sin righteously. Because of this perfect salvation, we can come before God with confidence.

If we calculate our conduct and try to add to the price of salvation, that amounts to regarding the price the Lord paid as insufficient. It is right to live good lives and serve the Lord, but on the Cross there is no remaining price that must be repaid with those things. In the atonement of the Savior there is no shortfall that we must fill. We must know this clearly, so that gratitude and obedience do not become a payment to buy salvation.

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Also, the fact that the Lord bore the sin of the world does not mean that people need not believe. Because this salvation, accomplished righteously, is effective for those who accept it in their hearts, all people must believe in the grace of the same Lord. We must receive not a salvation fitted to our own thoughts, but the salvation the Lord actually accomplished.

Now we cannot look at the scene of Barabbas being released merely as the affair of someone far away. We, who were to be judged for sin, have obtained life because of Jesus, who was judged according to the righteous law of God. The trial of people was unjust, but the salvation of God was righteous. That is why no one can shake this salvation. Let us believe in the Lord, who paid the full price of our sins according to the law, and preach this righteous gospel to those who need the same salvation. ✉

Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

Before the same Cross, people are divided in two

< Mark 15:1–47 >

“Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. Then Pilate asked Him, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ He answered and said to him, ‘It is as you say.’ And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, ‘Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!’ But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled. Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, ‘Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?’ For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. Pilate answered and said to them again, ‘What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?’ So they cried out again, ‘Crucify Him!’ Then Pilate said to them, ‘Why, what evil has He done?’ But they cried out all the more, ‘Crucify Him!’ So Pilate, wanting to gratify the

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crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified. Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it. And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS. With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!' Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.' Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him. Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eloi, Eloi,

lama sabachthani?' which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, 'Look, He is calling for Elijah!' Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, 'Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.' And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this Man was the Son of God!' There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem. Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was laid."

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People who were divided before the same Cross

There were many people around the Cross. The chief priests handed Jesus over out of envy, the crowd shouted to crucify Him, and the soldiers mocked Him, calling Him King. Those who passed by wagged their heads and insulted Him, and even the robbers who were hung with Him reviled the Lord. Yet from the mouth of the centurion, who saw the Lord breathe His last in the same place, came the confession *"Truly this Man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39)*. There were women looking on from afar, and there was Joseph, who boldly went in to Pilate and asked for the body of the Lord.

All of them saw the same Cross. But some mocked, and some recognized Him as the Son of God. The fact that the Lord was not crucified alone but was hung with robbers on either side also shows this. Mark records that both robbers reviled the Lord, but Luke records that one of them turned and asked, *"Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Luke 23:42)*. In this world there are people who recognize Jesus and believe, and there are people who not only fail to recognize Him and do not believe but also mock Him. Before the Cross, people are divided in two. Today, before this word, we must examine on which side we ourselves are standing.

What those who did not recognize Him saw

The words of those who mocked had a common standard. Saying, *"He saved others; Himself He cannot save" (Mark 15:31)*, they meant that if He came down from the Cross now, they would see and believe. They judged the Lord by visible power. They concluded that if He had power, He should escape

from that place at once, and that since He could not escape, He was neither a king nor the Christ. The soldiers' clothing Him with purple and bowing to Him was also a game of ridiculing a powerless king.

What they failed to recognize was who the One hung on the Cross was. Jesus is not one among many good people, but God, who made all things, who came clothed in human flesh. The Creator humbled Himself and received that humiliation in order to save His people from sin. To eyes that do not know the identity of the Lord, His humbling looks only like powerlessness. But the fact that the Lord did not use His power in that place does not mean that their eyes were right.

Today, too, people judge the Lord by the same standard. They set conditions, saying they will believe if their circumstances change as they wish, or they look only at His appearance in suffering, regard Him as a pitiable person, and pass Him by. But if one does not acknowledge that Jesus is God and the Savior, one believes in Him in vain. What the Lord wants is not sympathy, but faith that rightly knows and acknowledges who He is.

What the one who recognized Him believed

When the centurion saw the Lord breathe His last in that way, he confessed that He was the Son of God. The man who had been responsible for carrying out the execution recognized as the Son of God the One whom his own soldiers had nailed. Because Joseph was a man waiting for the kingdom of God, even though he was a prominent council member, he boldly went in to Pilate and asked for the body of the Lord. The women were those who had followed the Lord and ministered to Him from Galilee on.

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What the centurion saw was the same Cross that the mockers saw, but he knew the One hung on it differently.

The mockers, too, said that they would see and believe. But what they wanted to see was power to come down from the Cross, while what the centurion saw was the Lord breathing His last on the Cross in that way. Because what the Lord did for us was not to come down but to remain hanging to the end and die, the centurion, who saw that death and believed, stood in the right place. We, too, must recognize Him in what the Lord actually did.

When we know who He is, we also come to know why He was in that place. Jesus, who is God, came to remove the sin of the world, and by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, He had the sin of all mankind passed on to Him once and for all. The sins of our whole lives are also included in it. Because He bore that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death. His not coming down from the Cross was not powerlessness; it was in order to pay in full, as the One who had sin passed on to Him, the very wages of which it is said, *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins.

Therefore, to recognize the Lord means to believe two things together: that the One hung on the Cross is God, who made us, and that He solved our sins through the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. If one acknowledges only His power and does not believe the fact that He took our sins upon Himself, one cannot obtain the remission of sins. Conversely, looking only at His suffering and regarding Him as a pitiable person is not right faith either. The Lord is God, who saved us, and the Savior who is still alive even now.

He becomes the Savior only to those who believe

Although Jesus had the sins of all the people of the world passed on to Him, that salvation is effective for those who accept it in their hearts. The Lord becomes the Savior to those who believe, and He does not become the Savior to those who mock Him to the end and do not accept Him. Before the same Cross, it is written, *"Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him" (Mark 15:32)*, but the centurion confessed. The fact that the Cross stood before all people did not automatically save all people; those who recognize Him and believe receive that salvation.

We must examine ourselves as well. If, while calling on the name of the Lord in the church, we place the basis of salvation on our own goodness, then, like those who mocked, we have not yet recognized who the Lord is. If we call Jesus "my Lord," we must also receive the remission of sins from the work He accomplished. Placing the word ahead of our own thoughts is the faith that recognizes the Lord.

That faith also leads us in our daily lives. It keeps us from changing the gospel or putting the will of the Savior off in order to win the praise of people. Because we know the love of the One who saved us even while being insulted, we cannot easily abandon that work even if we meet with difficulties while preaching the gospel. It is not that we try to be saved by the merit of enduring suffering, but that we serve because the salvation we have received is precious.

The answer we must give before the Cross is the confession of faith that Jesus is our God and the Savior who bore our sins. Let us not stand on the side of those who mocked, but on the side of those who recognized Him. Because the risen Lord is alive even now, we can rely on Him. Let us preach this gospel,

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through which we know who He is and believe, to those who still see the Cross only as a powerless death. ✉

Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

Enter through the door of the kingdom of heaven that was opened before the door of the tomb was closed

< Mark 15:1–47 >

"Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. Then Pilate asked Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' He answered and said to him, 'It is as you say.' And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, 'Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!' But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled. Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, 'Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?' For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him

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over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. Pilate answered and said to them again, 'What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?' So they cried out again, 'Crucify Him!' Then Pilate said to them, 'Why, what evil has He done?' But they cried out all the more, 'Crucify Him!' So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified. Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it. And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS. With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!' Likewise the chief priests also,

mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.' Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him. Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, 'Look, He is calling for Elijah!' Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, 'Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.' And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this Man was the Son of God!' There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem. Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb

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which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was laid."

The veil that was torn before the door of the tomb was closed

At the end of Mark chapter 15 appear the tomb in which Jesus was laid and the stone that blocked its door. The Bible records that the women who had followed the Lord *"observed where He was laid" (Mark 15:47)*. If we read that scene by itself, it seems as though every way has been blocked by death. But before that, when Jesus breathed His last, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. In the very place where the Savior died, the door of the kingdom of heaven was opened for sinners. We must not judge the end by looking only at the tomb, but must know what was accomplished through the death of the Lord.

In the earlier part of this chapter appear people who bind Jesus, accuse Him, and hand Him over to the Cross. In the later part there are people who insult the Lord and demand that He come down so that they can see. If we look only at their actions, it seems as though the world drove Jesus out and won. But even while people were revealing their own sins, they did not know what kind of salvation the Lord was accomplishing. The will to save sinners did not depend on the recognition and welcome of people.

The salvation we believe in, too, does not become true only when the world recognizes it. What matters is what Jesus actually accomplished. The fact that He suffered and was buried in a tomb cannot be grounds for denying His salvation. Rather, because He received the judgment for our sins in our place, His

death became the way of life for us. The event of the veil of the temple being torn lets us see this grace.

The kingdom of God that is entered through the remission of sins

A person with sin cannot enter the kingdom of heaven by his own efforts. Even if he makes up his mind firmly and tries to live a good life, the judgment for the sins he has already committed does not go away. Nor can he pay the price of past sins with a promise not to commit any more sins in the future. A hope of heaven without the remission of sins can only remain one's own wish. God did not simply abandon sinners, but solved that problem through Jesus.

The opening of the door of the kingdom of heaven begins at the Jordan River. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and the sins of our whole lives were also included in them without any left out. Because the Lord bore those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive. That is what the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he said, *"He was wounded for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5)*. He also rose again from death. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins and can enter the kingdom of God. The way to the kingdom of heaven lies in the Savior, who took our sins upon Himself and even bore their judgment.

When we read the word that the veil of the temple was torn, we must also believe the content of this salvation. Knowing only the amazing phenomenon that occurred at the moment the Lord died is not enough. We must know what it means: just as Jesus

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said on the Cross, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*, He accomplished all that He had intended to do for sinners and opened the way to the kingdom of heaven to those who believe in that grace. The Savior opened the hope that had been closed because of our sins. That is why the kingdom of heaven is not simply a place where good people go, but a kingdom that those who have received the remission of sins enter.

This fact gives great assurance to us who are lacking. The way to the kingdom of heaven does not open and close depending on how strong our faith is today. Even on a day when we discover our own faults, the salvation Jesus accomplished does not change. Do not think that you can have hope only when you have become perfect. We have hope because we believe in the One who saved us perfectly. It is within that faith that we acknowledge our wrongs and live by following the word.

The door of heaven that was opened before the door of the tomb

Pay attention to the order of the text. The tearing of the veil of the temple happened before Joseph rolled the stone against the door of the tomb. At the moment the Lord breathed His last, the door of heaven was opened first, and the burial took place after that. Therefore, the scene of His being laid in the tomb is not a record that salvation failed, but a record that the One who opened the door of heaven actually died, and through that death, His paying the price of our sins in our place was actually accomplished.

It is written, "*Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door*

of the tomb" (Mark 15:46), and the women saw that place. Laying the body of the Lord with devotion is precious service, but human devotion and love cannot solve the problem of death. The hope of salvation lies not in the ability of the person who prepared the tomb, but in the Lord, who, after opening the door of heaven, rose again from that tomb.

Jesus is God, who is the Lord of life. He died to save us, but He did not remain in death forever. Because He who rose again from death is our Savior, those who have received the remission of sins can hope for eternal life. Salvation does not come from a heart that commemorates One who has passed away, but from believing in what the living Jesus accomplished and relying on Him.

Therefore, even when we think about death on this earth, we must also think about the resurrection of the Savior. The fact that the life of the flesh comes to an end weighs heavily on anyone. But for us who have received the remission of sins, there is the kingdom of God that the Lord has opened. Suppressing the fear of death with one's own courage is different from believing this promise. We can entrust eternal life to the One who bore death and lived again.

Respond with faith before the open door

The purpose for which the Lord opened this door is clear. The purpose of the Lord does not lie in our doing good deeds, but in our being saved from sin and obtaining eternal life. What the Lord wants to give is that very life of which it is said, *"The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23)*. So, what we must first ask before the open door is not how rightly we have lived, but whether we have believed in our hearts

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in the Son of God, who bore our sins. Because not everyone automatically believes the work of salvation just because it was accomplished before their eyes, the fact that one has heard the gospel many times cannot take the place of one's own faith.

The gospel that the Lord took all the sins of the world upon Himself is news that must be preached to all people. But those who hear it cannot enjoy the grace of the remission of sins while rejecting that Savior. Even though God has opened the way, one must not establish one's own righteousness and try to find another way. The only basis for entering the kingdom of heaven is the salvation the Savior accomplished.

Also, beside us there are people who do not know which way to go in the face of sin and death. What they need is not only the vague comfort that things will be all right. We must let them know that through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including even the sins of their whole lives, passed on to Him once and for all. We must preach the gospel that because He bore those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross, received judgment in their place, and died, and that He rose again from death. When we preach through the word the way the Lord has opened, they too can receive the remission of sins by faith. Let us not keep the hope we have received only in our own hearts.

The tomb blocked with a stone did not end the work of the Savior. Before the door of the tomb was closed, the door of heaven had already been opened, and Jesus rose up from death. We no longer need to make that door by our own goodness. Believe in the remission of sins given through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and enter through the open door of the kingdom of heaven. Hoping for the eternal kingdom that awaits us, let us rely on the living Lord today as well, and let us make this way of life known to other people. ✉

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CHAPTER

16

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, who is not in the tomb, and the saints' hope of resurrection

< Mark 16:1–11 >

"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?' But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.' So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She

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went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe."

The news of the resurrection that they heard when they went carrying spices

When the Sabbath was past, the women prepared spices to anoint Jesus with. As they went to the tomb on the morning of the first day, they worried about who would roll away the large stone. However, when they arrived, the stone had already been rolled away. The young man clothed in white whom they met inside the tomb said, *"Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here" (Mark 16:6)*. The news of the resurrection was heard by the people who had come looking for the body of the Lord who had died.

The problem the women saw was that the way to approach the dead body was blocked by a large stone. However, the news they heard at the tomb let them know that something far greater than that worry had been accomplished. It was the news not only that the stone had been moved, but that the Lord had risen. The women came carrying spices to put on a dead body, but the Lord rose up from death, beyond the range of what they had expected and prepared for.

The young man clothed in white clearly stated that the One the women were looking for was Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. The One who died and the One who rose are not different persons. They knew the place where the Lord had been buried and came looking for Him, and that very Lord rose. The resurrection is not a word that turns the Lord's death into something that never happened, but the event in which the One

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who actually died overcame death and rose again. Believing in this Lord's death as a fact and not believing in His resurrection are not two attitudes that can remain together. Only when this connection is clear can we believe that the Savior who received the judgment for our sins and the Savior who gave new life are one and the same. Therefore, the fact that the Lord has risen is not a word of comfort that makes us forget the sorrow of death for a while. Our faith, too, must not stop at remembering with sorrow the Lord who died, but must go forward to knowing and believing in the risen Savior.

You will meet Him in Galilee, as He said

The young man said, *"Go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you" (Mark 16:7)*. The promise the Lord had made before the disciples were scattered was now conveyed together with the news of the resurrection. The name of Peter, who had denied the Lord, was also called out separately. The Lord's word did not disappear because of the disciples' failure.

The news that they would meet Him in Galilee carries the meaning that the word the Lord had spoken before would be fulfilled just as He had said. Because of their own failure, the disciples would have found it hard to know what would happen from then on. However, the Lord's promise did not disappear according to their condition. In particular, the word to tell Peter as well shows that the Lord had not forgotten the disciple who had denied Him. The grace of the Lord, who knows his failure, is calling him back before the word.

There are times when, even after realizing our wrongs, we hold on only to the judgment of our own hearts. We may

conclude by ourselves that we can no longer come before the Lord. However, we must hear what salvation the Lord, who knows our failure, has accomplished and what He has said. Acknowledging our wrongs and denying even the Lord's grace are different things. The news of the resurrection, which was conveyed even to Peter, teaches us, too, that we must believe the Lord's word first, ahead of our own judgment.

The women were greatly amazed and afraid, and they said nothing to anyone. Next, the passage conveys that the risen Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene. Mary told this to the people who were mourning and weeping. However, the word says, *"When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe" (Mark 16:11)*. The heart that loved the Lord and mourned for Him and the heart that believed in the Lord's resurrection were not the same.

This is not to say that their sorrow was false. But just because that sorrow was genuine, their attitude of not believing in the resurrection does not become right as well. One can long for the Lord with a loving heart and yet fail to accept the word the Lord spoke. Therefore, we cannot place the standard of faith only on the depth of emotion. When the news of the resurrection was conveyed, they had to believe that word, no matter how great the death before their own eyes seemed.

Today, we, too, cannot explain faith only by the experience that our hearts were greatly moved when we heard the gospel. What salvation we have come to believe in must be clear. What matters is whether I have accepted the fact that Jesus bore my sin, received the judgment, and rose again. If we only repeat sorrow or joy without knowing that content, we are easily shaken when the circumstances of life change. When we believe in the facts the Lord has accomplished, an unchanging basis is formed for the peace of our hearts as well.

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Because He bore sin through baptism, He died and rose again

Jesus came to this earth to give us new life. At about the age of thirty, He received baptism from John in the Jordan River, and through that baptism He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. The sins of our whole lives were also all passed on to the Lord at that time. Because He was the One who bore the sin of the world, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for that sin in our place, and on the third day He rose again from death. The news that the tomb is empty is precisely the news that this salvation has been fully accomplished. We receive the remission of sins and obtain new life by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. The risen Lord gave the Holy Spirit as a gift to those who had received the remission of sins in this way. Matthew records, *"When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him" (Matthew 3:16)*. In the same way, the Holy Spirit comes to the person whose sins in the heart have been washed away by believing in the baptism of Jesus and the Cross. The Lord's resurrection does not end as an event in which He alone rose. Since the One who bore our sins and died has risen, His resurrection proclaims that those sins have all been resolved and that the Savior who delivered us from sin and death is alive.

When we believe in this gospel, the heart that had ceaselessly tried to make itself righteous in order to remove sin finds rest in the Lord's salvation. The Lord rose at dawn on the first day of the week in order to give rest to the hearts of you and me. A person who has not received the remission of sins wages war against sin every day because of the sin in his heart, but the Lord

removed all our sins and gave our hearts comfort and rest. We were not saved because it was a day when our hearts were at ease; rather, we enjoy peace because the Lord bore sin and even received the judgment for it. Even if difficulties remain in our lives, the basis of salvation is not shaken. This is because we believe in what the Lord has already accomplished.

We, too, have the hope of resurrection

We who believe in the Lord have the hope of rising again in the future. Death is not the final conclusion of our life. The Lord, who rose first, will also raise the saints again and let them live together in the eternal kingdom. Concerning that day, the Bible promises, *"And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17)*. Even when we grieve in the face of the death of a beloved saint, we can hold on to this hope. This does not mean that there is no sorrow, but that even in that sorrow, we can wait for the life the Lord will give.

The hope of resurrection is not a word that forces us to hide today's sorrow. When we let go of someone we love, it is natural to miss that person and to feel pain in our hearts. However, faith keeps us from holding on, in the midst of that sorrow, to the judgment that death ends everything. Because we believe that our Savior first rose again from death and will also give life to the saints, we can cherish the hope of meeting again. Even while there are tears, we can rely on the Lord's promise.

This hope also changes the meaning of the time we spend for the gospel. If what we gain in the world were everything, labor and sacrifice could look like a loss. However, when we know that our lives continue into eternity in the Lord, we do not take lightly the work of preaching the word of salvation to a single

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soul. Even as our bodies grow weak and the years pass, we can carry out today's work while looking to the life the Lord will give. The faith that believes in the risen Savior holds on to both tomorrow's hope and today's steps.

Let us not think of this faith only on the day we commemorate the resurrection. Even when we labor for the gospel today, let us remember that our lives do not end in this world. Jesus, who is not in the tomb but has risen, is our Savior. Giving thanks to the Lord, who has given the remission of sins, rest, and new life, let us preach this news of the resurrection to those who do not yet believe it. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Why do they not believe even after hearing the testimony of the resurrection?

< Mark 16:12–13 >

“After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.”

He appeared to two people walking on the road

The passage records, *“After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country” (Mark 16:12)*. They went and told this to the rest of the disciples. Earlier, the news from Mary Magdalene had been conveyed, and now the testimony of two people was also added. The news of the resurrection did not remain as one person’s vague expectation. The risen Lord personally appeared to people, and they preached the Lord whom they had met.

The passage does not say in detail who the two people were or what conversation they had on the road. The record that the Lord appeared in another form was also not given with the meaning that we should imagine the Lord’s appearance as we please. The flow of this short passage is clear. The Lord appeared, the two people reported it, and the rest did not believe

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either. Even though the testimony was conveyed again and again, their hearts still could not accept the news of the resurrection.

The two people conveyed the news they had come to know to the rest of the disciples. Their meeting with the risen Lord did not stay only within them. This is because it was news that had to be made known to the people who were still in sorrow and unbelief. If we, too, have believed in the gospel and received the remission of sins, we cannot end by keeping that grace as a comfort only for ourselves. Preaching what the Lord has accomplished so that others, too, can hear is the task of those who have received grace.

However, the news that was conveyed was not immediately accepted by everyone. The short word that says, *"They went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either" (Mark 16:13)*, shows that situation. Following the earlier testimony, they did not open their hearts even after hearing the testimony of other people as well. When people try to keep a judgment they have already made, it is hard for them to accept new facts. If a person holds on only to the fact that Jesus died and concludes that He cannot rise again, he ends up pushing even the testimony of the resurrection outside that judgment. Following this, the Lord rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart.

Accepting the Lord's death as a historical fact while rejecting His resurrection is inconsistent with true faith in Him. If we stop at acknowledging His death, we cannot fully know the salvation the Lord has accomplished. Therefore, when we believe in the Lord, we must have the faith that has received the remission of sins, but we must also have the faith that the Lord rose again. If there is no faith in our hearts that the Lord rose again, we cannot have the hope that we, too, will live again, nor can we do the work of God of preaching the gospel. Jesus is not One who remains only in the memories of the people who followed Him,

but the One who overcame death, rose, and appeared to people. Therefore, we who hear this news must believe that the Lord is the One who is alive even now.

Go forward from the place of hearing into faith

The disciples were people who had been with Jesus. However, the experience of having been with Him did not automatically make them believe in the resurrection. The Lord had already taught, *"The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day" (Mark 9:31),* but a heart that believed that word was needed. We, too, cannot say that our faith is clear merely because we have heard the gospel many times. We must examine whether we are accepting with our hearts the work that, as this gospel conveys, the Lord has accomplished.

Let us examine our own faith as we look at the disciples. Do you not think that there is no need for you to listen anymore because you are familiar with the explanation of the gospel? Familiarity and faith are not the same thing. In saying that we know the Lord's work, there must be the faith that our sins, too, have been resolved by that salvation. If that gospel remains a good story that applies only to other people, we still end up being afraid in the face of our own sins. We must accept the salvation the Lord has accomplished as grace for us.

Faith is not making one's conviction grow large by oneself without any basis. This is because the Lord has already given the basis for what we must believe. There is the work the Lord has accomplished, and there is also the word which conveys that work. What we must do is not wait until some special feeling arises within us, but hear that word and accept it. Our emotions

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do not make the Lord's salvation true. Because the Lord's salvation is true, we can believe.

What is that work? By receiving baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River, Jesus Himself bore all the sins of the world once and for all. The sins we commit throughout our lives were also all passed on to the Lord at that time. Because He was the One who bore sin, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for that sin in our place, and He rose again on the third day and personally appeared even to the two people who were going into the country. By believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we obtain the remission of sins and new life. The Lord is not only the Savior who bore sin and died, but also our Savior who is alive now. The One whom the two people met on the road is this very Savior.

Believing in His resurrection does not mean that our thoughts have become bright by themselves. It is believing that the Lord, who overcame sin and death, actually rose. Therefore, the assurance of salvation does not depend on how bright our emotions are; rather, because the salvation the Lord has accomplished is true, we enjoy peace by faith. Even if our shortcomings are discovered, we cannot turn the work of the Lord, who has already received the judgment for sin, back into something incomplete.

When we believe in the resurrection, the heart that seeks help from the Lord also becomes clear. We do not merely recall the teachings of a great man who has already passed away, but pray to the living Savior. The Lord, who received the judgment for sin for us and rose again, also knows our lives. Just because there are difficulties that have not been resolved does not mean that He is not alive. With the faith that believes in the Lord's salvation, we can tell Him our circumstances and ask for wisdom to act according to His word.

Why do they not believe even after hearing the testimony of the resurrection?

Also, the hope of resurrection changes our thoughts about death. A person who used to think that all hope also disappears when life in the world ends comes to look to the eternal life the Lord will give. This is also why Paul confessed, *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable" (1 Corinthians 15:19)*. It is not that we abandon our life today because of that hope. Rather, we gain reason to carry out more rightly the work entrusted to us now. Instead of following only the benefits we will gain for a little while, we can treasure the labor of preaching the news of salvation to people. This is because our Savior is greater than death.

The two people preached the Lord whom they had met, but the other disciples did not believe. We who preach the gospel, too, must not determine the value of the truth only by the reactions of those who hear. We must pray that their hearts will be opened and rightly explain what the Lord has accomplished. Rather than strongly showing the conviction of the one who speaks, it is important to clearly preach the content of the salvation that must be believed.

When the hearers do not believe right away, the one who preaches can also become discouraged. However, we must not reduce the content of the gospel or change it into a story the other person wants because the response is slow. We can listen to what that person does not understand and explain again the relationship between the baptism of the Lord, who bore sin, and the judgment He received in our place. Rather than thinking that we have finished all our work by the fact that we preached once, we need a heart that continues to serve that soul so that he may come to know the truth.

At the same time, we must not think that subduing the other person with words is faith. Faith is accepting with the heart the salvation the Lord has accomplished. Even if the preacher

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obtains an answer through forcefulness, that does not mean he has established the hearer's faith for him. Therefore, we must preach the word accurately and pray that the person may come to realize it. When we rely on the truth of the gospel itself, we can lay down our impatience and explain with patience. Testifying of the risen Lord is work done while trusting in His grace.

We must go forward from the place of hearing the news of the resurrection into faith. Let us believe in the new life the Lord has given and cherish the hope that He will also raise us again in the future. Let us get free from the heart that regards this life in the world as everything, and serve the gospel while looking to the eternal kingdom. The risen Lord is the Savior whom we can believe in and rely on even today. ✉

Why do they not believe even after hearing the testimony of the resurrection?

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

He who believes and is baptized will be saved

< Mark 16:14–18 >

“Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.’”

The mission He entrusted to the disciples who had not believed

When the eleven disciples were eating, Jesus appeared to them. And He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart. This was because the disciples had not believed the words of those who had seen that the Lord had risen. What the disciples, who were to become witnesses of the resurrection, had to receive first was faith that believes in the risen Lord. One cannot preach the gospel of new life while thinking that the Lord is in the tomb.

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The Lord, who rebuked them, entrusted them with a mission, saying, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15)*. Even while knowing their failure, He entrusted them with the gospel. The power of the spread of the gospel does not lie in the fact that the disciples were bold and perfect people from the beginning, but in the fact that the Lord, who overcame death, establishes them and sends them out. Before measuring the size of our own abilities, we, too, must first hear what the word is that the living Lord has entrusted to us.

The Lord did not leave the unbelieving heart as it was and tell them only to do a great deal of work. First, He pointed out the testimony of the resurrection that they had not accepted. This is because the person who preaches the gospel must himself believe in that salvation. We, too, cannot neglect hearing the word on the grounds that we are busy serving. The increase of work and the clarifying of faith do not automatically become the same thing. We must carry out the work entrusted to us with a heart that hears and believes in the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

What does the person who believes and is baptized believe?

The Lord said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16)*. This does not mean that one is saved merely by performing a ritual with water, regardless of faith. In the baptism of one who believes, there must be a confession about the work of Jesus, who saved him. Therefore, we must clearly know what we believe and how the Lord bore our sins. The reason the Lord

did not say only that whoever believes will be saved, but added the condition that it is the person who believes and is baptized, is that what washed away our sins is the baptism Jesus received. The Cross is the instrument of execution on which He received the punishment for sin, not the place where sins are washed away. That is why the token of faith is baptism.

When Jesus began His public ministry, He said to John in the Jordan River, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and received baptism. Through that baptism, all the sins of the world were passed on to the Lord once and for all, and the Lord also bore all the sins of our whole lives at that time. Because He bore sin, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for that sin in our place, and He rose again from death. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins. Therefore, the baptism we receive is a confession that we believe in the Lord, who bore our sins, died, and rose again. The act of a person receiving baptism cannot in itself replace the baptism Jesus received from John and the atonement on the Cross.

Therefore, one cannot explain one's faith only by the date one received baptism or the place where the ritual was performed. What matters is what one confessed to believe at that time. A person who believes that Jesus took even his sins upon Himself and received judgment in his place confesses that salvation through baptism. It is not that the ritual produces faith, but that the content of the salvation one believes is contained in the confession. If one knows this order, one can place salvation not in human deeds but in the work the Lord has accomplished.

The word that those who do not believe will be condemned must not be taken lightly either. This is because, even though the Lord fully bore the sin of the world, sin remains as it is in those who do not believe it, and a person who has sin receives the

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judgment for that sin. The Holy Spirit dwells in the person whose sins in the heart have been washed away by believing in the baptism of Jesus, but because the sins in the hearts of those who do not believe have not been washed away, the Holy Spirit cannot dwell there. What the Lord looks at in the end is not whether one says that he believes in Jesus, but whether or not the Holy Spirit is in his heart. Therefore, the fact that the Lord has accomplished salvation and people's believing in that salvation must be preached together. A career of having lived a religious life for a long time or a self-assessment of having done good things cannot replace faith. We cannot make another way for people to obtain the remission of sins, so we must make known the salvation of the Lord, who bore sin and received the judgment, and preach so that they may believe in Him.

If we speak only of the death on the Cross while leaving out the Lord's baptism, we cannot explain how our sins were passed on to the Lord. We must believe both in the work of bearing sin and in the work of paying the price of that sin. If one hears of the Lord's salvation and still tries to resolve sin in his own way, he is not accepting that grace. The gospel to be preached to all people is not a religious method we have devised but the salvation Jesus has accomplished.

Signs were given to serve the spread of the gospel

The Lord said, *"These signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues" (Mark 16:17)*, and He also spoke of being protected from harmful things and of the sick being healed. This authority was not given for people to show off their own abilities, but to serve the spread of the gospel that He had entrusted just before.

Therefore, if we make showing signs the goal of faith, we miss the purpose for which the Lord sends us.

Saints who believe in the gospel resist evil deceptions by relying on the Lord's name, and come to speak new words that convey heavenly salvation. When the gospel is preached, at the same time that the hearers receive the remission of sins in their hearts, demons flee and the Holy Spirit comes upon them. Taking up serpents means resisting by faith the people who have become servants of the devil, and not being hurt even if one drinks anything deadly means that even if one has drunk the poison in false words, it is neutralized when one hears the word of truth. Even when the same language is spoken, words telling one to build up one's own righteousness and the gospel that the Lord bore all sins are completely different news. That gospel sets even a heart shaken by deceptive words upon the word again. We must preach the gospel rightly, relying on the authority the Lord has given, and pray for those who need help. Testing one's own faith with serpents or poison is not the spread of the gospel that the Lord has entrusted.

The word about signs, too, must be accepted within this purpose of salvation. Overcoming evil deception, preaching the Lord's truth, and praying for weary saints are all connected with the work of serving the gospel. If gaining the reputation of having special abilities beyond others becomes the goal, the heart turns toward oneself rather than toward the Lord. A person who relies on the Lord's name looks after souls in need of help rather than exalting himself. He can also seek the Lord's help for the sick and look after them together.

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Unite your hearts in the Lord's will for all people

The Lord did not speak only of people who are familiar to us. As He said, *"Make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19)*, He spoke of all the world and all people. Rather than being satisfied only with the circumstances of our own church, we must broaden our hearts so that this gospel is preached to people of other languages and other nations as well. Not only those who preach directly but also those who translate and share the word and those who help through prayer and the labor of their lives serve this work together.

Translating the gospel into other languages requires actual preparation. Simply changing the words does not mean that the hearers will automatically understand all the meaning. People familiar with that language must examine the content and check whether the work of the Lord, who bore sin, is conveyed accurately. Sharing books or writings, too, is accomplished only when we find the people who will receive them and a way to deliver them. In this way, the word commanding us to preach the gospel to the world meets our lives today through concrete labor.

There is no need to put off beginning because we cannot handle the work of all nations at one time. We can preach the word to the people we are connected with now, prepare the necessary languages and materials, and pray for the workers who will work together with us. Work that begins in a nearby place sometimes extends to other places. We must not give up our own service by comparing it with the larger-scale labor of other people. When each person takes on by faith the work he is to carry out, he comes to take part together in the way by which the gospel is spread.

Serving by faith also does not mean boasting that one will do great things without preparation. We must look at what is

actually needed, honestly share our own circumstances, and consult together. Because we rely on the Lord, we pray, and we also offer our time and our hands to accomplish the work entrusted to us. Grace is received freely, but our labor is needed to preach that grace. Let us offer that labor not as the price for the remission of sins but as a response of thanksgiving for having been saved.

The world is wide, and our strength seems small. However, if we believe that this is the work the risen Lord has entrusted to us, we can begin the labor we can do today. Let us not reduce the content of salvation in order to win people's responses, but clearly preach the Lord's salvation, which He accomplished through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. Believing in the Lord, who has given new life, let us devote our hearts together to the work of preaching the gospel to all people. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord works together with those who preach the gospel

< Mark 16:19–20 >

"So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen."

"He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God"

Concerning the Lord, who spoke His last words to the disciples, the Gospel of Mark testifies, *"So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19)*. The Lord, who had died on the Cross and had been buried in the tomb, rose and ascended to heaven. The disciples could no longer see the Lord, who had been before their eyes, as they had before, but this did not mean that the Lord had become powerless or had disappeared. He is the Lord who is alive at the right hand of God even now. And the Holy Spirit is in the hearts of those who have received the remission of sins by believing in the baptism of

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Jesus and the Cross, so He is with us through the Holy Spirit and proves our salvation.

The order, namely that the Lord gave His word to the disciples before He ascended to heaven, is also important. The disciples were not people who had been left to decide by their own thoughts what they should now do. They had received a clear mission to preach the gospel to all people. Even though they could not see the Lord before their eyes as before, they could act according to the word He had entrusted to them. We, too, when we seek to know the Lord's will, must first listen to the word He has already given. When the work He has entrusted to us is clear, there is no reason to stop and wait only for some other special instruction.

The word that He sat down at the right hand of God makes it clear that the Lord does not remain in the suffering of the Cross. The Savior who overcame death is in glory. Therefore, the faith that knows the Lord's humbling of Himself must also look at His present glory along with it. The One who suffered for us is the very living Lord on whom we are to rely. We can give thanks as we remember His grace, and we can carry out the work He has entrusted to us as we believe in His authority.

The Jesus we believe in is not a teacher who left behind fine teachings and remains in death. He is God who saved us and the Savior who is alive even now. Therefore, the work of preaching the gospel that the Lord has entrusted to us is also not a matter of keeping the last will of a deceased person by our own strength, but of believing in the living Lord and carrying out the work He has commanded.

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He works together with those who preach everywhere

The last verse of the Gospel of Mark conveys, *"And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen" (Mark 16:20)*. The passage records together the work of the Lord in heaven and of the disciples who preach on earth. The fact that the Lord had ascended to heaven did not mean that the disciples were left with only their own ability. At the very place where they preached, there was the work of the Lord.

The faith that the Lord was with them did not let the disciples stay still. It made them go out to people with the word they had received. Relying on the Lord and our labor are not opposed to each other. Because we do not trust only in our own strength, we go forward praying, and because the Lord has entrusted it to us, we actually preach. An attitude of waiting only for results while doing nothing at all cannot be called faith that trusts the Lord.

That does not mean, however, that the activity of the disciples produced the work of the Lord. The passage says that the Lord worked together with them. The spread of the gospel is a work that the Lord entrusts and helps with. Human zeal cannot remove the sins of other people or give them life. We preach salvation, and the Lord brings souls to life through that word. When we rightly distinguish between our own labor and the work of the Lord, we can work hard and yet not credit the results to our own merit.

What must be made clear here is what they preached. The disciples did not go out to boast of their own special abilities. They preached the salvation that the Lord, who ascended to heaven, had accomplished on this earth. By receiving baptism from John, the Lord bore the sins of the whole world once and

for all, and at that time He also bore all the sins that we would commit throughout our lives. Just as the word says, *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*, because He bore those sins, He was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood, and died, receiving in our place the judgment that we were to receive; He rose again from death; and He has now sat down at the right hand of God. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit obtain the remission of sins and new life. This salvation is the gospel to be preached to all people.

The signs that the Lord performed also served the work of confirming that word. The signs did not take the place of the word and bind people's attention only to the power itself. Today, we, too, must not put conspicuous things ahead of the gospel. We must clearly explain the work of the Lord, who removed the sins of people, and we must ask the Lord to give faith to the souls who hear that word.

The role of the accompanying signs was to confirm the word. If the word is pushed back and only amazing phenomena remain, this departs from the purpose of the passage. We must not ask only what people saw and were amazed at, but must examine what salvation they heard and came to believe. What matters is whether the work of Jesus, who bore sin, is being clearly preached. Even the confession that the Lord is with us cannot be used apart from the gospel He has entrusted to us.

That is why those who preach the gospel need the labor of explaining. If we only repeat the words telling people to believe in Jesus and do not let them know how He solved sin, those who listen will find it hard to know clearly the object of their faith. We must explain the reason He took sin upon Himself through baptism and how this is connected with His receiving the judgment on the Cross. We must also preach the life that the

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risen Savior gives. Prayer that seeks the work of the Lord and the labor of preaching the word accurately must go together.

Believe in the Lord's companionship and carry out today's labor

When we think of the command to preach the gospel to all the world, our circumstances may feel small. We may feel at a loss as to how to preach this salvation to people whose languages and ways of life are different. However, the word that the Lord worked together with the disciples becomes for us, too, a reason to rely on Him. The Lord promised, *"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20)*. Because the gospel is not a matter of showing our own size but of making known the salvation of the Lord, we can hold on to that promise and go forward even if our circumstances are small.

Believing in the Lord does not mean that preparation and labor become unnecessary. We need the labor of preaching the word accurately, translating it into other languages, sharing it with those who need it, praying for that work, and helping one another. We must not cut down the content of the gospel or change it to suit the tastes of the listeners because we want to get a quick response. Even if it is to just one person, we must rightly preach how the Lord bore sin and saved us. As small labors pile up, more souls come to hear the gospel.

Not everyone does the same work in the same place. There are those who preach the word directly, there are those who review writings or help with translation, and there are also those who take on the necessary labor of daily life. Just because the outwardly visible roles are different does not mean that even the heart that serves by grace becomes smaller. When we carry out

the work entrusted to us in connection with others, more souls can hear the gospel. A church that believes the Lord is with it values one another's labor and serves with one heart.

The Gospel of Mark does not end by boasting of the abilities of the disciples, but ends by conveying that the Lord worked together with them. Let us, too, rely on this Lord. The Savior who ascended to heaven is alive and causes us to serve the work of preaching the gospel. Believing that this Lord works together with us, too, today, let us gather our strength for the work of preaching this gospel to the whole world during the days He allows. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The rest of heart given by the Lord, who rose on the first day of the week

< Mark 16:1–20 >

"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?' But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.' So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive

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and had been seen by her, they did not believe. After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either. Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.' So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen."

What happened at dawn on the first day of the week

The day on which Jesus rose was the first day of the week, that is, the dawn of the Lord's Day. Mark chapter 16 begins with the account of the women who went to the tomb with spices after the Sabbath was over. From this record that the Lord rose on the morning of the day after the Sabbath, we come to think about what the risen Lord has given us. The Lord first gave us rest. It is not a rest in which our outward circumstances become comfortable, but a rest in which our hearts find repose.

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Genesis says, *"Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Genesis 2:3)*. The reason God made the Sabbath one of the most important commandments in the Old Testament was also that what He wanted to give His people was rest. Those who have not received the remission of sins always struggle against sin because of the sin in their hearts, and they cannot rest. The Lord rose from death in order to make such a sinner a person without sin, to cause him to become a child of God, and to give rest to his heart.

When the women went to the tomb with spices, they thought that Jesus would be there. However, the stone had already been rolled away, and inside the tomb they heard the word that the Lord had risen. The body they were looking for was not there, but the news of the resurrection was. That news also included the message that Jesus was going before the disciples into Galilee, as He had said before. In this way, the One who rose fulfills what He has said. Therefore, our hearts, too, must not remain held only by circumstances that look as if everything is already over. Only when we believe the word of the Savior can we rightly know the salvation He accomplished and rest in it.

The new life given after He resolved the problem of sin

The risen Jesus is the very Savior who bore our sins. At about the age of thirty, by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, the Lord had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. To John, who was trying to stop the baptism, the Lord answered, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. Our lifelong

sins are also included in all those sins. Because the Lord bore those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment that we were to receive. And He rose again from death and gave us new life. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins and become children of God.

The fact that Jesus died and the fact that He rose must be believed together within our salvation. Through His death on the Cross He bore the judgment for sin, and through His resurrection He gave us the hope of new life. The Lord did not demand that sinners try a little harder and come to life by themselves. He Himself accomplished what we could not do. Therefore, those who have been saved can be freed from the heart that tried to end the problem of sin by relying on their own ability.

If we make how much we agonized after committing sins the grounds of our salvation, our hearts cannot rest. We end up always examining ourselves as to whether we have agonized enough, whether we remember all our sins, and whether we can avoid ever doing the same wrong again. However, our memory and resolve are not perfect. Because Jesus did not bear only the sins we remember, but took upon Himself all the sins of our whole lives, even the sins we have not yet come to know, rest comes to the heart that believes in His salvation.

The rest that the Lord gives does not mean a life in which there is nothing at all to do. Even when hardships continue outwardly and our bodies grow weary, we can enjoy the peace of the remission of sins. This is because the grounds on which we can stand before God do not lie in our circumstances. Jesus, who bore our sins and even received the judgment, is alive. If we believe in the salvation He accomplished, we can be freed from the heart that avoided God because of sin and can come forward with thanksgiving.

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Lay down your unbelieving heart

The Lord appeared to the eleven disciples, and *"He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart" (Mark 16:14)*, because they had heard the words of those who had seen the resurrection and yet did not accept them. Even though the sorrow of the disciples was deep, that did not make their unbelief right faith. They had to put what the Lord had accomplished ahead of the state of their own hearts. We, too, must look back on whether we are rejecting the word with our own thoughts even while we hear it.

There are cases in which people hear the word that the Lord bore all sins and yet think that their own sins alone still remain. They know that God has removed all their sins, and yet after a while they again say that they are sinners. That is breaking on their own the rest that the Lord has given. The scope of the remission of sins is not determined by our feelings, but by the work of Jesus, who took all the sins of the world upon Himself. That is why the Bible declares, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1)*. If we believe our own thoughts more than the word, we end up missing the rest that the Savior has given. Let us lay down our own judgment and believe in His perfect salvation.

This does not mean, however, that we insist that our wrong actions are not sins. What the Lord washed away are the sins we actually committed. Because we acknowledge those sins, we know that we need atonement, and because we believe in the atonement, we do not try to undergo the judgment for sin by ourselves again. We must distinguish between a life of correcting our wrongs and the grounds for obtaining the remission of sins. Saints who have been saved must

acknowledge their own faults in grace and honestly correct the wrongs they have done to their neighbors as well.

Jesus spoke of the salvation of those who believe and are baptized and the condemnation of those who do not believe. This is why the object of faith must be clear. Vaguely expecting that things will turn out well is different from believing in the Savior who washed away sins. The One we believe in is the Savior who had our sins passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment on the Cross because of those sins, and rose from death. When we have the faith that accepts that salvation, we enjoy the peace of the remission of sins before God.

The thanksgiving and service of those who have received the Holy Spirit

The risen Lord appeared to the disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit. *"And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" (John 20:22)*. The Lord gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to those who have received the remission of sins. It is not that we must forcibly raise our emotions in order to obtain the Holy Spirit. We must believe how Jesus bore our sins and saved us. Because the Holy Spirit dwells in hearts whose sins have been washed away, we live calling God Father. The new life that the risen Lord has given is not a comfort in words only, but the blessing of living as children of God.

At the end of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. The disciples went out and preached the word, and the Lord worked together with them. In this flow, too, we can see that obtaining rest of heart does not mean doing nothing at all. It is that those who believe

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in the grace of salvation work by relying on the living Lord. We move on from a life of laboring as if being chased in order to wash away sin to a life of preaching the grace we have received.

Our service, too, must be carried out upon this rest. If we live only in the fear that the Lord will accept us only if we do our work well, our hearts collapse at even a small failure. However, if we believe the fact that Jesus has already saved us perfectly, then even when we find our shortcomings, we can ask for help and take up the work again. Labor for the gospel is not a transaction to obtain salvation, but the thanksgiving of those who have been saved.

Do not keep the news that the Lord has risen merely as distant knowledge. Accept it as the word of the Savior who bore your sins and your judgment and gave new life. Whenever our hearts are shaken, let us think of this unchanging salvation rather than of our changing selves. Our remission of sins and our rest are in Jesus, who rose on the first day of the week. Let us live today in that peace, and to those who still cannot find a place to rest because of sin, let us also preach the rest that the Lord has given. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

We who believe that we will live again are not pitiable people

< Mark 16:1–20 >

"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?' But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.' So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive

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and had been seen by her, they did not believe. After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either. Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.' So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen."

When the resurrection feels real

Ordinarily, the resurrection does not feel very real to us. Even while we keep Easter every year and praise the risen Lord every Sunday, there are particular times when dying and living again comes to us as our own matter. Those times are when we stand before the tomb of a beloved saint who has left the world before us, or when our own bodies grow weak and we come to think about death. At such times, the hearts of those who have the faith that they will live again and of those who do not are completely different. Mark chapter 16 begins with the news

about Jesus, who was crucified, *"He is risen! He is not here" (Mark 16:6)*, and continues on to the scene in which the Lord rebukes the disciples who did not believe that resurrection.

The disciples did not hear the news that Jesus had risen only once. Mary reported it, and the two also reported it, but the disciples did not believe. Their experience in the past days, when they had followed the Lord, could not take the place of faith now. Jesus, who appeared to the eleven disciples, told them to go into all the world and preach the gospel only after He had rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart. This is because without the faith that the Lord has risen, one can neither do the work of preaching the gospel nor live a life of faith.

The faith that has received the remission of sins is not separate from the faith that believes in the risen Lord. Only when the faith that the Lord has risen is present together with it can we have the hope that we, too, will come alive again, and only when we have that hope do we not draw back from faith in the face of today's difficulties and the fear of death. Let us examine what this faith gives us.

He rose again for our new life

The resurrection of Jesus does not end merely with the fact that the Lord alone escaped death. He accomplished salvation to give new life to us who are under sin and death. The name Jesus contains the meaning *"He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)*. Jesus, who is God, came clothed in human flesh and bore the sin of mankind once and for all by receiving baptism from John, and He also had the sins of our whole lives passed on to Him at that time. Because He bore those sins, He hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, receiving the

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judgment in our place, and He entered the tomb and rose again in three days. Those who have received the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit have new life and the hope of the resurrection.

If the Lord had died because of our sins and simply remained in the tomb, we could not rely on a living Savior. However, the women who went to the tomb heard the news that Jesus, who was crucified, had risen. After that, the Lord Himself appeared to Mary, to the two, and to the disciples. The risen Lord showed Himself to those who had not believed at first.

We must also know clearly who the One who rose is. Jesus is God, who made us, and the Lord of life. The word that God the Father raised the Son from death does not mean that Jesus is merely a created being. The Son of God, who came clothed in human flesh, died for us and rose again. Because our Savior is the very One who gives life, we can believe that He will raise us up again, too.

Our souls, which have received the remission of sins, have obtained new life, and our bodies, too, will come alive again in the future. The end of our life on this earth does not mean that even the grace of God ends. When the Lord comes again, He will raise us up and cause us to live together in the eternal kingdom. We are people who have that hope. That is why, even while we live our present lives as precious, we do not regard our present lives alone as everything.

If there is no living again, we are pitiable people

The apostle Paul said as follows: *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable" (1 Corinthians 15:19)*. People of the world mostly live doing what

they want to do, but because we have been entrusted with the work of preaching the gospel, we cannot do all that we want to do and live exercising self-control. If there were no dying and living again and life on this earth were everything, there would be no one as pitiable as we are. But we do live again. That is why we are not sorrowful people but joyful people who have obtained new life.

Having this faith does not mean that we do not feel sorrow at all. There is the pain of parting from those we love, and there is also the fear of our own bodies growing weak. Only, even in that sorrow, we live keeping firmly in our hearts that even though we die, we will come alive again. We think of the fact that Jesus rose up from death and believe in the life He promised us. Because the hope the Lord has given us reaches farther than the end that is visible to our eyes, we can set our hearts upright again.

We need to distinguish between speaking of the resurrection as something we know and faith that lives relying on the resurrection. One can confess with one's lips that the Lord has risen again and yet make one's actual decisions following only the profits of this earth. At such times, we must examine again how this word relates to our lives. Think about what work the Lord, who made you alive, has entrusted to you today. Using the present time as befits those who will live forever is the life that believes in this hope.

Today, relying on the Lord, who ascended into heaven

After Jesus finished speaking, He ascended into heaven. Scripture depicts that scene, saying, *"He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19)*.

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The disciples went out and preached the gospel everywhere. They did not stop that work because the Lord could not be seen before their eyes; rather, they went forward following the word of the One who is alive, and the Lord worked with them. The faith in the resurrection became not only the hope for the future but also the basis for preaching the gospel today.

The faith that believes in the resurrection keeps us in the face of difficulties. Because there is the resurrection in the world to come, by which we will come alive again no matter when we die, we do not retreat from faith because of fear, whatever present difficulty or death may come. Even if we suffer loss while preaching the gospel and our labor does not bear fruit right away, we do not say that the work is in vain. This is because our life does not end on this earth.

Also, the labor of serving the gospel cannot be the price that causes us to rise again. New life is the grace received by believing in the salvation that Jesus accomplished. We are not people who obtain eternal life by doing much work, but people who preach that grace because we have obtained eternal life. If this order is clear, we do not boast that we have done more than others, nor do we lose hope because we carry out less owing to our circumstances. Each of us can take part together with thanksgiving in the place permitted to us.

The Lord raised up the disciples, who had wept and not believed, as witnesses of the living Savior. We, too, must get free from the heart that used to calculate as though life on this earth were everything. Look to the Lord, who delivered us from sin and judgment and gave us the hope of living again. Our life does not end on this earth. We who believe that we will live again are not pitiable people but joyful people. With that faith, let us faithfully serve the gospel the Lord has entrusted to us during the days He permits. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The new tongues a born-again person speaks, the language of the kingdom of heaven

< Mark 16:1–20 >

"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?' But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.' So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She

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went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe. After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either. Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.' So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen."

How to read the signs that follow those who believe

Jesus spoke of the signs that follow those who believe. Namely, they will cast out demons, speak with new tongues, take up serpents, not be harmed even if they drink poison, and when they lay hands on the sick, the sick will recover. If one reads this word only according to the letter, it sounds as though a born-again person must take up serpents and drink poison every day to prove his own faith. However, this word is a spiritual word

given to born-again people, and it is power that was given because it was needed for preaching the gospel. The flow of Mark chapter 16 shows this.

In this chapter, people who hear the news and people who bring the news appear again and again. The women heard at the tomb the word that Jesus had risen, and Mary and the two made known that they had met the living Lord, but the disciples did not believe. After rebuking them, the Lord gave the disciples the command *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15)*, and following that command, He spoke of the signs that follow those who believe. And at the end of the chapter, the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them. The signs stand in the very midst of the flow that is the spread of the gospel.

Among them, new tongues in particular show that the words that come out of the mouth of a born-again person change. A tongue means the language of a region. A born-again person still speaks the language of his own country, but with that language he speaks of the things of the kingdom of God. Because the lips that used to speak only of worldly benefit now preach the remission of sins and the kingdom of heaven, those words become new words to the hearers, words they have never heard before. New tongues are not sounds that cannot be understood, but the language of the kingdom of heaven that a born-again person preaches.

The content of salvation entrusted to our lips

The content of the language of the kingdom of heaven is the salvation that the risen Jesus accomplished. Jesus, who is God, came clothed in human flesh and bore all the sin of mankind

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once and for all by receiving baptism from John. The lifelong sins of all people are included in it. Because the Lord bore that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in their place the judgment that sinners were to receive. And He rose again from death. That those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins and obtain new life is the news entrusted to us.

Here, the baptism Jesus received from John and His death on the Cross are not separate from each other. Because the Lord took sin upon Himself, He bore the judgment for that sin. If one does not preach how sin was passed on to the Lord and only says that He suffered, the hearers find it hard to know how their own sins and the Savior's death are connected. We must explain what the Savior did according to that relationship. We must not try to persuade people quickly by cutting down the content.

The Lord then spoke of salvation and condemnation together, saying, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16)*. The work of preaching the gospel is much weightier and more important than sharing good feelings. This is because it is the work of telling people who are under sin and judgment about salvation so that they may believe in it. Having heard about Jesus and believing that He took our sins upon Himself and made atonement for them are not the same. We must help the hearers know clearly what they must believe according to the word.

To do so, we who preach must first stand on the gospel ourselves. The disciples, who heard of the Lord's resurrection and yet did not believe, were first rebuked for that unbelief. We cannot be satisfied with saying to people that they should believe while having no assurance in our own hearts. We must preach with the faith that has received the remission of sins and the faith that relies on the living Savior. The basis of our words is not the

position of the one who preaches but the fact of the salvation that the Lord accomplished.

Discern with the truth the words that harm the soul

The Lord, who said, *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18),* spoke of the authority to cast out demons given to those who believe. Preaching the gospel of the remission of sins is not merely the work of changing people's thoughts a little, but the work of letting souls held by lies hear and believe the truth of salvation. At the very moment one hears the gospel and receives the remission of sins, demons depart from that heart, and the Holy Spirit dwells there. We cannot make souls new by our own strength, but we can preach the word the Lord has given. We must believe that the Lord works through that word.

The word about serpents and poison, too, must not be received as a command to put one's body in danger in order to show off one's faith. Taking up serpents means that those who believe in the gospel do not fear people who serve as slaves of the devil but stand against them, and not being harmed even if they drink poison means that they discern with the word of truth the poison those people put into their words and neutralize it. Words that blur the salvation Jesus accomplished try to bind the heart again to sin and fear. Words do not become the right gospel just because they sound plausible and many people approve of them. We must confirm what the Lord says He has accomplished.

In particular, we must be careful of the claim that if one's resolve is strong, the problem of sin is solved. Merely raising the intensity of faith cannot change the content of salvation. No

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matter how firmly we resolve, that resolve cannot bear our sins or receive the judgment in our place. The One we should rely on is Jesus, and what we should believe is the salvation He accomplished. Instead of gripping our own hearts more tightly, we must know that salvation accurately through the word.

When our hearts have been shaken by hearing wrong words, let us not agonize alone, going over only those words again and again. We must hear the word in the church and have fellowship with the saints who believe in the same gospel. The truth that Jesus has already borne all sins neutralizes that poison and sets the heart upright again. The Lord has given us the word with which to discern lies. Those who hear and believe that word can also preach the right words of salvation to other souls.

Do not boast of power, but testify of the word

The Lord said that signs follow those who preach the gospel. Of what took place when the disciples preached everywhere, Scripture concludes, saying, *"The Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen" (Mark 16:20)*. The purpose was not to reveal that the disciples were remarkable people, but for the word of salvation that the Lord gave to be confirmed. We, too, must examine our hearts so that we do not desire our own ability to be recognized more than we desire souls to believe in the gospel.

Those who believe in the power the Lord has given can pray in faith when help is needed. The word in which He said, *"They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:18)*, was also given so that we would pray in faith when there is such a need. However, there is no need to go about deliberately seeking strange things in order to display power. The duty

entrusted to us is to preach the gospel. While carrying out that work, we need only ask the Lord for help and rely on the Lord's working. The faith that the living Savior is with us must not turn into a craving to draw people's attention with marvelous things.

Even after Jesus ascended into heaven, the work of preaching the word continued. This is because the Lord did not abandon the disciples but worked with them. We, too, need the same faith. It is not that one cannot preach the gospel because one does not speak well. One need only know the Lord's salvation rightly and speak step by step so that the other person can understand.

The new life that the Lord has given us has also changed what our lips will preach. We are not people who relay only the fears of the world, but people who preach the remission of sins and the hope of the kingdom of God. First, believe that word and engrave it on your heart. Let us rely on the living Savior and preach the truth that brings souls to life. The new tongues of a born-again person are the language of the kingdom of heaven. Let us live a life of preaching that language, received from the Lord, to those who have not yet heard it. ✉

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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.

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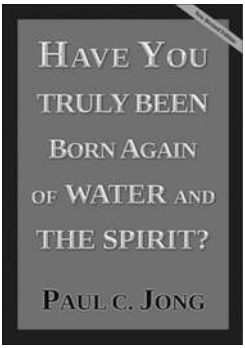
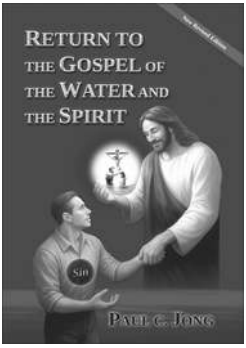
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

HAVE YOU TRULY BEEN BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT? [New Revised Edition]



Among many Christian books written about being born again, this is the first book of our time to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in strict accordance with the Scriptures. Man can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit. To be born again means that a sinner is saved from all his lifelong sins by believing in the baptism of Jesus and His blood of the Cross. Let's believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven as the righteous who have no sin.

RETURN TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT [New Revised Edition]



Let's return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Theology and doctrines themselves can't save us. However, many Christians still follow them, and consequently have not been born again yet. This book clearly tells us what mistakes theology and doctrines have made and how we can believe in Jesus in the most accurate and certain way.

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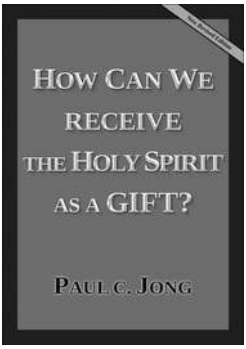
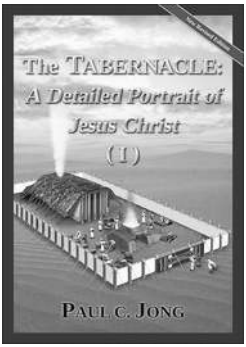
HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]



In Christianity, the most significantly discussed issue is salvation from sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However, few people have the exact knowledge of these two topics. Nevertheless, in reality people say that they believe in Jesus Christ while they are ignorant of true redemption and the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the true gospel that makes you receive the Holy Spirit? If you want to ask God for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then you must first know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and have faith in it. This book will certainly lead all Christians worldwide to receive the Holy Spirit through the washing away of all their sins.

The TABERNACLE : A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (I) [New Revised Edition]

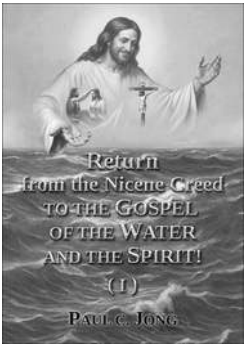


How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

In fact, the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen manifested in the gate of the Tabernacle's court show us the works of Jesus Christ in the New Testament's time that have saved the mankind. In this way, the Old Testament's Word of the Tabernacle and the Word of the New Testament are closely and definitely related to each other, like fine woven linen. But, unfortunately, this truth has been hidden for a long time to every truth seeker in Christianity.

Coming to this earth, Jesus Christ was baptized by John and shed His blood on the Cross. Without understanding and believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, none of us can ever find out the truth revealed in the Tabernacle. We must now learn this truth of the Tabernacle and believe in it. We all need to realize and believe in the truth manifested in the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen of the gate of the Tabernacle's court.

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.

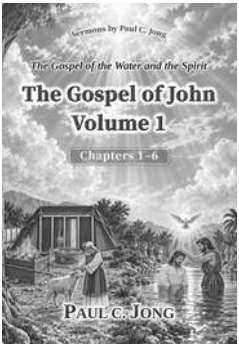
The baptism Jesus received from John was to fulfill the law of the sacrificial system found in Leviticus. That is, just as sin was transferred to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, the substance of that sacrificial law was fulfilled through Jesus's baptism.

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.

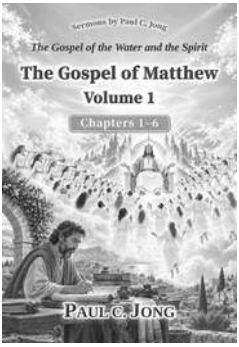
The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of John (3-Volume Series)



"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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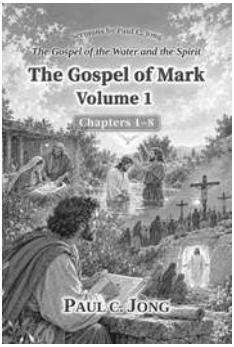
The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Mark (2-Volume Series)



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.

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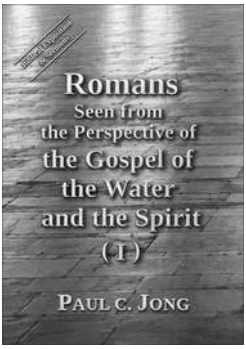
Paul C. Jong's Biblical Exposition & Sermons

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,

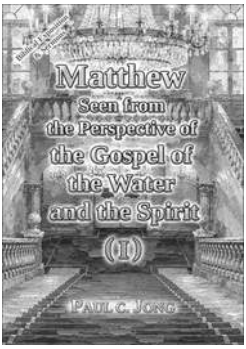
A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of 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)



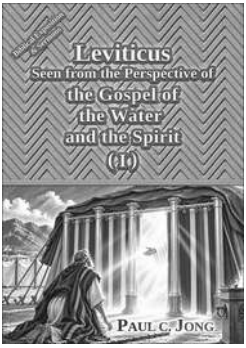
Why does sin still remain in your heart, even after believing in Jesus, reading the Bible for years, and attending church faithfully? Through Matthew chapters 1–4, this book answers clearly from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

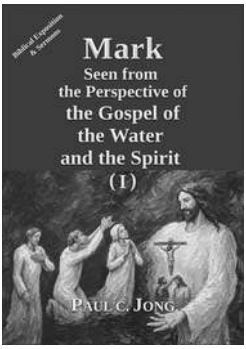


Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) examines how the Old Testament law of sacrifice prefigures the salvation of Jesus Christ, looking at the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering, as well as the consecration ceremony of the priests, Aaron's first sacrifice, and the incident of Nadab and Abihu.

The author, Pastor Paul C. Jong, has long preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and in this book, he also explains the eternal atonement Jesus completed with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, connecting it to the sacrifices of Leviticus.

How can a sinner be made sinless? This book gives a clear answer to that question through the Bible.

Mark Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)



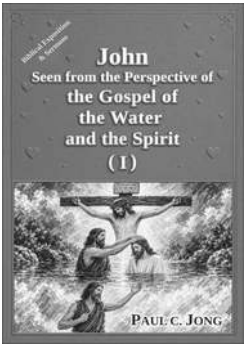
Who do you believe Jesus to be? Through Mark chapters 1–4, this book testifies to the beginning of the gospel, the Lord's authority to remit sins, and the ground of the heart that hears the Word.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed onto Him, bore the punishment for those sins in our place on the Cross, and rose from the dead and gave us eternal life. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins at once and the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Do not read this book merely to add to your knowledge. Examine what kind of ground your own heart is, and lay down your own righteousness and religious stubbornness. Receive the Word of life just as it is and enjoy true rest, and relying on the Lord even in the storms of life, bear the fruit of faith.

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)

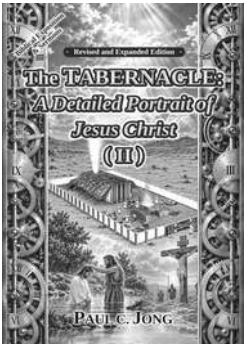


"Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)" expounds the Word from Luke chapters 1 through 6 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Each chapter is composed of three parts: Biblical Exposition, Questions and Answers, and Sermons. The central 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!

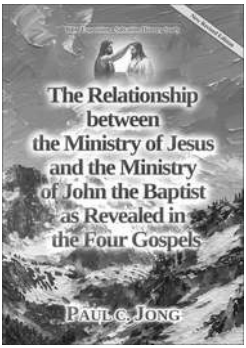
The TABERNACLE: A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (3-Volume Series)



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.

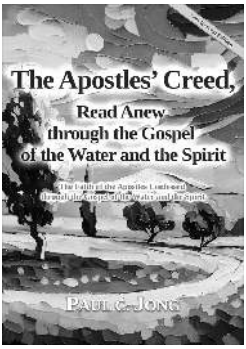
This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through 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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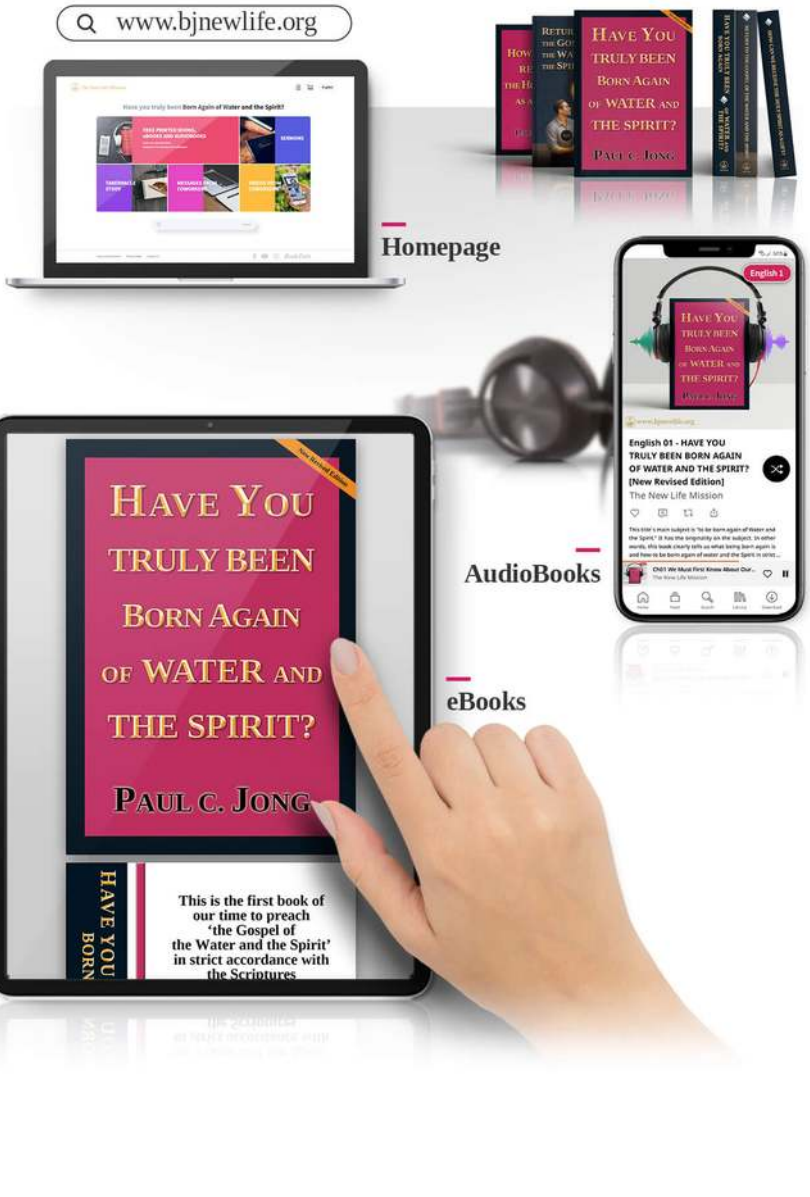

Our The New Life Mission is distributing Pastor Paul C. Jong's spiritual books in 'printed book' form through coworkers who have been born again by water and the Spirit.

If you wish to possess printed books to build up spiritual nourishment, or if you sincerely wish to participate in our gospel spreading ministry, please apply by writing your reason, name, contact information, and address to the email address below.

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Please help us spread the true gospel of Jesus Christ through our books so that more people can be born again of the water and the Spirit. We would also be grateful if you could introduce our website and books to many people and invite them to visit.

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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.

The veil torn from above, the way of salvation that the Lord opened

When Jesus breathed His last on the Cross, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. Who opened the way for sinners to come to God? It was not our good deeds that opened that door. Jesus, who is God, came in the body of a man and, by receiving baptism from John, had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. The sins of our past days, of today, and up to the day we die were also passed on to the Lord at that time. The Lord, who bore those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death.

The tearing of the veil means that God has accomplished all that He intended to do to save mankind and has opened the door of the kingdom of heaven to those who believe. It is not that He merely opened the door while leaving sin as it was; rather, the Lord has solved the problem of sin and judgment that had blocked our way. Therefore, the person who has received the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit can come boldly before God. Believe in the salvation the Lord has accomplished. For us who have received the remission of sins, the door of the kingdom of heaven is already open.

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