Sermons by Paul C. Jong

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

The Gospel of Matthew

Volume 3

Chapters 13–20



PAUL C. JONG



“But Jesus looked at them and said to them, ‘With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible’” (Matthew 19:26)

No one can wash away his sins and obtain eternal life by his own strength. Our good deeds cannot erase our past sins either. But God has accomplished the salvation that we could not accomplish. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and in order to receive the judgment for those sins in our place, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and rose again from death. The basis of salvation does not lie in our own efforts and righteousness. The remission of sins and eternal life are given to those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus Himself accomplished.

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and read now,

before the Antichrist appears,

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL C. JONG

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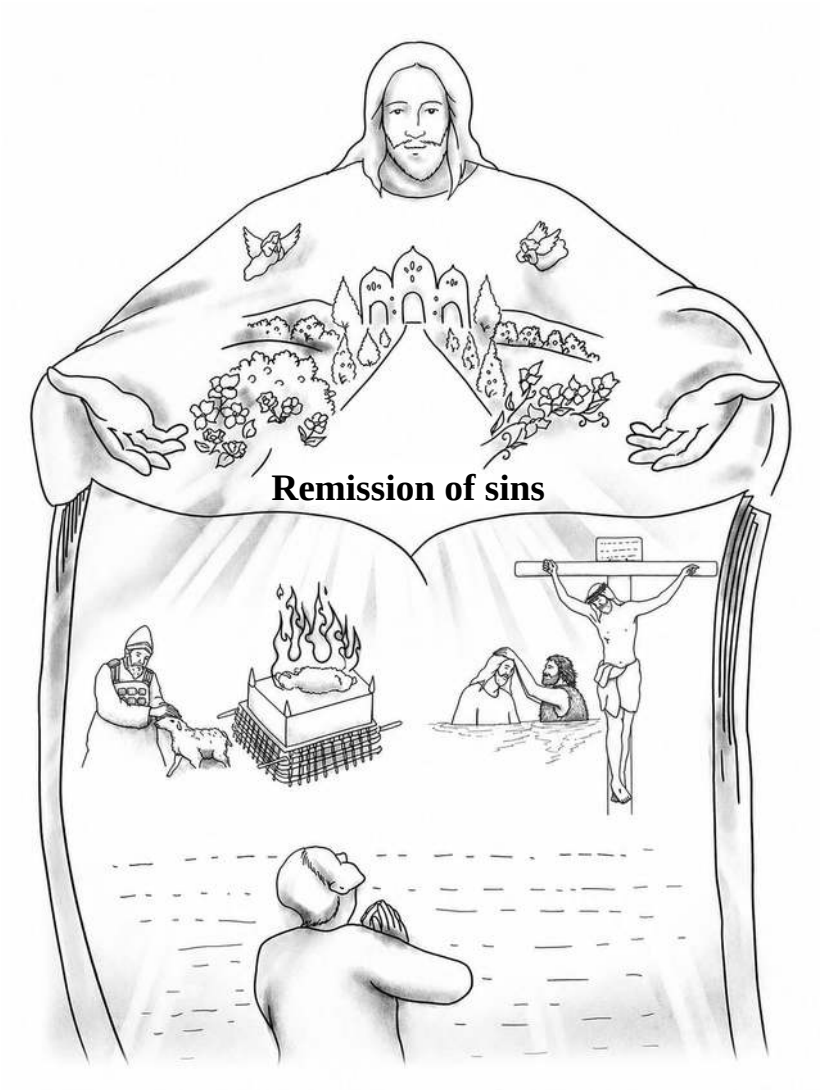

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Preface

Those who have found the treasure of the kingdom of heaven follow Jesus

Jesus spoke of the kingdom of heaven through the joy of a man who found treasure hidden in a field. *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44)*. This man, having seen the treasure, did not go back with the same heart as before. Because he knew how precious what he had found was, he sold what he had and bought that field. Giving up his possessions became a joy to him because he knew the value of the treasure he would gain by it.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is this precious to us. With riches gained in the world or with the recognition of people, we cannot remove our sins, nor can we obtain eternal life beyond death. But Jesus gave us the remission of sins and let us enter the kingdom of God. Those who know and believe in this salvation come to know what is most precious to them, so even if they suffer loss because of the gospel, they do not exchange the salvation they have received for the things of the world.

I hope that, as you read this word, you will accept the treasure of the kingdom of heaven as your own and joyfully follow Jesus, who gave that salvation.

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Jesus has removed our sins

To know that the treasure of the kingdom of heaven is precious, we must first see what we ourselves are like before God. The rich young man who came to Jesus said that he had kept all the commandments. But when he heard the word telling him to sell his possessions, give to the poor, and follow Jesus, he went away sorrowful. Knowing the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself and having actually kept it were different things. Through this word, Jesus exposed the young man's own righteousness, in which he had been trusting.

When we, too, stand before the word, we cannot look at that young man as if his case were someone else's affair. For having a little better conduct than other people does not mean that we have perfectly kept the commandments God has established. When we acknowledge that the evil thoughts and greed that defile a man come out of our own hearts as well, we come to cast away the thought that we can escape the judgment for sin by a few things we have done well. We need a salvation that we cannot provide for ourselves.

Jesus is God, who came clothed in a human body in order to save us, who are just like this. Peter's confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, was a confession of believing that Jesus is the One who would save us. After hearing that confession, Jesus taught that He Himself would suffer, be killed, and rise again. To know the salvation that Christ gives us, we must know why Jesus had to die.

Through the baptism He received at the Jordan River from John, the representative of mankind, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. All those sins include, without exception, the sins of our whole lifetime that you and I commit from the time we are born until we die. Because our sins

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were passed on to Jesus, Jesus was crucified on the Cross as the price of those sins. By shedding His blood and dying there, He received the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus has accomplished.

God did not pretend not to see sin, nor did He let our good deeds take the place of the price of sin. Because Jesus had all our sins passed on to Him and even received the judgment for them in our place, those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of all their sins, receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, and become children of God. The basis on which we can have the assurance of salvation does not lie in how admirable we ourselves have become, but in how Jesus has removed our sins. Therefore, even when your sins are revealed, do not leave the word, but believe in the grace of Jesus, who has saved us completely.

Those who believe the word lay down their own thoughts

A heart that believes in the salvation Jesus has accomplished is also shown in one's attitude toward His word. In the parable of the sower, the good ground is the person who hears the word and understands it. If we welcome the word for a while and then throw it away when difficulties come, or let our hearts be taken by the cares of the world and riches so that the word cannot bear fruit, then even though we have heard the precious gospel, we cannot enjoy its benefit. We need a heart that looks at itself in the light of the word and accepts just as they are the judgment God has made concerning sin and the word He has spoken concerning salvation.

We, too, who have already received the remission of sins, must keep on learning this faith. Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, but when Jesus said that He would die, Peter tried to block that way. To Peter's thinking, it would have been good for his beloved Jesus to avoid suffering, but that way was the way Jesus had to go for our sins.

So Jesus said to deny oneself, take up one's own cross, and follow Him. If we who have been saved are to follow the Lord, we must first learn what pleases Jesus rather than judging whether something is convenient for us. This means not pushing away the word because it does not fit our will, subduing our wrong stubbornness, and taking on the labor entrusted to us for the gospel. This is not paying the price of our sins, but a life of believing in and following Jesus, who saved us, as Lord.

Of course, we cannot walk this way by our resolution alone. The disciples, too, who lacked food to feed the great multitude before them, brought what they had to Jesus, and they received the bread Jesus gave and distributed it to the people. Jesus, who saved us, also has the power to help us, who are weak. Therefore, rather than drawing back because of your own shortcomings, ask the Lord for help, learn the word together with the church, and carry out by faith the work entrusted to you today.

We who have had all our sins canceled forgive our brothers

The faith that follows Jesus is also revealed when we deal with the brothers we live with. When Peter asked how many times he should forgive his brother, Jesus told the story of a servant whose debt, which he could not pay, had been canceled. That servant, whose debt of ten thousand talents had been

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canceled, seized his fellow servant who owed him a hundred denarii and pressed him to pay the debt. Because he forgot the great compassion he had received, he could not show compassion even to the one who fell down before him and begged him to wait.

If we, too, keep counting only our brother's wrongs, we come to have the same heart as this servant. For while we think about how much we have endured, we forget the remission of sins God has granted us. We, too, were people who owed a debt of sin that we could not pay by ourselves, and we are people who have come to live because Jesus removed all those sins. If we keep this grace in our hearts, then even when we deal with our brother, we can humble the heart that insisted that only we were right, wait for him to turn back, and forgive him from the heart.

That does not mean, however, that covering up a brother's wrong and saying nothing is love. Jesus said to go to a brother who has sinned and admonish him, and He said that if he hears, you have gained your brother. Therefore, when we admonish, we must not set our hearts on making him ashamed, but must let him know clearly what is wrong and help him return to the word. When we, too, receive admonition, we must humble ourselves before the same word, for we are all brothers and sisters who live by the compassion of Jesus.

God does not want even one little one among them to be lost. The labor of teaching the word to someone young in faith, raising up again a brother who has fallen, and praying together is the work of caring for one person whom God holds precious. I hope that the grace of salvation we have received will thus lead to a life of serving one another.

Those who have been served by Jesus live preaching the gospel

The heart that serves the brothers also turns toward those who have not yet received the remission of sins. Because we know how precious the salvation we have received is, we come to hope that others, too, will hear and believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit and obtain eternal life. The joy of having gained the treasure does not end with ourselves, but leads to the labor of preaching the word of salvation to those who suffer because of sin.

Even while doing this work, we easily fall into weighing who has worked longer and who receives better treatment. When the disciples sought high positions and were greatly displeased with one another, Jesus taught that the one who serves is the great one. And He made the reason for this clear through His own work. *"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28)*. Our life was given to us through this very service of Jesus. So rather than seeking to be exalted by people in the name of following Jesus, it is right that we serve them so that they may hear and believe the word of life.

Preaching the gospel involves labor that must be carried on for a long time. Not only is preaching the word directly precious, but working in one's own place and praying together so that the word may be spread to others are also precious. Even on days when others do not recognize it, when we think of Jesus, who removed our sins, and of the souls who need this gospel, the reason to continue that work becomes clear. Even if there are things we lose on the way of following the Lord, we do not lose the eternal life Jesus has given us and the glory of the kingdom of God that we will enjoy in the future.

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I hope that through this word you will believe in your hearts in the salvation Jesus has given and gain strength within that grace. If you do not yet have the assurance of the remission of sins, lay down your own righteousness and accept the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Let us who already believe in this gospel keep that treasure as precious and together serve the souls whom Jesus loves. A life of believing in and following Jesus, who saved us, and preaching that salvation to others as well, is the blessed life that we, who have gained the treasure of the kingdom of heaven, are to live. ✉

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CHAPTER

13

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The word bears fruit in the field of the heart that hears

< Matthew 13:1–9 >

“On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: ‘Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’”

The word given to the multitude gathered on the shore

When Jesus sat by the sea, a great multitude gathered. The people stood on the shore, and Jesus sat in a boat and spoke.

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Many people gathered in one place, but what matters now is how each person receives the word he has heard. So the parable of the sower makes those who hear examine their own hearts.

Let us read verses 1 and 2. *"On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore" (Matthew 13:1–2).* Jesus came out of the house and sat by the sea, and when the multitude came flocking, He got into a boat and sat. In chapter 5 He went up on a mountain, sat, and taught (Matthew 5:1), but here a boat became the place where He spoke. Even without a specially prepared platform, the Lord let people hear the word, whether on a mountain, by the sea, or in a boat. But the fact of having gathered near and the receiving of the word in the heart are two different things.

The opportunity to hear the word is precious. Before the multitude, Jesus teaches heavenly things, that is, things that cannot be found out by human thoughts alone. Therefore, what a person standing before the word needs first is not to put forward his own judgment, but to hear what Jesus is saying.

Let us read verse 3. *"Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: 'Behold, a sower went out to sow'" (Matthew 13:3).* The sower took the seed and went out. Just as seed can grow in the field only when it is sown, so when the word of God is preached to people, they are given the opportunity to hear and believe that word. Now Jesus Himself is letting the multitude hear that word.

A farmer does not deliberately choose the wayside or stony places to sow seed. While he was sowing it a handful at a time, the seed fell on various kinds of ground. So from verse 4 through verse 8 the text repeats the word *"some"* and shows to the end what becomes of the seed that went out from the same hand, on

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each different kind of ground. The seed was the same; what was different was the ground.

While you hear the word, you also should examine your own hearts. Look back and see whether you let it slip past you because it is familiar, whether you stop at being moved for a moment, or whether you push the word aside because of other thoughts. Before it is a means of classifying others, the parable Jesus tells is given to us who hear the word.

The end of the seed that fell by the wayside

Let us read verse 4. *"And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them" (Matthew 13:4)*. The seed fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured it. It is clear that the seed reached that place, but this did not lead on to the seed's growing and bearing fruit; so here the difference between the opportunity to hear the word and the keeping of the word is revealed.

Because a path is a place where people are always treading, its soil is packed hard. The seed cannot burrow into the soil by itself, so it lay exposed on the path, was spotted by the birds passing by, and was soon devoured. In verse 4 there is not a single word that it sprouted. Herein lies the reason why we cannot consider that we have held on to the word merely because we remember what we heard.

People easily accept only words that fit their own experience. Because they do not want to change the thoughts they have already settled on, they try to fit even what God says about their sin and salvation to their own judgment. But to hear the word is to acknowledge the fact that God knows our condition and speaks rightly.

Those who preach the word also need to know this result. Even when they clearly preach the same gospel, the responses of those who hear differ, but the content of the truth cannot be changed just because the other person did not accept it. Jesus made known beforehand what happened on the wayside after the seed was sown so that they might discern the word even amid such responses.

Here there is also the responsibility of the one who hears. If we keep our own hearts closed and only wait for someone else to speak to us more movingly, we cannot treat rightly the word that comes to our ears. So when you hear the word of salvation, acknowledge your own condition as you stand before God, and listen attentively to what Jesus has accomplished.

Verse 4 ends with the words *"the birds came and devoured them."* When you are given the opportunity to hear, receive that word as precious. As long as we leave the word outside our hearts, we cannot enjoy the assurance that comes from that word. With this first scene, Jesus awakens us, who had been listening carelessly.

The sprout that came up quickly and the soil that was not deep

Let us read verse 5. *"Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth" (Matthew 13:5)*. On the stony places something different from the wayside happened. Sprouts came out of the seed. Because there is an outward response, it is easy to think that things are going well, but along with that response Jesus reveals the fact that the soil is not deep.

We cannot judge the later fruit only by the fact that the

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sprouts came up quickly. What Jesus pays attention to is the condition of the ground that is to receive the seed. People too can rejoice greatly when they first hear the word, and while we value that joy, we must also examine whether we actually believe and rely on the word we have heard.

Let us read verse 6. *"But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away" (Matthew 13:6)*. When the sun rose, the sprouts were scorched and withered. Jesus finds the reason for this in their having no root. It was the unseen root rather than the visible sprout that determined what came after, so faith also cannot be judged by outwardly displayed zeal alone.

Believing the word is deeper than striving to keep a good feeling. It is accepting that God is right even before a word that goes against our thoughts, and relying on Jesus, who has saved us, even when our shortcomings are exposed. So the joy we have when we hear must be connected to the word on which we actually rely.

Jesus makes the reason clear in the words *"because they had no depth of earth."* Because gravel is spread just beneath the topsoil, the roots are blocked as they go down, and the sprouts that cannot reach moisture turn yellow and wither. The problem of ground without depth could not be made up for by the sprouts coming up quickly. Rather than boasting of the fact that you started something quickly, you also should check whether the basis of what you have started is the word of God. Even when people's praise diminishes, that basis remains.

This order is also needed in caring for others. Rather than considering everything done by looking only at the first response, we must help that person understand Jesus' word rightly. It is caring for him by examining together which word he must believe when he meets difficulties, so that understanding and

believing the word may continue.

The strength choked by the growing thorns

Let us read verse 7. *"And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them" (Matthew 13:7)*. This time the seed fell among thorns. Jesus says that the thorns sprang up. Even after the seed was sown, other things grew up together around it, and in the end they choked the strength the seed needed to grow.

So this scene does not let us rest content with the fact that we once heard the word. Along with interest in the word, other demands also enter our hearts. If we simply follow our anxieties and greed, those thoughts take hold of our hearts, and judging and acting according to the word we have heard is pushed to the back. So examine what you are continuing to cultivate.

Taking on and doing necessary work is different from having our hearts captured by that work. People who believe in God also look after their daily lives and carry out their responsibilities. But if we always put off the word on account of those responsibilities, we should look back and see what it is that leads us. The word sets our judgment right even in the midst of a busy life.

What the thorns did in verse 7 is expressed in the words *"choked them."* This means that even without openly opposing the word, we can keep that word from actually leading our lives. If, while rejoicing in the truth we have heard, we keep putting other things first in important choices, we need to examine that heart before the Lord.

Even so, we must not, upon seeing thorns growing, decide at once that someone is a person to give up on. This parable first

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asks how we ourselves are hearing the word. Tell God your anxieties, and think again about the word you had laid aside because of those anxieties. And by faith do what you can do in following the Lord's word.

Nor is it that we can hear the word only after we have gotten rid of all our anxieties. Anxieties are like waves rolling in, and even when we drive them back once, they come again; so, just as you breathe, entrust them to the Lord by faith each time. God speaks to us when we are anxious, and as we hear the word we learn what we must entrust to Him and what we must obey. When we trust Jesus, who knows our needs, we can also deal with the problems of our daily lives rightly before God.

The fruit of the seed revealed in the good ground

Let us read verse 8. *"But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:8)*. The earlier scenes ended with the seed being devoured, withering, and being choked, but in the good ground fruit appeared. After speaking of the earlier failures, Jesus clearly lets us hear even the scene in which the seed bears fruit.

Therefore, this parable is not to be heard only as a discouraging story. There are people who hear and believe the word, and that word bears fruit in their lives. Herein lies the reason why we can preach the gospel even while seeing the reality that many people reject the word. Because the Lord has spoken of fruit, we believe in the value of the word and keep on preaching it.

Even the fruit of the good ground is not all depicted as being of the same size; a hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold come out together. Jesus did not make the harvest fit a single number.

So, before this word, rather than comparing ourselves with the fruit of others and boasting or shrinking back, we need only believe and receive the word that has been preached to us.

Fruit is not something unrelated to the seed that springs up from the ground on its own; it is the fruit that the sown seed grows and bears. When we believe the word God has given, that word leads our thoughts and choices, and this leads to a life of valuing the gospel, preaching that word to others as well, and serving according to the will of God.

Here, do not make fruit a matter of paying the price of your salvation. The One who gives life is Jesus, and it is those who have received the grace of salvation who live by that word and bear fruit. If we count our activities and establish our own righteousness, we end up relying on ourselves again; but when we know grace, we give thanks to the Lord and carry out the work entrusted to us.

The text says that the seed in the good ground *"yielded a crop."* The seed did not stop at merely being in the ground but went on to bear fruit. Believe the word of God that has come to your hearts. I hope that you will keep learning the word the Lord has given and treasure living in a manner worthy of that word.

The word of salvation preached to us

When we speak of the word of God that the seed points to, we cannot leave its content empty. Jesus preached the will of God to save sinners. So we must acknowledge that we have no righteousness of our own with which to wash away our sins, and believe the word of salvation that God gives. The heart that hears responds rightly when it accepts the truthfulness of that word.

The law of atonement that God established included laying

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hands on the head of the offering. *"Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:4)*. Instead of putting forward his own boasting, the sinner had to rely on the offering and the law of atonement that God had established. It is God who establishes the way of the remission of sins.

The seed that falls on good ground and bears fruit, that is, the word of salvation preached to us, is as follows. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including even the sins we will commit throughout our lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all. And as the price of the sins that had been passed on to Him, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place, and He rose again from death and saved us completely. To those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit are given.

When you hear this word of salvation, do not take away from its content by the standard of the thoughts that are familiar to you. Faith is accepting just as it is what Jesus has accomplished. How the Lord dealt with our sins comes before how fervent our feelings are, and the assurance of the remission of sins is also based on that fact of salvation.

Remember this gospel even when you newly discover your shortcomings. Rather than hiding your heart, you need only acknowledge your shortcomings and, relying on Jesus, who has already saved you, turn from your wrongs. The word of God does not become false because of our weaknesses. Rather, we come to know more clearly the reason for relying on that word.

So the seed we are to preach must also be this clear. Words that merely please people cannot take the place of the remission of sins, so we must preach the gospel rightly so that those who hear may know and believe in Jesus' salvation. Both those who

preach the word and those who hear it value the salvation God has accomplished more than the evaluation of people.

Beyond the visible responses, to the heart that hears

Now think together about the kinds of ground on which the seed fell. On the wayside the seed was devoured, on the stony places it sprouted and then withered, among the thorns the growing thorns choked its strength, and on the good ground it bore fruit. Jesus does not let us see only what the beginning looks like, but lets us see even what becomes of it afterward.

We need eyes like this when we look back on our faith as well. Do not stop at merely recalling the day you heard the word or the emotion you first felt, but examine whether you believe that word now. It is looking back to see whether you accept what God says to you, and whether you are setting your thoughts and life right according to that word.

We cannot believe in someone's place and make his heart believe, but we can preach the word, explain it, and pray together. So do not give up all your labor by looking only at someone's initial indifference or difficulties. Within the parable of the sower there are the things that hinder fruit, and together with them there is also the abundant fruit borne in the good ground.

Conversely, the expectation of fruit can never be a reason to change the content of the word. If we preach Jesus' salvation vaguely in order to get a quick response, what those who hear must believe also becomes vague. Our part is to preach the word clearly, to help people understand that word, and to rely on God, who gives the fruit.

When you care for the people entrusted to you, refrain from

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hasty evaluations. What comes first is to examine whether the word has been preached to them, in what sense they heard it, and what they find difficult. Rather than forcing your own experience on them, confirm together what Jesus has said. This is because faith must be directed toward the word God has given.

Also, do not stop hearing because you think you know the word well. Even those who know this parable can let the word slip past them as on the wayside or have their hearts taken by anxieties, so each time we hear, we need an attitude of opening our hearts before God and acknowledging that He is right. The fact that we know the word does not take the place of hearing.

Jesus, who to the end tells us to hear

Let us read verse 9. *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:9)*. As He finishes the story, Jesus calls out to those who hear. This is not a word telling them to watch the scenes of the seed and the ground and leave it at that; it is a command that makes those who are now hearing that word respond with their hearts.

This word, that whoever has ears should hear well, is a call not to stop at hearing the sound, but to receive into our hearts the gospel we have heard and to rely on it by faith. Do not avoid the word that is directed at you; learn what you have not understood, and receive into your heart the truth you have clearly come to know. While Jesus is speaking to us, we must be people who hear that word.

The scenes of the wayside, the stony places, and the thorns make us who hear be on guard, and the fruit of the good ground lets us know how precious it is to receive the word. When we hear this warning and this promise together, examining our own

hearts and trusting the Lord become connected with each other. So even while we see our shortcomings, we do not depart from the word.

Keep this conclusion in your labor of preaching the word as well. Just because some seed is devoured and some sprouts wither, you must not forget even the seed that bears fruit. Jesus spoke of the fruit of the good ground. Although we cannot determine all the responses of those who hear, we can preach truthfully the word the Lord has entrusted to us.

With what kind of heart are you hearing the word now? If you are pushing the word away with your own thoughts, lay those thoughts down. If you have relied only on a moment's joy, hold fast clearly to the salvation Jesus has accomplished. If you are weighed down by the anxieties of daily life, tell God about those problems and again make your judgments according to the word.

Let us gratefully receive today's opportunity to hear the word. Believing in Jesus, who caused the seed to bear fruit in the good ground, let us keep in our hearts the gospel of the water and the Spirit that He has let us hear. Because the Lord has spoken, let us hear; because that word is true, let us believe; and let us live according to the word we have believed. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Blessed are the ears that hear the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven

< Matthew 13:10–23 >

"And the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?' He answered and said to them, 'Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: "Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them." But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not

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understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.'"

The disciples, who ask the meaning of the parable

After hearing the parable of the sower, the disciples came to Jesus and asked Him why He speaks to the multitude in parables. Receiving that question, Jesus explains what difference there is among the people who hear the word of the kingdom of heaven. So this conversation shows both the blessing of being able to hear the word and the responsibility of understanding that word.

Let us read verse 10. *"And the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?'" (Matthew 13:10)*. The disciples asked Jesus directly. When there is a word that one does not understand, seeking teaching from the One who spoke it—this attitude appears here. They did not interpret the parable as they themselves thought and draw their own conclusion, but waited for the Lord's explanation.

To ask a question means that one will keep listening. When the word did not agree with their own thoughts, they could have

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closed off the conversation, but the disciples came to Jesus. In this way, those who believe learn the word rather than hide what they do not know, and they accept the meaning that the Lord makes clear.

Jesus does not conclude the disciples' question with only an explanation of parables as a manner of expression, but tells them to whom it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. This is because the matter of understanding the word is deeper than the question of whether it is a story that falls easily on the ear; it is a question of what the heart is like before God, who speaks.

As we read the Bible, we come across familiar words. But knowing those words and understanding what God makes known through that word are different things. So do not be satisfied with having heard words such as sin and salvation, faith and fruit-bearing, but learn what that word reveals to you.

The abundance of those who receive what He has granted

Let us read verse 11. *"He answered and said to them, 'Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given'" (Matthew 13:11)*. The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are what Jesus makes known, and the disciples are people who hear and learn His word. So we must know the grace that Jesus has granted, and rather than exalting ourselves by what we have understood, we must receive the Lord's teaching all the more.

The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven spoken of here are the word concerning the way to enter heaven, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which removes all sins. The *"you"*

to whom it was given to know that word were those who sought to accept the word of God just as it is and to follow it, and the *"them"* to whom it was not given were those who heard and yet firmly closed their hearts. Therefore, the assurance of those who know the kingdom of heaven lies not in their own ability, but in the fact that Jesus has spoken to them and in the truthfulness of that word.

Let us read verse 12. *"For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him" (Matthew 13:12)*. Those who listen while treasuring the word they have received come to learn more, and those who do not accept the word lose even what they have already heard. It is a solemn declaration that one's attitude before the word determines one's knowledge and faith thereafter.

Do not read this abundance by turning it into a promise that worldly possessions will increase. The matter Jesus is now answering is knowing the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, so what He spoke of is the blessing by which those who have heard and accepted the word come to know the Lord's will more and more. That is why, the more we come to know the word, the clearer the eyes with which we see ourselves and salvation become.

The same idea as *"will be taken away"* appears again in verse 19. Since He said that the wicked one *"snatches away"* the word that was sown in the heart of the person who did not understand, the text itself shows that what the one who does not have loses is precisely the word of the kingdom that he had heard. On the other hand, the abundance given to the person who keeps the word he has heard does not stop at receiving the remission of sins, but continues on to living by that faith and following God.

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A warning about closed eyes and ears grown dull

Let us read verse 13. *"Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand" (Matthew 13:13)*. Jesus speaks of the state of not understanding even while having eyes and ears. It is seeing and hearing outwardly but not accepting that word. So this word awakens the heart that had felt secure merely because it was in the place of hearing.

Next, let us read verse 14. *"And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive'" (Matthew 13:14)*. Jesus connects the response that people are now showing with the prophecy of Isaiah. Since He said that the word spoken to the people of Isaiah's time was "fulfilled" in the people gathered before Jesus, the same picture was being repeated even with the Lord before their very eyes.

Let us read verse 15. *"For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them" (Matthew 13:15)*. At the center of this word is a heart that has become hardened. That the ears are dull and the eyes are closed is because the heart refuses to turn back to God, so we cannot attribute the matter of understanding only to the difference between a good mind and a poor one.

People want to hear explanations that are favorable to themselves, but the word of God also reveals our sins. If we push away the word that says we have sin, we cannot properly accept the grace of salvation that washes away that sin either. So, to be healed by God, we must acknowledge the picture of ourselves that He reveals.

Pay attention to the fact that verse 15 says that the *"hearts"* of this people have grown dull, that is, hardened. To consider the Lord's word right with our heads while not accepting it with our hearts—that is hardness. So the word *"turn"* does not stop at pleading once that we have done wrong, but refers to acknowledging that we were wrong, humbling our hearts, and changing direction toward the word of God.

If we direct this warning only at others, we ourselves fail to hear it. Examine what you, too, are refusing before the word. Rather than looking only for words that will protect our own thoughts, acknowledging that God is right and accepting the teaching that Jesus gives—this is the way to turn back from hardness.

The disciples' blessing of seeing and hearing

Let us read verse 16. *"But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear" (Matthew 13:16)*. Jesus calls the disciples' eyes and ears blessed. The disciples were now seeing Jesus, who had come, and hearing His word. They had not merely heard rumors about the kingdom of heaven secondhand; they were standing before Jesus, who was teaching about the kingdom of heaven.

Let us also read verse 17. *"For assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (Matthew 13:17)*. The disciples see and hear what many prophets and righteous men longed for. Since they are hearing His word at the time when the salvation God promised is being revealed through Jesus, Jesus Himself makes known how precious that grace is.

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This blessing was not praise the disciples earned by being better than others, but a blessing given because Jesus had come and had spoken to them. The great multitudes gathered by the sea on the same day also heard the same parable (Matthew 13:2), but among them were people who did not believe even though they saw Jesus before their very eyes. So the disciples had to receive with thanks the time and the word granted to them, and they could not take lightly the fact that the Lord's teaching was near them on the grounds that it was familiar.

Today, through the written word, we hear what Jesus has done and have been given the opportunity to learn clearly about the Lord who saved us and to believe in Him. Think about the grace that God has bestowed so that you could hear that word. Being able to hear the truth is a precious opportunity to believe that truth and live by it.

Rather than boasting to others of what we have seen with our eyes, we must know rightly what we have seen; and rather than remembering much of what we have heard with our ears, we must believe that word. The reason Jesus explained the parable of the sower after speaking of the blessing to the disciples also lies in His purpose of having the word that was heard lead to understanding.

The word of the kingdom sown in the heart

Let us read verses 18 and 19. *"Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside" (Matthew 13:18–19)*. Now Jesus explains what the seed is and what kind of person the wayside is. Even if the

word of the kingdom has been sown in the heart, if one does not understand it, the wicked one takes it away; this reveals how important it is to understand with the heart what one has heard and to believe it.

Understanding is not attaching to the word a meaning convenient to ourselves, but knowing what God says about us and the salvation that Jesus has accomplished. It is knowing why we need a Savior and believing how that Savior has washed away our sins. That is why it is necessary to learn the content of the word clearly.

According to the law that God established for dealing with sin, the sinner laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering. *"He shall bring the bull to the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, lay his hand on the bull's head, and kill the bull before the LORD" (Leviticus 4:4)*. The way to come to God was not a way that people make by putting forward their own righteousness, so one had to follow the will for atonement that God had set.

The center of the word of the kingdom that we must understand is right here. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus, our Savior, had all the sins of the world, including the sins that you and I will commit throughout our lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all. And as the price of those sins, He was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died in our place, 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 the gift of the Holy Spirit, so hearing and believing this work that God has accomplished is accepting the word of salvation.

So do not stop at vaguely thinking of Jesus as a good person, but believe in Him as the Savior who actually dealt with our sins. Faith has its object and its content, so when what we believe is

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clear, even when other words reach our ears, we can discern them on the basis of the salvation that Jesus has accomplished.

Memorizing the word of God is beneficial, but what has been memorized is not in itself understanding. We must know and believe what work Jesus has done and how it relates to our sins. The assurance of the remission of sins, too, does not come from our power of memory but from believing with our hearts the fact of salvation that God has spoken.

The hardship that comes because of the word, and the root of the heart

Let us read verses 20 and 21. *"But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles" (Matthew 13:20–21)*. The person who corresponds to the stony places received the word with joy immediately, but having no root within, endured for a while and then stumbled. Jesus does not explain the whole state of the hearer only by whether there was joy or not.

In particular, look at what caused the hardship. The text says that tribulation or persecution arises *"because of the word."* This means that we may face opposition because we believe Jesus' word. Even at such times, the fact that the word is true does not change; just because many people oppose it, the truth does not become a lie.

Earlier, in verse 6, it said that the sprouts on the stony places were scorched and withered *"when the sun was up,"* and in verse 21 Jesus explains that sun as the tribulation or persecution that

arises because of the word. The joy of first hearing does not last long, like brief moisture before the sun rises, but the salvation that Jesus has accomplished does not change according to feelings. So it is necessary to believe the Lord's word both when the heart is joyful and when it is weighed down by hardship. The root has to do with the faith that accepts that word as our sure foundation.

When you meet hardship, do not put all your effort only into recovering the emotion you felt at first, but examine again what the Lord has said. At such times, the areas in which, while saying you believe, you were actually relying on people's recognition may be revealed. Then, rather than insisting on your own expectations, you need only judge by relying on Jesus' word.

We must preach the word to those who are going through tribulation as well. We cannot guarantee that the hardship will soon disappear, but we can clearly preach that the salvation Jesus has accomplished is true and that He is the Savior of those who believe. Help that person by examining the word together, so that he can believe in God and endure.

Following the will of the word amid cares and temptation

Let us read verse 22. *"Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22)*. Here too there was the hearing of the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choked the word. Though the hearing was the same, a different result appeared depending on what was leading the heart.

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Cares put future needs first, and temptation makes the gain that can be obtained look large. Both grip people's hearts and make them follow their own circumstances before the word, and Jesus describes that result as *"unfruitful."* So we cannot pass off what has taken hold of the heart as merely a matter of daily life.

Taking care of what is needed for daily life also requires faith. We must believe that God knows our needs and fulfill our responsibilities without abandoning the word. If the desire for gain drags you toward denying the gospel, reject that temptation. The truth we believe comes before the size of what we can gain.

In verse 7 He said that the thorns grew up and *"choked them,"* that is, the seed, and in verse 22 He said that cares and temptation *"choke the word"* so that there is no fruit. The seed among the thorns was neither snatched away like the seed by the wayside nor quickly withered like the seed on the stony places, but it sprouted and grew; yet because of the thorns that grew up beside it, it did not come to bear fruit. What is it that keeps you from judging according to the word even though you know the word you have heard? You need to look back on whether it is people's recognition, worry over what you might lose, or greed to gain more, and examine the problem of your heart clearly before God.

Even amid the worries of daily life, remember that our Savior is Jesus. The Lord has washed away the sins that cannot be washed away even with much wealth, so when we think of the grace of salvation we have already received, it becomes clear what we should treasure most. Those who believe in Jesus live distinguishing between the needs of life and greed on the basis of that grace.

Tell the Lord about the things you are worried about. Do not give up the word because of those things, but learn what choices you should make according to the word. Those who fulfill their responsibilities according to God's will have a way to rely on

the Lord, and when they connect the word they have heard to actual choices, they come to discern the power of cares and temptation as well.

The fruit borne by the word that has been understood

Let us read verse 23. *"But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:23)*. Jesus explains that the good ground is the person who hears the word and understands it, and so He sets the standard clearly. Such a person does not stop at having been in the place of hearing, but is one who understands what the word he has heard is and believes it.

In today's text, the idea of understanding appears in verses 13, 14, and 19 as not understanding, and in verse 15 as what the hardened people avoided out of fear, and only when we come to verse 23 does the one who *"understands it"* at last appear. That person is one who has grasped what this word says to him, namely, that if there is sin, he will perish, that he needs a Savior, and that this Savior has saved him through the water and the Spirit. Even if his faith at first is only as large as a mustard seed, as he keeps hearing the word, his faith grows and he bears fruit.

The yield of a hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold shows that hearing and understanding the word does not end empty-handed. Yet that is no reason to boast of the fruit and exalt ourselves. Since it is Jesus who has enabled us to hear and has taught us to understand, it is fitting to have a heart that knows the grace received and keeps learning the word.

Jesus answered the disciples' question fully in this way, and

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after hearing the parable, they learned even its meaning. You also must not leave as they are the parts of the word you have heard that are not clear. Learn by following the explanation that Jesus has made clear, and examine how that word touches your faith and your life.

The ears that hear the word Jesus gives and the heart that accepts its meaning are blessed. Treasure this grace that has been granted to you. Accept the word you have learned as your faith for today, and live making choices according to that word. Hold fast in your hearts the truth that the Lord has taught you. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The parables of salvation that Jesus gave

< Matthew 13:10–50 >

“And the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: “Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.” But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places,

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this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.' Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?" He said to them, "An enemy has done this." The servants said to him, "Do you want us then to go and gather them up?" But he said, "No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"' Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.' Another parable He spoke to them: 'The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.' All these things Jesus spoke to

the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.' Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.' He answered and said to them: 'He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'"

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Today's word speaks about the parable of the sower. In particular, this chapter is the chapter of the parables, in which Jesus spoke all His words about the kingdom of heaven in parables. Why did Jesus speak in parables? It is because, if He had spoken directly, people would all have understood; so He explained by means of parables and spoke in parables in order that, among people, those who would understand might understand and those who would not understand might not understand. God's parables explain the invisible things of heaven by using real things on earth. A parable gathers things of similar kinds together and explains them so that they are easy to understand by relating them to one another, but what our Lord spoke was very difficult. So He said, *"It has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given" (Matthew 13:11).*

"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field"

So our Lord said as follows: *"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?" He said to them, "An enemy has done this." The servants said to him, "Do you want us then to go and gather them up?" But he said, "No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the*

reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"'" (Matthew 13:24–30).

God sowed very good seed in people's hearts. But it is not only God who sowed good seed on this earth. Satan the devil also sowed his own evil seed in this world. So in this world there are people who are born again, and there are also many people who are not born again but are very similar to those who are born again. That is because this enemy came into the world and sowed tares.

So on this earth, because of the two kinds of seed, the fruits of the truly good seed and of the bad seed have each grown up, and we must not try to pull these up. God said to just let them grow together until the final harvest. And we must sow good seed so that it bears good wheat, and gather it and offer it before God, so that in the end it can be put into God's barn. God has told us to devote ourselves only to sowing good seed.

The kingdom of heaven, which is like a mustard seed and leaven

He said as follows: *"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches'" (Matthew 13:31–32).* This kingdom of heaven was said, first, to be like a man who sowed good seed in his field, and second, to be like a mustard seed that a man took and planted in his own field. This tells what things happen when God's gospel of the kingdom of heaven is planted in people's hearts.

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At first we think of the kingdom of heaven as something very small and of no account. “Oh, that is nothing much. It is similar to how it was before I received the remission of sins, and there is nothing special about it. It just seems that my sins are gone?” Although it seems like nothing in this way, it is said that when this grows in our hearts, it becomes greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, and the birds of the air come and nest in its branches. That means that through people who have received the remission of sins and grown in faith, countless people receive the remission of sins. That is why it is said that the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man took and planted in his own field.

It means that this gospel planted in our hearts is like that. When it is first planted, it is barely visible, like a mustard seed; we wonder whether we have received the remission of sins or not, and it feels like nothing at all. However, as time passes and the word keeps absorbing water and keeps growing, and faith grows within us, it later becomes a great tree, so that we can clearly testify to others by faith, and by clearly testifying of the gospel, people can nest and rest under that tree, can receive protection under it, and can also grow within it. To put it simply and briefly, it means that when a person who has received the remission of sins grows in faith, countless people receive the remission of sins through him.

This gospel of the kingdom of heaven seems insignificant, but because it has the power of life, it is a gospel of very great blessing. I can tell you this very clearly. In human thinking this may seem like nothing, but this gospel of the water and the Spirit is not the nothing that people think it is. It means that this gospel is such a blessed gospel that it gives us many blessings and also causes many people to receive the remission of sins.

God also speaks again using a parable: *“Another parable He*

spoke to them: 'The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened'" (Matthew 13:33). This word, too, is a word spoken in a parable. What did He speak of in a parable? He is speaking of how great a place the kingdom of heaven is. He says that the kingdom of heaven is like putting leaven into three measures of meal and making it rise; at first the kingdom of heaven feels like nothing, so it is easy to think, "Since I have received the remission of sins, I suppose I am going to heaven. If I go, I go; what is so special about it? I am not going to a bad place but to a good place, so for now I can be at ease." Of course, it can be that way at first after receiving the remission of sins, but as time passes and we come to know the bitterness of the world, and we see brothers or peers leave this world, whether through illness or anything else, and attend their funerals, the passing of the years no longer feels like nothing much. It means that when we see many people go before us and live while going through the many difficulties of this world, only then do we come to know, little by little, how great the kingdom of heaven is and how great a blessing it is.

Whatever we may feel, the kingdom of heaven is in fact an enormously great place. God made the heavenly kingdom, so great that we cannot imagine it, and gave it to us. Speaking of this kingdom of heaven in a parable, our Lord said that it is like leaven put into three measures of meal until it all rose. When you first look at leaven, it looks just small and unimpressive, so it is regarded as nothing; but what happens when the leaven is put into three measures of meal? When you try to make three measures of meal rise, this leaven has to go in, and when the leaven goes in, the meal rises enormously. It rises beyond what we had thought, and it means that the kingdom of heaven is even beyond what we actually feel.

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Dear fellow believers, do you think about the days ahead when we will enter and live in the kingdom of heaven? When we think of how we will enter and live in the heavenly kingdom in the future, that place is so enormous that we cannot imagine it. Therefore, this word is telling us that our salvation is not something with which we are satisfied and stop; rather, when we know how great the kingdom of heaven that God has given us is and live hoping for it, the life of faith we live as saved people shines several times brighter.

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field"

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44). For example, suppose that a man who deals in land was looking around to buy just an ordinary field, and found a box containing a very large diamond in the middle of that field. He would quietly bury the box, go to the owner, and say that he would buy that field; and even if the owner asked for an enormous amount of money, he would sell all that he had and buy that field. This is the parable of the kingdom of heaven. The meaning of this word is that after you and I meet the gospel of the water and the Spirit and discover that this is truly salvation, this is eternal life, and this is the way to the heavenly kingdom, we sell everything of our own to buy this.

Dear fellow believers, is there anything more precious than the Lord Jesus? There is also a hymn like that, isn't there? Is there anything in this world more precious than this salvation that Jesus Christ has given us, than this gospel by which He

removed your sins and mine with the water and the Spirit? There is nothing in this world more precious than this gospel. There is nothing on this earth greater than the Lord, who removed all your sins and mine through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This gospel is the greatest thing.

Those who, after discovering this gospel, truly know that it is salvation sell everything they have and buy it. But what about the foolish people who do not know this? They do not sell everything; rather, if even a little of what is theirs suffers loss, they quit. He said that when a man finds treasure hidden in a field, he rejoices, sells all that he has, and buys that field. If people find this and yet do not know how precious it is, then the moment they suffer even a little loss, they say, "Oh dear, should I believe this or not? If I believe this, the persecution is severe; if I believe this, there are things I lose. Let me quit." Among people there are those who do this. But if they know that this is truly precious, they sell all that they have and buy it. Once you meet the gospel of the water and the Spirit and are truly born again, everything other than the gospel looks trivial. So a person who was attending a seminary quits the seminary without any regret, and even if he had a hundred graduate school diplomas, he would not be sorry to give them up. "What use is this? What use is a lump of gold, what use is a diamond, what use is honor, what use is life? Is there anything more precious than this gospel?" Dear fellow believers, a person who truly knows that this gospel is precious will make this gospel his own at any cost, even if he must offer up his own life.

I cannot tell you how precious this gospel is. It is because of this gospel that we receive the Lord's love and salvation in abundance. Our Lord came to this earth, received baptism from John and had the sin of the world transferred to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross, rose again, and saved you and me

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with the water and the blood; and this gospel makes you and me go to the kingdom of heaven, this gospel makes you and me become children of God and the people of God, and this gospel makes you and me never die and live forever in the heavenly kingdom. God has made you into complete human beings through this gospel of the water and the Spirit; how could we exchange this gospel for anything else? We could never do that.

Once we are born again, people say to us—these are the tempting words of Satan the devil—"Hey, I will send you to study abroad." They say, "If you, having received the remission of sins, just stay here quietly, I will send you to study abroad. And I will buy you a good car, too. And I will leave all this property to you." But the gospel is something that cannot be exchanged for anything. It absolutely cannot be exchanged. No matter what happens, it cannot be exchanged.

A born-again person comes to confess, "All that is of no use. To me it is nothing but scraps of waste paper." As long as I have this one body of mine with which I can serve the Lord and I have the gospel, that is enough; what profit is it to me if they give me all their property? Am I going to eat, drink, enjoy myself, and play with it? Since I will preach the gospel and preach the word every day, what property do I need, and what car do I need? Even without a car I have two good feet, and as long as I pay, I can ride in a car as much as I like, so why should I maintain a car and why should I pay taxes on it? The point is, why should I go to such trouble? I am the one who is to make use of the car; should I serve the car? Also, they say they will send me to study abroad, but what need is there anymore for studies learned in the world? Dear fellow believers, this is not to say that since studying is unnecessary you should quit all your studies; rather, it means that if it is truly necessary in order to preach the gospel, you should study, but there is no need to do so to gain the honor

of the world. It means that we cannot give up this gospel because of the things of the world.

Dear fellow believers, will you give up a doctorate in theology and receive the remission of sins, or will you become a doctor of theology and give up receiving the remission of sins? It has to be one of the two. But a doctorate in theology can be earned at any time as long as you study, whereas a life of believing the gospel and living for the real truth is not an opportunity that comes every day. If the opportunity comes and you do not believe and do not accept it in your heart—if you know it and still do not believe—it is eternal hell. You can never again receive the remission of sins. That is why He spoke in this way here: how precious the gospel is—it cannot be exchanged for anything whatsoever.

Yet people say that if you are born again, it does not matter if you stay in a church of the world, and they ask why we gather separately. They say such things a lot. But, dear fellow believers, it says that when a man saw the treasure, he sold all that he had and bought the treasure in that field. This gospel has that kind of worth. This gospel that you and I have is the most precious and valuable treasure, so much so that it cannot be bought with anything in this world. If someone set down a lump of gold or a box of diamonds and said, "I will give you this, so give up the gospel and give up the church. Sell this and use it all your life, do not attend the Church of God, and give up this gospel. Believe another gospel. Just believe in the blood of the Cross only," is there anyone who would do so? Perhaps there may be someone who would. But whoever does so will die before spending all that wealth, and will go to a place swarming with maggots and suffer forever.

That is why He said, *"Nor cast your pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6)*. Pigs do not know pearls. Rather than that shiny

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thing, pigs want a lump of rotten radish more. But to your souls and mine, the gospel of the water and the Spirit is truly the most valuable treasure.

Living in this last age, you must stay fully alert. I hope that you will not cling too much to what will decay, not cling too much to what will be destroyed, and not cling too much to yourselves, but that you will believe in this salvation given to you, this gospel of the water and the Spirit, this life, this gospel more valuable than the whole world, as precious, and live while thinking of how you will live in the heavenly kingdom and enjoy glory in the future.

"When he had found one pearl of great price"

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45–46). Dear fellow believers, the good pearl refers to this gospel the Lord has given us, and it says that in order to buy it, he sold all that he had and bought that pearl. The reason He specifically said pearl and not treasure is that, just as a pearl is formed within the pain of a shellfish, it refers to the sufferings or difficulties we undergo because of this gospel.

As we live on this earth, our lives undergo difficulties and pain. Life is like a ship that keeps sailing the sea, crossing over the waves. At sea there are times when a storm arises, times when it is calm, times when the wind blows, times when the waves rise high, and times when we suffer because of many waves. In fact, difficulties and hardships follow every life. We live in this world enduring patiently in all hardships. Even apart from the gospel, there are things on this earth that we must

endure patiently as we live; then after we have received the remission of sins and been saved, how could there be nothing that you and I suffer? There are parts where, because of the gospel, we must endure patiently, must suffer, and need perseverance. It means that because of the gospel we endure patiently to the end. It says that when he found one valuable pearl, he sold all that he had and bought the pearl.

Dear fellow believers, we must live enduring patiently, persevering, and holding out to the end through the tribulations, persecutions, and difficulties that come because of the gospel. If we live with a faith that endures patiently until the kingdom of heaven comes, until the day our Lord comes, until the day we go before the Lord, we will receive everything.

Dear fellow believers, it says that the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking good pearls. If a merchant finds a truly good pearl, wouldn't he sell everything and buy it? Likewise, when you and I find this truly valuable gospel, we must not throw away this gospel because of the pain that comes because of it, but must endure patiently and persevere to the end, and hold on to this gospel even at the cost of all our possessions and all our lives, and in the end keep it as our own.

Dear fellow believers, it is clear that this age is one in which people are very comfortable physically but which is very difficult spiritually. At such a time as this, God, who spoke the parables of the kingdom of heaven, has told us what price we must pay for this gospel He has given us. We are those who have already received the remission of sins. Now we must trade by faith with this gospel, undergo difficulties because of this gospel, and, if there is anything hard or any loss, accept it all and endure patiently. Rather, by faith we must seek good things before God, and by faith do much trading before God and make a profit to offer to God—we must become such wise merchants of the gospel.

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The net that separates the wicked from among the righteous

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:47–50). Our Lord said, using a parable, that the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet. At the end, God causes the people who believe in Jesus to increase in number in the church. No matter how many people who believe in Jesus there may be on this earth, at the end the Lord settles accounts, putting the good into vessels and throwing the bad away. He said that the wicked will be separated from among the righteous and cast into the furnace of fire, and here the wicked are those who do evil works that go against the gospel. There are also people who have received the remission of sins and yet will go into the fire of hell. Who are such wicked people? Who are those who are wicked even though they are righteous? Those who do not preach the gospel, who hide the gospel, who corrupt the gospel, who oppose the gospel, who use the gospel to buy bread to eat, who exchange the gospel for a bowl of red bean porridge and eat it—such people will be picked out by God on the last day. When the Lord carries out the final harvest on this earth, He catches the wicked and picks them out, even though they are said to be righteous. He does not put them into good vessels, but catches them and simply throws them away.

There are people who can end up like this even after receiving the remission of sins. If someone has received the

remission of sins and also knows the gospel, yet does not preach the gospel but just preaches only the blood of the Cross, which is easy for people to understand and brings no persecution, and so calls everyone who comes in righteous, and uses people's zeal for his own benefit and for exalting his own name, that is an evil thing before the Lord. Such a thing cannot be excused before the Lord.

Dear fellow believers, if a person who has the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he is branded as wicked before the Lord and is cast away. If a person who has the gospel of the water and the Spirit opposes and hinders a person who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that person is wicked. If one opposes and goes against the gospel of God, that person is wicked. The outcome will be clearly revealed before the Lord.

While speaking the parables of the kingdom of heaven, the Lord said that the kingdom of heaven is like a net cast into the sea. Our Lord spreads His net wide over the whole world with the gospel of the water and the Spirit and catches fish. Every fish there is has come into it. He has the angels separate the wicked from among them. Those who have received the remission of sins and those who have not, those who will not go to the heavenly kingdom and those who will go, have already been distinguished. If you believe this gospel, you have become a child of God, and if you do not believe, you have already become a child of the devil. Every kind of fish has come into the net, but from among them the Lord separates the wicked.

Among those who have the gospel, what kind of person would be the most outrageous? Those who hinder this gospel of the water and the Spirit, who do not believe it, and who preach it mixed up in confusion. Such people cannot be tolerated. If a person already knows it himself yet hides it from others when he

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preaches, the hearers become confused, and also, because they believe wrongly in that way, the sin in their hearts is not removed. In their heads they think, “Ah! This is the gospel. Jesus has removed all sins,” but it is not actually accomplished in their hearts. The place where those who preach the gospel mixed up in confusion like that will go is hell.

Today there are people who know this gospel of the water and the Spirit yet are reluctant to preach it. Because they would be persecuted if they preached this gospel to the people of the world, they do not preach this gospel. And yet they are confident that they themselves are going to heaven. They firmly believe this. Why is that? It is because they themselves know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and believe it in their hearts, and the only thing is that they do not open their own mouths to spread it, or that when they spread it, they corrupt it a little; so they believe that since they still believe, they will go to heaven. But please keep in mind the fact that even a person who has received the remission of sins exactly, if he does not preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit exactly to others, will be branded as wicked before God. God does not tolerate such a person.

Workers of righteousness, who keep and preach the gospel to the end

He spoke all the parables of the kingdom of heaven; those who know this know it clearly, but what about those who do not know? No matter how much you tell them, they do not know. Our Lord truly planted this gospel of the water and the Spirit, the gospel of the remission of sins, in your hearts and mine. And He sowed it in this world. But at this time Satan the devil also sowed seeds. He sowed seeds of lies. Satan the devil sowed a false

gospel. People who have received the true gospel and people who have received a false gospel live together on this earth. When people first receive the remission of sins, this gospel seems like nothing much, but later they come to know the fact that it is a gospel of enormously great blessing; after that, they come to sell all that they have for this gospel, become people who endure everything patiently because of this gospel, and keep this gospel to the end, living while preaching it, and then go to heaven—there are such workers of righteousness.

You and I must stand in the ranks of this gospel and live by faith until the end of the age, and then go. Even if we preach the gospel to just one person, we must spread the gospel of the water and the Spirit exactly, so that the person hears it, believes it in his heart, and receives the remission of sins. If that person does not believe, it cannot be helped, but we must spread it so that they clearly hear and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins. We must become people who preach the gospel in that way, live as servants before God, and, when the Lord comes, go by faith into the Lord's kingdom while receiving the praise *"Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21)*.

I truly give thanks that God has given such a gospel to you and me. Truly, the time of harvest on this earth has now drawn near. The time when the fields have turned white and the grain is reaped has drawn near. Spiritually speaking, it is not yet 100 percent the time of harvest; it is the time to sow many seeds.

Even now we are sowing the seeds of the gospel throughout the whole world. When we preach the gospel clearly, those who will believe will believe, and those who will not believe will not believe. The time of harvest has drawn near, yet we must still be faithful to our duty as those who sow the seed. When you and I sow seed, the time of harvest will come someday; knowing the

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fact that the time of harvest has drawn very near, I hope that you will all truly have faith and become possessors of such faith that, as those who possess the kingdom of heaven, you do not lose this kingdom of heaven. Live by faith. Do not look at the world, but live by faith and preach the gospel. Let us focus our efforts on preaching the gospel.

Now we must preach the gospel, sow the seed, and take heart. Now is not the time to be content. This present time is truly a time to work by faith, and a time when there is so much work to be done. It is also a time when so many workers are needed, a time when we must live by faith, a time when we must speak by faith, and a time when we must keep the gospel by faith. God has given you and me the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. He has given us the gospel of the heavenly kingdom. Let us live with our faith.

It is not yet a time when we can set our hearts at ease. There are so many places throughout the world where the gospel must be preached. When we look ahead, what we have done so far is in fact nothing. So we cannot let ourselves slacken. There are many things ahead that we must endure patiently, and many things that we cannot live through without faith. I hope that you will join your strength together, help one another in hard times, pray for one another, live by faith, and live spreading the Lord's gospel. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

He who hears the word and understands it

< Matthew 13:18–23 >

“‘Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.’”

How have you been? Today I would like to share grace through the word of the Gospel of Matthew. In the word there is the passage, *“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it” (Matthew 13:19)*. And saying, *“He who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it” (Matthew 13:23)*, it says that he who hears the word and understands it bears fruit and yields a hundredfold,

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sixtyfold, and thirtyfold. Using the parable of the sower, our Lord spoke of the spread of the gospel on this earth. In fact, many seeds of the gospel are sown on this earth, but if they do not fall on good hearts that hear the word and understand it, it is of no use at all. The good ground is the one who hears the word and understands it. Such a person fully receives the remission of sins and bears the fruit of the remission of sins. Those who hear, understand, and believe the word of God cause other people as well to bear much fruit through them; but it says that when they hear God's word of the kingdom and do not understand it, they themselves are glad for a while, and then, when persecution or tribulation comes because of the word, or the riches of the world or some temptation comes upon them, they stumble, give up, and end up denying it. Therefore, although we all alike hear the word of the kingdom of heaven, there are those who understand it and those who do not, and there is a great difference between them.

Dear fellow believers, a farmer sows many seeds in his field, but not one hundred percent of them sprout. And even if they do sprout, not all of them bear fruit. Some seeds are buried too deep and do not even sprout; some seeds are not covered with soil at all and lie on the ground just as they are, so that they receive the sunlight and dry up completely, produce neither sprout nor fruit, and simply end up rotting on the ground. And there are also cases in which some seeds, while their sprouts are coming up, fail to bear fruit because of insects or animals or other things such as thorn bushes, and wither yellow and come to an end. When we farm, we can know such things.

The remission of sins received temporarily

Our Lord says that He sowed seeds in four kinds of ground,

and this means that the Lord sowed the word of the kingdom of heaven on this earth. He sowed the word of the heavenly kingdom in this world, and the person who hears the word of the heavenly kingdom and understands it receives the remission of sins, becomes a child of God, and also goes to heaven. Before that, here on this earth, many people—some a hundred, some sixty, or thirty, and so on—receive the remission of sins because of that person. But if people themselves do not fully understand, they are glad for a while when they hear the word, but when persecution or suffering follows because of the word, they quickly abandon their faith. Hearing reproaches such as, "What kind of church is like that?" and because of various things that do not please them, they hear the word yet do not fully understand it, and so they bear no fruit and end up dying. This is precisely receiving the remission of sins temporarily. At first, they hear the word and know it, saying, "That is really so. This is the truth." But as they live a life of faith in the Church of God, their own evil keeps being exposed. And they come to see very plainly what they themselves are like—that they really are wicked people who deserve to die. Whenever their true selves are exposed in this way, there is a desire in them to avoid facing themselves. They have no desire to acknowledge themselves as they are.

"I really am such a person." The word of the kingdom of our God does not speak to us only of the gospel, but digs out even what kind of breed we fundamentally are. "We are a brood of evildoers, a breed that can produce nothing but bad thorns and thistles. Therefore, we are truly wicked among the wicked. We are the most wicked among the wicked, utterly useless, just the right kind of people to be thrown into the fire as firewood."

Our God speaks of two things. Our God says that we human beings are fundamentally wicked. And looking at each of us

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individually, He says, “You are an evil one,” and that we are useless. But influenced by the thoughts that Satan the devil has sown—“We are good people. We can live good lives”—when we are told, “You are evil,” we exalt ourselves and think we are wronged, saying, “This is going too far. They utterly ignore human beings, and completely ignore, despise, and trample human ethics and morality. This is too self-righteous.” Because of this, we come under the influence not of the word of the kingdom of heaven but of the tares that the devil has sown on this earth, namely, “If you believe in Jesus, you go to heaven. You don’t necessarily have to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Is that one verse the only word in the Bible? There are many other words too.” And if we accept it and say, “Right,” we fall into falsehood.

Dear fellow believers, there are many tares on this earth that Satan the devil has sown and left behind. You say that you believe in Jesus, but since a great many fakes have appeared since Jesus, it is more likely that you are believing in tares.

The distinction between rice and tares

Dear fellow believers, when people grow rice, they transplant rice seedlings into the paddy. I do not know it well, but before transplanting, in the seedbed they crumble the soil finely and sift it through something like a sieve, a little coarser than a flour sieve, to pick out all the pebbles and the like; they also put in just the right amount of fertilizer, make very fine soil, and level it very flat. Then they let water cover it a little and sow rice seeds there. Then they control the temperature. They set up something like a plastic greenhouse, control the temperature, and wait for sprouts to come up there.

Only rice seeds were planted in the good soil of the seedbed. Tares were never sown in the seedbed; nothing but rice seeds were sown in it. When the temperature is set appropriately so that they sprout and grow to a suitable size, spring comes, and the seedbeds are carried out and the seedlings transplanted into the paddy.

Clearly this owner sowed only rice seeds and planted only the seedlings from the seedbed in the paddy, yet around summer a very strange phenomenon occurs. Some plants are very deep green, and some are bent over with yellowed tips, as if they had starved for three days. People who do not know well pull out the yellowed ones and throw them away, leaving only the deep green ones that look as if they will bear much fruit. But farmers do not do that. Farmers look at the leaves. When they look at the leaves, the ones that are very deep green and coming up very vigorously are not rice but barnyard grass. It is a weed without fruit. Seeing that barnyard grass, they call it tares. Dear fellow believers, some farmers do not pull up the barnyard grass. Why is that? Because the roots of the tares are tangled together with the roots of the rice, if they pull it up, the rice is pulled up along with it. That is why they leave it alone until autumn. Farmers leave it alone because they know that things will be different when autumn comes. In outward appearance, both are similar grasses. The barnyard grass has actually grown more vigorously. And the rice has yellow leaves and does not look like much. But when harvest time comes, the barnyard grass has only green leaves, and only from the rice, which had seemed lacking, do ears of grain come up. The rice blossoms, and a little later grain forms, and when it receives the blazing autumn sun, that grain turns from deep green to a rich golden yellow. And when the rice is fully ripe, it droops and bows its head. But what about the barnyard grass? The barnyard grass does not bow its head.

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Having no grain, how stiff and hard it is; being utterly inedible, how long and blunt it is; it does not bend down but stays stiff. Dear fellow believers, farmers leave such things until autumn, and at harvest they cut everything down together, gather the tares separately, and burn them in the fire.

Understanding the word means knowing how evil one is

Dear fellow believers, you come to the Church of God and hear the word, but you must understand it. The Bible says that he who hears the word and understands it bears fruit a hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold. But it says that when one does not understand it, Satan the devil comes, picks it up, and eats it.

Dear fellow believers, being told to hear the word and understand it means that we must know how evil we are. We must know what evil and useless beings we ourselves are. The word says, *"Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it" (Matthew 13:18–19),* and says that those who hear the word of the kingdom yet do not understand it end up being devoured by Satan the devil, like seed sown by the wayside.

Dear fellow believers, anyone can come to church. Church is not a place where only privileged people come. To put it simply, even people who are sinners come to church. They may come to look around, to do business, or because they are bored, or to make friends with the opposite sex or to pick a spouse—they can come in many different ways. But although anyone can come to church, not just anyone hears the word of the kingdom and understands it.

Dear fellow believers, what word is being preached now in this Church of God? The Church of God preaches, in God's place, the word that our God speaks. The Church of God is a place that lets people hear the word of the kingdom. Therefore, it is a place that truly preaches the word of the kingdom rightly and correctly speaks forth the word of the heavenly kingdom on God's behalf, but when you go there, there are many times when it does not fit our thoughts, ethics, and morality at all.

Dear fellow believers, what does the word of the heavenly kingdom say? It calls people scrap with no use or worth at all. What did our God in heaven say to us, the descendants of Adam? He says, "You are human scrap. You are wicked people with no use at all. You are just the right ones to be kindling. You are sinners who are just right to be sent to hell." God says so.

Dear fellow believers, then, among the people who come to church here and hear the word, there were times when you thought, "Oh, I am not like that—why make such a fuss? Seeing the way the word is preached, this church will never grow," weren't there? "He shouldn't preach like that. He should preach logically and not touch people's hearts, and somehow spoon-feed them the remission of sins so that they receive the remission of sins." I never think that way. We must fill a slop bucket full of slop water and kick it over hard. What does that, so that all the slop water pours out, is the word of the kingdom of heaven. It is the word of the heavenly kingdom.

The false ones on earth do not stir up people's hearts, so that the slop water never spills; they do not speak of dirty things, so that the dirty things inside people do not rise up; they somehow calm everything down and let it settle, and then, looking only at the clear water that has risen to the top of the slop bucket, they say, "If you make just a little effort, you can become a clear stream. Make just a little more effort. If you make just a little

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more effort, you might even go to heaven." But God speaks of the fundamental nature of us human beings.

Dear fellow believers, it is to me and to you that God is speaking. He says, "You are wicked, of no use at all, and just right to be sent to hell." Dear fellow believers, do you acknowledge that? Do you acknowledge that you yourselves are such wicked people who would deserve to go to hell, had our Lord not been there? Dear fellow believers, you must acknowledge that. You must understand that.

Dear fellow believers, let us take a look at ourselves. Is there anything in us that is truly of use? Dear fellow believers, a tree is used at least as firewood, and all things are still of some use, but, dear fellow believers, are we of any use? All things under heaven fulfill their own missions and do all their work just as God made them, but people have so many thoughts of their own and oppose God's will so much—is there any use for such people? We do not know the Creator. In Isaiah, God said, *"The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master's crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider. Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters!" (Isaiah 1:3–4)*. It means that we are completely useless scrap, a brood that deserves to go to hell.

Dear fellow believers, those who, after hearing the gospel and receiving the remission of sins, cannot endure to the end are called seed that fell on stony places; they are people who, after hearing the word and believing it, stumble when tribulation or persecution comes. Such people, after hearing the gospel, do not acknowledge it when they are told what human beings are truly like and that the Lord saved such human beings. They mistakenly think and say that there is still something good and something kind in them. They say so because they do not understand the word of God and do not know what they

themselves are really like. If people do not know what they themselves are like, they do not understand the word. If people do not know themselves, they cannot fully receive the remission of sins, nor can they fully bear fruit. It means that the seed is planted and a sprout comes up, and while it is coming out to bear some fruit, it ends up becoming chaff. The owner mercilessly takes the chaff and burns it up. No matter how good its outward form, chaff can never be brought into the barn.

Dear fellow believers, only those who hear the word and understand it can become the wheat. No matter how much they hear the word and know the gospel, those who do not know what they themselves are really like cannot become the wheat. Such people cannot bear fruit. Dear fellow believers, you know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, don't you? Who, coming to the Church of God, does not know that Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River and took it away? But, dear fellow believers, do you acknowledge that we ourselves are truly evil and useless, people who must go to hell, complete scrap even in human terms and of no use at all? Dear fellow believers, we must acknowledge both of these things. Only then do we bear the true wheat and get harvested at the end.

It has been said that "he who stumbles when tribulation or persecution comes because of the word" is chaff; have you fully received the remission of sins? Is there a church on this earth that has received the remission of sins, or not? There are pastors who have received the remission of sins, and there are churches that rightly preach the word of the kingdom of heaven. It means that there are people who hear the word and fully understand it. But there are also those who do not. There are countless churches in this world: there are churches that preach God's word of the kingdom, there are also churches that preach the

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words of the devil, not the word of God, and there are churches that preach them mixed with the word of God. Such places are churches in name, but it is hard to call them churches that fully preach the word of God.

In such places they sometimes even slander the Church of God. Then, though people have been born again, their faith may waver and they may come to think, “Is this church the only true Church of God? Couldn’t that church also be the Church of God?” But if you go to another church and listen quietly to what they say, they do not even say, “Man is fundamentally evil”; somehow they say that people are good, simply tell them to believe in Jesus and go to heaven, and tell them to do good deeds. Those places just say such things and do not touch the heart at all, so how comfortable that is! So, comfortably, they say, “If we believe, this is how we should believe. Whenever you go there, they turn your insides upside down. What kind of church is that?”—and if, even after receiving the remission of sins, you come to think that way, please know that your heart has already been snatched away.

Dear fellow believers, if you quickly acknowledge yourselves, your insides will not be turned upside down either. If you acknowledge it quickly, how gently I too can preach the word! I would say, “Dear beloved saints.” Because people head toward hell without acknowledging themselves and without understanding, a true servant of God turns their insides upside down, makes them see what they themselves are like, and leads them rightly.

The parable of the four kinds of ground

There are four kinds of ground. Among them, on the wayside ground the seed was not even buried in the soil at all. This refers

to those who hear the word and oppose it outright or pay it no attention at all; and from the second ground on, in all three kinds of ground the seed fell and sprouted from the soil, but they differ in whether they grew well and bore fruit or not. Which one bore fruit? There is only one ground that bears fruit: the good ground. This ground was ground that heard the word and understood it. The other two kinds of ground did accept the gospel, but did not become fruit and gave up partway. They did sprout, but the stony ground dried up because it had no root, and the thorny ground had all its nutrients taken away and became corrupted, so they did not bear fruit.

Dear fellow believers, those who truly hear the word of God and fully understand it know that they themselves are truly useless people. If you say to such a person, "Oh my, why are you like that?" he says, "Yes, that's right. It is right, but the Lord has removed my sins, so that's good. Is there anything worth looking at in me? That's right. Because I myself am so like that, I don't trust myself or follow myself; I believe in the Lord and follow Him. Just as the Lord said, I really am wicked, and there is nothing to expect from me. That is why I believe in the Lord."

Dear fellow believers, those who understand the word of God do so. But those who do not understand the word, when someone says something about them, say, "In human terms, that one is worse than me. I have something good in human terms and am upright, but how can that one be so mean, and how can he be so cold?"

That is so. Born-again people have compassion toward those who live by faith, but I cannot tell you how cold they are toward what is spiritually wrong. Dear fellow believers, those who have truly heard the word of God and understood it are very humane. Because they truly know all about human beings, they understand human beings and are tolerant toward them. But

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when people who have not received the remission of sins and have not understood say this and that to those who have heard the word and understood it, those who have understood the word treat them coldly: “Is that so? Then end it. Go away.” I cannot tell you how cold they are toward those who go against the word.

Dear fellow believers, could it be that the seed has been sown on stony places? Could your heart be stony ground? Dear fellow believers, are you still not acknowledging the sin within yourselves? Acknowledge what is in your hearts just as it is.

I acknowledge the murderous heart, the lustful heart, the envious heart, and the thieving heart in my heart as such, because the Lord points them out through the word. We must lay bare ourselves, who cannot help but do such deeds and who will have to keep doing such deeds in the future, and acknowledge it before the word of God. Do you acknowledge it? Dear fellow believers, if you do not acknowledge yourselves, you do not acknowledge the word. If you do not acknowledge the parts that the word is pointing out and indicating in you, how can you understand the word? This word is a practical word. Dear fellow believers, only when you acknowledge can you understand, and only then can you know what God is saying. The word of God is open, but not everyone who sees it understands it. Not everyone who reads it understands it. Not everyone who hears it understands it. One must be able to see whether what God says is the very reality that is in oneself. And only when one is able to acknowledge it can one receive the remission of sins.

Being sown on stony places means having no understanding and not acknowledging. Dear fellow believers, it is a field, but a field with stones embedded in it. On the surface it looked fine, so the seed did fall on it, but when the seed tried to put down roots in that soil, draw in moisture, and send its roots down deep, before even one centimeter, the ground beneath was full of

stones, and it could not put down roots any further. It needs to put down roots well into the soil to draw up moisture, but because there is nothing but stones beneath, no matter how much it puts down roots, no soil comes. Because no soil comes, dear fellow believers, the roots stretch and stretch, but it is too hot under the blazing sun and there is too little moisture below, so it withers and dies. That is what stony ground is.

"I am a little evil. This is where I behaved a little badly, and this is something I did a little wrong. I haven't done much wrong in my life so far; there are one or two things I did decisively wrong. In this I clearly sinned. I confess that this is a sin." Saying so, they acknowledged their sins and accepted the gospel. "The Lord took away this sin. The Lord saved me," they said, and accepted the gospel. "The Lord took away the sin of the world. He took away all the sin of the world, my sin. I am saved," they acknowledge; but how much is there within them that has not yet been exposed! The evil that they have not yet acted on but are harboring in their hearts is the gravel.

Dear fellow believers, while being in the church, when things are exposed in the bright light of the word, one must acknowledge them in order to become good ground. Yet they do not acknowledge them. "I still love people. I understand people." They say that they are good. But in reality there is nothing but gravel inside them. It means that there is nothing but sin inside them. Even though their hearts are full of a murderous heart, an adulterous heart, an envious heart, a thieving heart, a lustful heart, a wild and perverse heart—such hearts—what happens if they insist that they are not like that? Dear fellow believers, what did it say happened to the seed sown on stony places? It does not bear fruit. Being sown on stony places means hearing the word and immediately receiving it with joy, yet not bearing fruit.

How precisely did our Lord express it in the Bible? He said

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that they receive it immediately but do not bear fruit. When the Lord says, "You are a sinner. Through the baptism I received from John at the Jordan River, I had all your sins transferred to Me and took them all away," some people thought of their own small sins and immediately believed, saying, "Lord, I believe." Hallelujah, they say they have no sin. But beyond that, there was no uniting with the church, following its order, or doing the work of God. Such a person receives it immediately with joy, but because he has no root in himself, he endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, he stumbles.

Dear fellow believers, what happens if it falls over when it has not been long since the sprout came up and it has not yet even put down roots? It is completely uprooted and dies. Without roots, it is shaken by any small thing, easily uprooted, and dies. Dear fellow believers, there are many such things even within the Church of God. Anyone can become stony ground.

Among us, too, there are many people who could become stony ground. It is said, *"But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles" (Matthew 13:20–21)*. Dear fellow believers, the place where such a person goes is hell. They did receive the remission of sins, but not being able to acknowledge this word is having no root. It means that they were not able to acknowledge the word. Dear fellow believers, is the word of the Bible the truth as the word of God, or not? We must believe and acknowledge this word, and by believing this word, roots must go down in our hearts. Only when we put down the roots of the word in our hearts by believing this word do we live. We must accept the word of God, saying, "That is right. That is

correct," and live by faith.

The Bible says, *"The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:6).* "Ah, we cannot be saved by the law. God Himself has saved us." We must fully believe the word of God and acknowledge before the gospel that we were sinners and useless wicked people. Only then are we saved. If we do not believe firmly like that, we have no root, and we endure for a while and then stumble.

Dear fellow believers, after hearing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, what is the second thing we must do? We must put down the roots of the word. Our own hearts are the field and the word of God is the seed, and only when the field of our hearts is good can the seed take root. Good ground is believing the word of God. "Do you believe in your heart or not? Have you understood the word or not?" If you only hear the gospel and do not accept the word of God, it is hell.

Countless people have heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we preach to them. They all like it. They immediately rejoice. They say that they now have no sin. What do they do after that? Saying, "What does it matter whether it's this way or that way?" they go here and there like wanderers with no fixed destination. If they just know the gospel and end it there, they die. All plants must have roots to grow and bear fruit; a tree is a proper tree only when it bears fruit—what kind of proper tree is a tree that bears no fruit?

Dear fellow believers, in the kingdom of God, the word of the kingdom of heaven must become fruit, and good ground must bear fruit. The word says that only when we become people who believe and acknowledge all the word of God with our hearts, and believe and follow it with our hearts, do we bear fruit.

Dear fellow believers, you must know what the word of the kingdom of heaven is. The word of the kingdom of heaven is the

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word of God. The word of God speaks clearly of heaven and hell. If you believe, heaven; if you do not believe, hell; there is no in-between.

And, dear fellow believers, Jesus Christ, who is God, came to save us human beings. God says to us, *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19)*. It means that you are people bound for hell, so you must repent, turn back, and believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. The word of the kingdom of heaven is that we must repent, turn back, receive the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ, become fruit, and go to heaven. Having a faith that cannot even go to heaven is not right. That is not the word of God. The word of God surely brings us all the way to heaven. This is precisely what leads us all the way to heaven, and this word that lets us into heaven is precisely the word of God.

The words of this world are the words of tares. In the end, they are saying, "Believe roughly. You don't know whether you will go to heaven or hell. If God takes you, you go to heaven; if He doesn't take you, you go to hell." If someone asks what to do if, after having believed in Jesus, God says on that day, *"I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:23)*, they say, "Then it can't be helped. What can you do then? That is up to the Lord."

Saying this is speaking the words of the devil. Dear fellow believers, isn't that so? Because preachers of the gospel love the souls that belong to God, they give them the word of the kingdom of heaven and surely bring them all the way to heaven. But the false ones do not care at all.

Dear fellow believers, it was said that being sown on stony places means one who stumbles when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word; dear fellow believers, we must hold fast to the word of God. Dear fellow believers, do you

understand?

Dear fellow believers, what does the Bible say? It says, *"The letter kills" (2 Corinthians 3:6)*. In the Bible there are countless words of this kind and that kind. After saying that all sins have been removed, it then also has parts that speak to unbelievers and parts that speak to believers. Dear fellow believers, there are passages that speak of repentance to the born-again, and there are passages that speak of repentance to those who are not born again. But the false ones cannot distinguish these. No matter how highly educated a doctor of theology may be, if he has not been saved through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he cannot discern them. They cannot know the Bible even by reading it in the original languages; only by being born again can one discern to whom these things are spoken.

"The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches"

Being sown by the wayside means that when one hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. The seed sown on stony places is one who heard the word and immediately received it with joy, but could not put down roots inside, so that when tribulation or persecution arises, he endures a little and then stumbles. It says, *"He who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22)*. If you have heard the gospel and believed, you are not wayside ground. Whether you are stony ground, thorny ground, or good ground—that is the question; but if, after believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and

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being born again, you come to the Church of God and keep being supplied with the food of the word, removing any stones with the word and being trained to become good ground, you will escape being stony ground. For if you are united with the Church of God, you can plow the field at any time.

But the thorny ground is the problem. There is no stone beneath, but there is seed planted in ground overgrown with thorns. Being sown among thorns means one who hears the word but in whom it is choked by cares and the deceitfulness of riches, so that he does not bear fruit. Such a person comes to church and listens to the word well. He believes the word, saying, "Amen, amen, hallelujah." But he gets caught by the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the like. Dear fellow believers, if you get caught by these, it is the end.

Dear fellow believers, even in the hymn we sing every day, it says that there are many hardships on the way to heaven, doesn't it? A person who experienced it wrote that poem. It means that going to heaven is not so easy. Dear fellow believers, a certain person coming to the Church of God said, "Clearly, the church of truth is the church of truth. That's right. Amen," and said it all. Everything that was preached became an amen to him, and his heart was in harmony with it. But there is one worry. "If I keep attending this church, my livelihood will become difficult because of offerings." With this thought, because he does not want to pay money, does not want to give offerings, does not want to serve the Lord, does not want to give material things to the work of God, wants to become rich in the world, and does not want to give up his own material things, he says that he cannot live a life of faith. There are people who give up their faith because, before God, they absolutely do not want to use their material things for God, but want to use them for themselves.

The word of God is truly precise. As we live a life of faith, we say, “If I had this money, it would be really useful to spend it somewhere. With this money I could buy a good record, play it when my husband comes home, and set a wonderful mood in the house. It feels like a waste to pledge this material wealth.” When the church says, “Let us give voluntarily for the work of God,” this creates conflict in the heart. They feel as though they are being told to give because their situation is known. But it is not something done aimed at anyone’s situation. It is done for the kingdom of God, but a fire flares up in that person’s heart. Yet somehow or other, they reluctantly did it once. So they thought, “I did it once, so they won’t do it again,” but it is done again. So they begin to think it over.

“If I keep doing this, I’ll end up giving away everything I have. If this goes on, how will I live?” The cares of the world arise. “How shall I live? If I keep attending this church, I simply cannot live.” Did such a feeling come to you or not? At first it did, didn’t it? But I know well that you repented, recognizing that such a heart is evil before the word of God, turned your hearts around, and came. That is overcoming the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches.

And if you live by faith, you rather live more abundantly and well. People worry that they will become penniless beggars, but in reality they do not become penniless beggars. Dear fellow believers, there is not a single person who became a penniless beggar by serving the Lord. But there are many who became penniless beggars while living for themselves. They became penniless beggars because they lived for themselves.

Dear fellow believers, what did it say in Proverbs? It said, *“There is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty” (Proverbs 11:24)*. What that means is that true riches and poverty are divided according to whether or not one uses

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material wealth for God. They receive the remission of sins and live putting down the roots of faith in the Church of God, but what are they caught on next? They are caught on material things. "Material things have become a burden, so I can't keep attending church. I received the remission of sins, but now I should quit. Already, while coming to this church, I have made too many offering pledges. If I do the math, it seems I will have to pledge no small amount of money in the future too. Then if I stop coming to this church, give no offerings, and save money, how much would it be? A considerable amount of money will be mine. I can save it."

The calculation comes out exactly. Because of the temptation of riches, they give up their life of faith. And they abandon their faith. So, choked by riches, they cannot ruminate on the word. If the word of God is not heard because of the temptation of riches and the profit of the world, they will die in the end.

Dear fellow believers, it says, *"The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10)*. This is not telling you to give money to the church.

But, dear fellow believers, money or the Lord? People or the Lord? Ourselves or the Lord? We must make a clear choice. Will we live with the Lord, or live alone? Will we live only for ourselves, or plan our future with the Lord and live? That must be clearly decided. It was said that if one follows riches, he does not bear fruit; that life is a curse. Dear fellow believers, do you understand? No matter how much you have heard the gospel and how much you have believed it, if you follow the world, it is the end.

No matter how well you do, no matter how much you resolve that you believe the gospel well and will not abandon it, if your heart is captured by the world, you will surely deny the Lord in the end. Many people ultimately denied the Lord because of

money. Do you think Satan the devil will leave you alone? He does not leave people bound to the world alone, but makes them sin. When they sin, Satan the devil will at first say it is all right. Then, when they sin again, he condemns them, saying, "You are a person who sins like this. A worthless thing like you!" "You beast, you worthless thing, how can you be a son of God? How can you receive the remission of sins? Quit while you can." When they are condemned like that, later it is so painful that they say, "What do I mean, believing in God? I do not believe in God. The Lord saved me—what did He save? That is not the truth. This is the truth," and they speak, standing on the side of what worldly people say. Like them, if they say, "Lord, please forgive the sins I committed today," their hearts are at ease. Saying, "It cannot be that there is no betrayal, no stumbling," they can stumble in that way.

One who fell among thorns hears the word, but because of the cares of the world and the temptation of riches, the word is choked, and by rejecting the word he denies the Lord and is destroyed. And so he goes to hell.

The Lord or the world

Dear fellow believers, we must know ourselves well. We must know how wicked we are, how useless we are, and how much we are people bound for hell. And we must acknowledge it.

Dear fellow believers, we must choose well. The Lord has given us the word of the kingdom of heaven. It means that He has given us the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord received baptism from John at the Jordan River and had our sins transferred to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and

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rose again, and so removed all our sins. “You were evil human beings, useless human beings, human beings bound for hell, and I saved you. Will you choose Me, or will you choose the world, or will you choose yourselves?” He is telling us to choose. God gives us the opportunity to choose.

“Will you follow riches, or will you follow Me?” “Will you follow people, or will you follow Me?” “Will you love yourself, or will you love Me?” Dear fellow believers, our Lord is speaking to us.

Dear fellow believers, we must know clearly. Do riches give us life? Won’t riches disappear on that day? No matter how rich we are, when we leave this world we go empty-handed. Riches do not give us eternal life. Riches do not make us happy.

We must know clearly. And we must acknowledge it. God gave us riches so that we would manage them and use them for the necessary things as we live; He did not tell us to be bound by riches and give everything over to them. These riches also cannot take us to heaven. Riches cannot make us happy.

We must clearly acknowledge it. And we must acknowledge that there is nothing of use in us, whether in our character or in any other respect. We must acknowledge that we are of no use even to ourselves. We must also acknowledge that we are people who cannot help but go to hell. Only when we acknowledge it can we believe in the Lord and follow the Lord, and we bear fruit.

There are also many people who held on to riches and went to hell. When God asks, “When the riches burn, you will burn too. Will you choose the world, or will you choose Me?”—if someone believes in God, yet chooses the world, God burns him up together with the world.

Not bearing fruit is the end. Our faith can come to an end quickly. Even among born-again people, I have met a great many whose faith came to an end in that way. As I preach the

gospel, there are many such people, and when I see them, I feel so sorry for them. "It would be better for them not to do that. If they do that, they will be ruined. Their own souls will be ruined, they themselves will go to hell, and the way for their families to be saved will be blocked. That is a sure guarantee of hell." If someone has received the remission of sins but does not follow the Lord, the way for his family to receive the remission of sins can easily be blocked too. This is because if the one who first received the remission of sins gives up, there will be no one to preach the gospel to that family.

When I exhort them, thinking, "They will be ruined if they do that," they do not listen. If they do not listen, what can I do? I have no choice but to leave them alone. What I can do for them is exhortation and guidance; I cannot even have faith on their behalf. If God needs to, He makes children of Abraham even from stones, as the word says, *"God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (Matthew 3:9)*. Therefore, even without that person, God fills the church with all the people it needs and does His work. We must also acknowledge that God is the One who bestows grace on us; it is not we who bestow grace on God. It is we who need God's help and we who need to follow God Himself; it is not that what we do, or how we do it, is what is needed.

But there are people who make light of the church. Of course, we do not give up even on such people, and we try exhorting them. But even if we tell them, "The Bible says this," there is no way it will get through to them. They reject even the word of God—will they listen if a guide speaks to them? Rather, they trample on it.

Dear fellow believers, it happens according to the word. If, while you are believing the word of God, the temptation of riches comes and the temptation of people comes, then too you

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just need to acknowledge and follow what God says. Even if various temptations come, those who, though lacking themselves, choose God and follow God receive the remission of sins and bear fruit fully, bear fruit a hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold before God, and also themselves become the wheat and enter heaven. They enter God's barn. But those who heard the gospel and did believe, yet rejoiced only for a while and then followed the world, come to an end then and there without fruit. The place where they go is hell. Meet them a month later. See what has become of them.

Dear fellow believers, do you want to go to hell, or do you want to go to heaven? God does for you as you wish. Before God, God does for us according to where we want to go. With God there is no refusal. He does as you wish.

"I want to go to hell." "All right, then go to hell." "I want to go to heaven." "You want to go to heaven? I saved you with the water and the Spirit. Believe that, believe in Me, and follow Me. Then go to heaven." With God there is no refusal. It is because He is vast and great.

Dear fellow believers, do you want to become fruit and go to heaven? Or do you want to pursue riches in this world, be recognized by people in this world, and then go to hell?

If you cling to this world, you die. What is there in the world that you cling to so much? What loss did you ever suffer from believing in God that you find following God so hard and hate it? God has bestowed grace on you; He has not made you suffer loss. The word says, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23)* and *"there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother 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" (Mark 10:29–30). I believe that word of God. No matter what anyone says, I follow the word of God.

If, while following the gospel, someone says one day, "Because I am lacking, I cannot follow well now, but I do follow. It is because I am lacking now," that I understand; but if he says, "I am absolutely against it," flatly declaring opposition before God, from then on it is over. You must either deny yourself of your own accord and follow the Lord, or fail to shake off the temptation of the world and follow that path. And one thing to keep in mind is that if you are cast out from the Church of God, it is God who has cast you out, and what the church binds on this earth is bound in heaven as well.

Dear fellow believers, do you think going to heaven is that easy? Do you think receiving the remission of sins and going to heaven is that easy? He saved us freely, but do you think He sends even those who betray to heaven? Do you think that if you betray the gospel, give up serving God, go off to serve idols, and serve as is convenient for you, He will send you to heaven? If you follow the world, throw away the Lord's word, and go, you will lose your faith. Even if you boast that you have faith, it is of no use.

As I always say, though I have said that faith must not change, you must know that if it changes, it is the end. What matters is not showing off your faith to others, but whether you truly believe in your heart or not. The game is decided by whether you deny yourself or not. The game is decided in the second half, not in the first half. The first half is a feeling-out match, and the second half is the real fight. Dear fellow believers, if you truly love riches and go in that direction, pursuing them more than God and holding on to them as too precious, and then leave, it means that that person's faith itself disappears. Dear fellow believers, you must hear the word and understand it. We must

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truly hear and understand what this word means, and deny ourselves. “My thoughts are not right; the word of God is right, and what the Church of God does is right.” Only when we follow by faith in this way, even with faith as small as a mustard seed, do we grow into faith that bears fruit and enters the barn, and truly enter it.

Dear fellow believers, come to your senses. We do not live forever on this earth. Young people especially must know this well. We do not live forever in this world.

The life of faith is self-denial, first, second, and third

Dear fellow believers, how many things there are to deny after receiving the remission of sins! Dear fellow believers, how many evil aspects of yourselves are exposed! The more you live a life of faith, the more they are exposed. Each time, you must acknowledge them. You must understand quickly and follow by faith, though lacking. Only then can you go to the heavenly kingdom. As it says, *“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” (Hebrews 10:26)*, if one betrays, there is no more atonement. Satan the devil does not leave what we believe alone, but always makes us betray it. Satan the devil carries out his many attacks of this kind through temptations and many cares. He makes us fall for the temptations of the world, be bound by many cares, and deny believing in the Lord. That is why we must hold on to the word. At times we must fight the spiritual battle well. The word of Ephesians that says *“having girded your waist with truth” (Ephesians 6:14)* and *“take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the*

word of God" (Ephesians 6:17) is precisely the word telling us to fight against Satan the devil.

How long do you think you will live in this world anyway? You must keep in mind that if you do not follow the word of God on this earth, you will die and go to hell. This earth is not eternal. But the world beyond is eternal. The truth is eternal. Understand. And deny yourselves.

In the life of faith, the first thing is self-denial, the second is denying oneself, and the third is denying oneself. Denying oneself and believing in and following only the Lord is precisely the life of faith. Of course, denying oneself is not as easy as saying it. That is why it is said: deny first, deny second, deny third. Denying oneself and following the Lord's word is following the truth and going along the narrow way, which is the way of life. But those who do not understand this and go along the broad way of the world face destruction. Dear fellow believers, do you understand?

Dear fellow believers, will you pursue the riches of the world? Do not do that. I ask you: never do that. Even if we offer riches before the Lord, how much do we offer? How much riches do you offer, that you say riches are a burden? Since God is also the One who governs riches, if God takes away all your riches, you will have nothing at all. If God strikes your body, you will be unable to do anything. We have no ability to do anything about anything, but the Owner of all things is the omniscient and omnipotent One who does all things, so believing in and relying on Him is wisdom.

Dear fellow believers, you must give thanks to God, who has given you material things so that you can offer them before the Lord. What would happen if God took them away and you didn't have a single penny? Do not regret it after you have become a beggar, but acknowledge in all things that you have something

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to offer, and give thanks in all things. And please, do not say foolish things.

Anyone can come to the Church of God and hear the word, but it is those who understand the word who can remain in the church; not just anyone can come and remain. It is you who need the church; it is not the church that needs you. Some worldly churches are the opposite, but as for us, it is we ourselves who need the church; it is not the church that needs us. You must clearly understand this today. It is we who need help before God; it is not God who needs help from us. That is why the church keeps exhorting and speaking even to those who do not understand the word, once, twice, and again. But if the word is already choked and does not get through at all, then that is now the end. If even the word of God does not work, then it has gone as far as it can go.

Many people hear the gospel, but not many become fruit. Dear fellow believers, you must choose one of the two: either become fruit and go to heaven, or become chaff and go to hell. We who have heard the gospel must hear the word and understand it. I am not telling you to go to hell. Clinging to material things does not make them increase, and worrying does not accomplish anything, so we must first believe in and follow the Lord, and wait for the Lord to bestow grace on us. But we usually do this: "If You bless me first, I will follow You too." But the Lord is never like that. The Lord said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23)*.

"If you follow Me even in the midst of hardship, and if there is anything you have lost for My sake, I will give it to you." But we do the exact opposite. "Lord, if You do this for me, I will follow You." The Lord is not deceived. People say, "Lord, if You heal my illness, if my body is healthy, I will serve You,"

but the Lord is not deceived. The Lord says, “You are deceiving Me again.”

Dear fellow believers, try becoming healthy after being in poor health. Do you think you will serve the Lord? You will serve yourself and follow your own flesh. If you make a poor person rich, he does not believe in God, does not seek the Lord, and follows the world. Dear fellow believers, don’t you see such things often? Even if you sacrifice yourself and give everything for others, people turn their backs once they have received all they can receive—that is what people are. Do not be deceived.

It is the heart that follows. It is faith. Faith is what does not change in any situation, and only those who follow the truth live by faith to the end. We must understand the truth. We must understand what God is saying. We must understand what the Lord is saying to us through these four kinds of ground. People who hear the gospel and give up—you say they believe the gospel? That makes no sense. If they truly believe, could they possibly not come to church?

Dear fellow believers, it is impossible to truly know and believe that this is the truth and yet not come to church.

“Dear fellow believers, let us repent of our sins. We have sin. Let us repent of our sins every day.” You say they go to such a place and listen to the word? If they truly believe, they cannot sit comfortably there. They will come out seeking the word of truth. But if they betray their faith, they can go and sit there.

“This is right, and that is a bit lacking. When the pastor matures, he will take care of it himself. Let me bear with him.” That is betraying the faith.

Dear fellow believers, those who are truly born again return to the Church of God. Among the born-again, there is no one who does not return to the Church of God. Just as there are no migratory birds that do not return, the truly born-again righteous

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return to the Church of God. Dear fellow believers, migratory birds surely return according to the season, in keeping with the climate. Only the dead ones cannot return.

Dear fellow believers, decide. And understand. Which is right? Dear fellow believers, even if we lose everything, isn't it right to believe and go to heaven? Dear fellow believers, it is said, *"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 16:25)*. There are many things in the Bible that are said in reverse. After receiving the remission of sins, if we ourselves try to live, we die. But if we resolve, "If I perish, I perish," and follow the Lord, we will never die.

Dear fellow believers, do you want to go to heaven? If you want to go to heaven, even if you lose everything, do not lose what the Lord has said, but believe it. If you believe the Lord's word and follow, you will lose nothing, and your souls will go to heaven and enjoy all blessings. If you do not believe and tremble for fear of losing things, you will lose everything of the world, and your souls will also go to hell. Understand. Please. Dear fellow believers, do you understand?

There is not much time left for you and me to meet and talk. Do you think I will keep speaking the word of God in this place for thirty years, or forty years? We do not know tomorrow. We do not know where you will go or where I will go, or whether we will die or depart in the future—so will you put off until tomorrow what you must do today? Faith in particular must be decided today and understood today. If you fail to shake off the temptation of the world, run toward it, and leave the Lord, it is as if you are now riding an express train, impatient to go to hell. Its final destination is hell, in every case.

The narrow way to heaven

Do you know the animal, a kind of antelope, called the springbok? There is a story that when one of these antelopes jumps off a cliff, the whole herd following it jumps off one after another in a line. The antelope at the very front cannot reduce its own speed as it runs fast, so even when it reaches the cliff, it cannot stop and falls, and the antelopes following behind it likewise do not know it is a cliff, run fast after it, cannot stop, and fall off the precipice to their deaths. So it is said that below the cliffs around where springboks live, there are many places where animal bones are piled high. Even now, countless people do not know where the person in front of them is going, and blindly run after them toward hell. Toward the path that some person ahead is taking, they say, “Oh, he’s going. I should go too,” and follow along together, and they all end up in hell.

But the way to heaven is not traveled blindly. The way to enter heaven is Jesus alone, and it is not so blind that one cannot stop; it is personal, intellectual, and just, and because many people do not take that way, it is difficult and narrow. Many people just look at it and give up. And many enter it and then turn back again. But those who clearly believe it take that way, no matter how difficult it is. Though it is difficult, the way of believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and living for the gospel is a smooth highway to heaven, so there is not a single person who has fallen and died while going by faith. It is because the Lord is with them. Whenever it was dangerous, as if they might fall, the Lord protected them, led them, gave them new strength, and gave them power, bestowing grace so that they would get through that way.

Dear fellow believers, understand. If you want to go to hell and enter the fire that is never quenched, then do not believe in

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or follow the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is the word of God. But if you want to go to heaven, believe in and follow the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Choose one of the two, but I hope that you will understand the word, choose the right way to heaven, and bear much fruit in the good ground. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The owner waits patiently until the harvest

< Matthew 13:24–30 >

“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, “Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?” He said to them, “An enemy has done this.” The servants said to him, “Do you want us then to go and gather them up?” But he said, “No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.’””””

The good seed sown in the owner’s field

Tares appeared in the field where good seed had been sown. Seeing them, the servants asked the owner where the tares had come from and whether they should go and pull them up. The owner tells them both where the tares came from and what the servants must do. So in this parable we examine together the

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hearts of the servants who discovered the problem and the judgment of the owner who protects the wheat.

Let us read verse 24. *"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field'" (Matthew 13:24)*. The story begins not with the tares but with the owner sowing good seed in his own field. In explaining the kingdom of heaven, Jesus first makes clear the good thing the owner did, so even though tares appear later, the goodness of the seed first sown does not disappear.

In the world, when falsehood is exposed, people easily come to doubt even what is true along with it. But just because there is falsehood does not mean that there is any flaw in the truth God has given. The owner in the passage sowed good seed. Only when we first hold on to the fact that the word of salvation Jesus has given is perfect can we firmly keep the ground of our faith even while seeing falsehood.

The field belongs to the owner. This earth, where all people are born as sinners, live with sin, and then die, the Lord regarded as a field in which to sow the seed of salvation. The owner sowed the good seed, and the owner also decides where to keep the wheat after the harvest, so the servants are people who serve by following his will. Remember that we, too, who serve God, are people who hear and follow what He decides.

While the owner clearly distinguishes the tares the enemy planted from the wheat, he nevertheless stops the servants who want to pull them up now. Both to discern the truth and to know how to act, the owner's words are needed.

When you discover a problem, what do you think of first? If your heart is taken up by the discomfort before your eyes, it is easy to forget even the good work God has already accomplished. So remember first the truthfulness of the gospel and the Lord's will. When we examine the problem on the basis of that fact,

anger and impatience will not determine our actions.

The enemy's work of sowing tares among the wheat

Let us read verse 25. *"But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way" (Matthew 13:25)*. Instead of destroying the good seed the owner had sown and making the field anew, the enemy sowed tares among the wheat. So the good and the bad came to be in the same field, and their being mixed in this way startled the servants and made their judgment difficult.

As the words *"while men slept"* indicate, while people were born, ate and slept, and lived their daily lives, the enemy also came and sowed his own seed. The enemy did his work and left, but what he sowed remained in the field. False words, too, influence people's hearts even after the person who first spoke them has disappeared from sight. So do not judge only by the appearance of the person who spread the words or by the impression the words give, but discern whether their content agrees with the salvation of Jesus.

The enemy in this parable hinders the owner's will. God has given the true gospel that saves people, but Satan spreads falsehood that keeps people from being completely saved from sin. Even if words similar to the gospel are used, if they blur the salvation Jesus has accomplished, we must recognize the difference. We cannot accept everything as the same just because it is mixed together.

Let us read verse 26. *"But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared" (Matthew 13:26)*. The tares were seen only at the time of sprouting and producing

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a crop. Just because the servants saw them only then does not mean that the tares were first sown at that time; the time a problem is discovered and the time it began are different from each other. Do not think that you know the whole process from the visible results alone.

The owner knew what the servants did not know, and he clearly reveals that the enemy did it. What the servants needed was not to add their own guesses and doubt the owner, but to listen to the facts the owner made known. The word God has given also clearly reveals to us problems of sin and falsehood that we had not yet known.

Seeing the reality of tares growing may bewilder you, but it is not that God does not know that reality. Distinguish the fact that the Lord sowed the good seed from the fact that the enemy sowed falsehood. Even while truth and falsehood appear together, what we are to believe is the perfect word of salvation Jesus has given.

The responsibility of the servants who ask the owner

Let us read verse 27. *"So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'" (Matthew 13:27)*. The servants brought the problem they had seen in the field to the owner and asked how tares had come about when he had sown good seed. They remembered what the owner had done, yet they did not understand the situation before their eyes.

They did not stop at asking the owner; they were also ready to act. Let us read verse 28. *"He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go*

and gather them up?'" (Matthew 13:28). What shows here is a will to resolve the problem rather than a mind to leave it alone. However, their zeal alone does not determine which action is right.

The servants' question contains *"us then to go,"* yet it is asked as *"Do you want."* Though the hands to pull them up would be their own, they asked the owner whether to pull them up or not. Those who serve God must also distinguish between their own zeal and God's will, so even a work begun with good intentions needs the teaching of the word.

In the passage, the servants ask twice, in verses 27 and 28, and the owner answers twice, each time introduced with the words "he said." His second answer begins in verse 29 and continues to the end of verse 30, so the longest words in this conversation are the owner's words. We, too, examine the word in order to act responsibly, and from the owner's words we learn what to discern, what to protect, and in what way to serve.

When you see falsehood, you may want to argue right away and settle the matter then and there. But also consider what a person who is hearing the true gospel for the first time comes to learn in that process. If you pour your heart only into defeating your opponent, the faith of the very person you should be caring for may be harmed. The owner's answer turns the servants' eyes to the wheat.

Look back on whom your actions are for. You should examine whether you are seeking the satisfaction of having removed a problem, or whether you are trying to help the people God treasures. A servant is one who is entrusted with the owner's field and serves in it, so his labor has the right direction when he, too, treasures what the owner seeks to protect.

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The command given so that even the wheat would not be uprooted

Let us read verse 29. *"But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them'" (Matthew 13:29)*. The reason the owner stopped the servants was the wheat. There was a danger of uprooting even the wheat while trying to get rid of the tares, so the owner put the need to protect the wheat ahead of the fact that the tares were bothersome.

The owner's prohibition was not a command given out of a lack of interest, but a command that stopped them because he knew the condition of the wheat and the consequences of what the servants intended to do. The owner saw the loss that the servants could not see. So even when God stops our actions, do not insist that only your own zeal is right, but listen to His word.

The judgment that there were tares was right, but the method of pulling them up now did not agree with the owner's will. Here there is something for us to learn. Even a person who has accurately recognized a wrong can go wrong in the process of dealing with it, so along with the knowledge to discern, we need an attitude of following the word.

The gospel must be preached clearly so that those who hear it can understand it. Make plain what is true and what is false by the word, but explain it so that the hearers may understand the salvation of Jesus. A person is not saved from sin just because you win an argument. Jesus has accomplished salvation, and we are people who help others believe in His gospel.

The owner's command contains an obedience that waits. If we think that only moving busily is obedience, it is hard to accept the word that tells us to stop. But for a servant, both the command to go and the command to wait are the owner's will, so laying down our impatience and waiting for the time that has

been spoken of is also an act of faith.

In that waiting, the wheat grows. Just because the owner stopped the servants' hands does not mean that all the work in the field has ended; the life that must be protected keeps on growing. So rather than letting a falsehood that cannot be removed now take away your whole heart, treasure the people God cares for and their faith.

A clear time limit: until the harvest

Let us read the first part of verse 30. *"Let both grow together until the harvest" (Matthew 13:30)*. The owner gave the waiting a time limit. The time of growing together does not go on endlessly, and when the time of harvest comes, the owner gives a command different from the one he gives now.

Not pulling up the tares right away does not mean that the end of the tares disappears. The owner has set the time and already knows what he will do at that time. So those who believe in God's judgment do not accept the present mixed state as if it were the eternal conclusion, but live today remembering that there is an end God has set.

The one who gives the command at the time of harvest is also the owner, so the servants do not set the date themselves. We must distinguish between the work God has entrusted to us and the judgment that belongs to God. Just because you have seen falsehood in the world, do not try to bring about its end with your own hands, but do what the Lord has appointed according to the Lord's word.

Waiting requires faith, because we must believe the outcome the owner has spoken of even while the problem before our eyes is still visible. The owner knew the state of the tares growing and

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commanded that they be left until the harvest. Also, the fact that the time of harvest has not yet come means that even those who are now standing in the place of falsehood still have a chance to turn back.

That does not mean, however, that this word is a command to call falsehood truth. The owner distinguishes the tares from the wheat to the very end, so we, too, stand in a place clearly set apart from words that blur the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Holding firmly to the truth while entrusting the final judgment to God—this is the discernment and waiting we learn from this parable.

When your heart grows impatient, think of the owner's words. It is not that you can believe God only if every problem is solved right away. Knowing what God has commanded and following that command comes first, so even while waiting, you can give thanks for the good work the Lord has done and care for the people entrusted to you.

The tares that are burned and the wheat that goes into the barn

Let us read the rest of verse 30. *"At the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn'" (Matthew 13:30)*. Though they grew in the same field, their ends are different. The fact that they were together does not guarantee the same outcome.

The tares are bound and burned, and only the wheat goes into the owner's barn. As the word says that they are bound in bundles to be burned, those who followed a false gospel will be bound together on the last day in that falsehood and the

framework of religion. This ending is a warning that God will in the end distinguish truth from falsehood. Therefore, what matters is not the fact that you have been recognized by people but what you believe before God, and you cannot consider it all right to hold on to something different from the gospel along with it.

The wheat is gathered into the owner's barn. The wheat the owner sought to protect at last enters the place the owner prepared. So the owner's waiting was not a neglect that loses the wheat, but a care aimed at the end in which that wheat is harvested. Those who believe in God, who has saved them, have this hope.

That hope does not come from boasting of one's own goodness, so sinners must accept the way of salvation God has set. In the Old Testament ordinance of atonement, too, the sinner laid his hands on the sacrificial offering and then killed that offering. *"And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill the sin offering at the place of the burnt offering" (Leviticus 4:29)*. The dealing with sin had to be carried out according to the law of God.

To bring us into the kingdom of God just as the wheat is gathered into the barn, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and at that time He also had the sins that you and I commit throughout our lifetime passed on to Him. And as the price of those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross in our place, and He rose again from death. To those who have received the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift and lets them live in His kingdom.

What we rely on is the salvation accomplished in this way. Lay down the desire to escape the final judgment by your own

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zeal. Those who believe in the righteousness Jesus has fulfilled are the ones who belong to God, and because they live knowing that grace, they can entrust the end to God and carry out by faith the work entrusted to them today.

The peace of the servant who follows the owner's judgment

In this parable the servants learned two things. They heard why the tares had appeared, and they also learned how they should deal with them. Just as knowing the source of the problem was not enough and they had to wait according to the owner's will, we, too, must keep learning the word even after we have discerned the truth.

Do not forget that God sowed the good seed. The more falsehood you see, the more clearly you must hold on to the true gospel. Do not change the content of salvation according to the confusion you see and hear, but discern by the standard of what Jesus has accomplished. What the Lord has done is perfect.

Also, think of the people the Lord treasures. Examine whether, because of your zeal, such a person is being hurt or that person's way to learning the word is being blocked, and after pointing out a problem, think about how you will explain the truth and help that person's faith. The owner's heart is turned toward the wheat in the field.

We can wait even while discerning because the end belongs to God. The Lord will gather up the tares and bring the wheat into the barn, so even if we do not stand in the owner's place, that judgment will be carried out. If you believe this fact, you can choose care that agrees with the word rather than a hasty settling of the matter.

The obedience you need today may be to stop and listen. Do not push ahead, in the name of zeal, with a method God has forbidden. Act according to the word, and wait according to the word. It is fitting for a servant to care for people within the true gospel and to carry out what the Lord has commanded.

The owner knows his field, protects the wheat, and sets the time of harvest. Those who trust his judgment can keep on doing the work entrusted to them even amid the confusion before their eyes. I hope that you will follow the will of God, who treasures the wheat, lay down your impatience, and serve by faith. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Give thanks that you are a field in which good seed has been sown

< Matthew 13:24–32 >

“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, “Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?” He said to them, “An enemy has done this.” The servants said to him, “Do you want us then to go and gather them up?” But he said, “No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”’ Another parable He put forth to them, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.’”

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Dear fellow believers, as people go on living, there are times when they get irritated. But if we keep holding on to irritation, there is no end to it. In the old days there were skeins of thread, and there was black thread and there was white thread. If you take hold of the end of the black thread and pull, black thread keeps coming out. If you take hold of the white thread and pull, white thread keeps coming out. This tells us well how to live a life of faith wisely.

If, as we live a life of faith, we keep thinking only about the parts that irritate us and keep pulling on them, we keep recalling only the things that irritate us. When we think about this part, we get irritated at this part, and when we think about that part, we again get irritated at that part, and if we keep pulling, only that comes up. There is a saying that one must stand in the right line, and there is also a saying that one should fasten the first button correctly; likewise with thread, it is one of two things: whether we will take hold of the white thread and pull or take hold of the black thread and pull, whether we will keep thinking about irritating things or think about our Lord. If we fall into temptation and keep pulling out only the black thread, the more we pull it out, the more heated we get. At first we get irritated; if we pull out a little more, we flare up, and after that there is no end. If we burst out with what we have piled up all that time, there is no end. Even while knowing that it is not good, we end up doing so because we are irritated. Since we are human, if we do not resolve it, it bursts out in another direction, and we may needlessly vent our irritation on the brothers and sisters around us or on our family, so that the sparks fall elsewhere. You will be the same way, too. If we do not quickly release our irritation when we get irritated, we end up going to some unrelated place and taking out our anger there. It seems this is because people have the flesh. But we must not leave it as it is. We must calm

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our hearts. The word says, *"'Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26)*, and if we harbor wrath for a long time, it is not right before God. When you are irritated, can you pray? You cannot pray. Even so, if we bow down and quietly keep calling on the Lord, the Lord calms our hearts and makes the irritation disappear. And even while seeing other people's faults, we think, "I am the same kind of human being too. I too could be like that at any time." In any case, if our hearts are hung up on it, we cannot preach the gospel and cannot serve God. For our hearts to be sunk in discomfort is truly not right.

Dear fellow believers, it is hard, isn't it? If we were people who drink, we would have a drink once and let it all out, but for us who believe in Jesus, that does not really work. If the slander against the gospel were abuse directed only at me, one person, I would understand it. But such slander also strikes the souls who are to receive the remission of sins, and it completely tears down the faith of the souls who have just received the remission of sins. When I think about this and that, I cannot tell you how irritated I get. This is because such slander is not a personal attack on some individual but is directly connected to the kingdom of God. Someone who had not been born again would have tried to argue it out to the end and pay them back. But that is not fitting. Since the Lord has remitted my sins, I too must forgive the sins that other people commit against me. For if I try to pay everything back because I am irritated, the Lord will say, "I canceled all your debt, and are you throwing your fellow servant into prison because he does not pay his debt?" and will tell me that it is not right.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field"

Today, let us compose our hearts again and look to the Lord. The word says, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field" (Matthew 13:24)*. This good seed can be said to refer to the word the Lord sowed, that is, to our Lord. The Lord came to this earth and removed all our sins, the sins of all the people of this world. The good seed refers to none other than Jesus. This field refers to the world, that is, to the hearts of the people of the world. Good seed was sown in this world, but the enemy came, sowed tares, which are bad seed, on top, and went his way. Therefore, in this world, the word of our Lord, who removed our sins—this word of God—and the words of Satan the devil have been sown mixed together. They have been sown mixed together. And the people who accepted the good seed into their hearts are like a mustard seed. When this one good seed is sown in our ground, we think little of it, thinking, "What great thing could there be in it?" But when this good seed is sown in the ground, very good fruits come up from that ground. Wheat comes up. This word says that wheat comes up, and that seed truly grows—a single mustard seed grows—and becomes a large tree, so that all the birds nest in it and enjoy rest, and are also protected by that mustard tree. Our Lord came to this earth and was planted in this way in the fields of the hearts of certain people like you and me.

Dear fellow believers, in the fields of people's hearts, there are people in whom the Lord has been planted, and there are people in whom the words of the devil have been planted. A person in whom the words of the devil have been planted is a tare. Now, the gospel of the people on this earth in whom tares have been sown—the people in the fields of whose hearts tares

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have been planted—is truly similar to the true gospel, but a gospel in which sin remains even when one believes it is not the gospel. Dear fellow believers, this is not wheat. These tares will all go into the fire. In the hearts of some people, Jesus is present and the truly pure gospel has been planted, so that they have come to have hearts that have truly received the remission of sins and are going to heaven; in some people, tares have been sown, so that they imitate it closely and even say that they are going to heaven, but in reality there is sin in their hearts.

Dear fellow believers, we must know whether good seed has been planted in our hearts or tares have been planted. Dear fellow believers, has good seed been planted in your hearts? Here it says that the kingdom of heaven is like a man who took good seed and planted it in his field; dear fellow believers, if you plant good seed in your hearts, you will go to heaven. If we plant in our hearts the word of God that God has removed our sins, that He has removed sin 100 percent, we will go to heaven. And we bear many fruits of heaven. But if we plant in the fields of our hearts what we thought was genuine but is fake, that is, tares, tares come up. Such a person thinks he is genuine, but he cannot become genuine. He is always fake. He lives a life of faith that is very similar, but it is not the real thing. Genuine fruit is different. This tare has no grain. It is chaff. But wheat has grain. There is white grain inside. These two kinds of seed have been sown in all the people who live on this earth. I believe we must consider whether good seed has been sown in us or tares have been sown.

The change in a person in whom good seed has been planted

I see that those who heard this gospel and received the remission of sins go through a great many difficulties. There are many times when it is hard. But through this good seed, the Lord, they can overcome all these things. Dear fellow believers, in fact, though it seems that we get terribly irritated, we do not actually get that irritated. Even when we have a quarrel between husband and wife—in the past we would quarrel as husband and wife because we lost our temper, but now we do not quarrel as husband and wife because we have lost our temper; rather, we quarrel as husband and wife for the sake of righteousness. We argue for the sake of what is right and in order to do well from now on; dear fellow believers, what I am saying is that we do not fight just because our feelings are hurt, in order to soothe our hurt feelings. Do you understand what I am saying? The people in whom good seed has been sown truly bear good fruit through the Lord, also bear the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit through the Lord, and through the Lord, such people become people of the Holy Spirit.

Dear fellow believers, what changed between before and after I was born again is this: in the past, when I lost my temper, I always had to pay the other person back. Once I lost my temper, I was very fearsome; once I had marked someone, I always had to see it through to the end. But from the time good seed was planted in my heart, that is gone. The outer man gets very angry, but the inner man has no reaction at all. In the past, when my outer man got irritated, the inner man would also get irritated along with it and keep pace with it, and then I would fight and so on, but the inner man stays still. It is calm. I should get irritated, but I do not get irritated. Only my outer man gets

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irritated and makes a fuss, and the inner man says it is all right. It says that such things can happen. And it shows tolerance. The outer man says, "I cannot tolerate this," but the inner man tolerates it. It says, "Ah, such things can happen." So, after hesitating for a long while, no fight comes of it. For there to be a fight, I would have to lose my temper within the inner man, but since I do not lose my temper within, no fight comes of it. After the good seed came in, I ended up becoming a tolerant person, though I was not originally that kind of person.

When I look at God's people, people change a great deal. There are some people who are very bad-tempered. I cannot tell you how fearsome such a person looks when he glares with blazing eyes, but when I talk with that person and sense his inner man, I see such brothers and sisters in whom I can feel something different from the outer man—how gentle, how meek, and how good they are. That is precisely because good seed has been planted in us. Dear fellow believers, God of course breaks us. But that is not something achieved by some self-cultivation of ours. It is not achieved by our efforts. It is because the Lord is in us, because the Lord gives off His character, His nature, His fragrance from within us, because His fragrance flows out. There are some people who look very strong, but when you talk with them, they are very gentle. There are some people whose outer man looks extremely gentle, but when you talk with them, their inner man is strong and hardhearted. Dear fellow believers, even so, once good seed is planted, the Lord plows up the inside. He surely makes this heart, the heart itself, into His image. It is because good seed has been planted, dear fellow believers. We also receive salvation through the good seed. We also bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit through the good seed, through our Lord. It is not through ourselves that we bear fruit. The Lord makes a person who cannot be patient be patient, and makes a person

who is too indecisive draw truly clear lines—our Lord works within us. We must actually express outwardly and draw out the Lord who works within us. Just as we draw out white thread, when we draw out the Lord's doing such work in us, the Lord's leading us and ruling over us, we can gain many fruits and can give glory to God.

The person in whom tares have been sown

But on the contrary, in the people in whom tares have been planted, the evil of the tares comes out of their hearts. Even while knowing that they should not do this, they form factions. Dear fellow believers, while reading the Bible, I discovered one amazing fact, and it is that people who do not have the Holy Spirit form factions. In Galatians, concerning people who do not have the Holy Spirit, there is this word: *"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions –ASV" (Galatians 5:19–20)*. The people in whom tares have been sown say that Jesus is their Savior, yet they believe that Jesus did not completely save them, and they believe that He did not completely save the people of the world either. From a person in whose heart sin—tares—has been planted, the fruit of the tares comes out. A person in whose heart tares have been sown cannot love. He cannot be tolerant. He cannot forgive. And words that slander the righteous come out, and what comes out after that is words that harm the other person.

Dear fellow believers, why is it that one wants to love but cannot love? It is because tares have been sown. Dear fellow believers, if the Holy Spirit, the Lord, God's own word of truth,

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the word of our Lord, has been sown in us, the Lord comes out. But if tares have been sown, tares come out. The word says, *"Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7)*. Dear fellow believers, so tares cannot imitate the fruit of the good seed, at least. Even if they want to, they cannot. Even if they want to do so, they cannot. The lives of the righteous and of sinners look similar. The righteous also get angry, the righteous also suffer pain, the righteous also catch colds, the righteous also are distressed, and there are times when they cry and times when they laugh. Sinners do the same. It is similar. But the righteous can forgive even people who seem impossible to forgive. Sinners can never forgive people who seem impossible to forgive. That is what is different. A person in the field of whose heart good seed has been planted and a person in whom tares have been planted are that different. Dear fellow believers, has good seed been planted in your hearts, or have tares been planted? Good seed has been planted. That good seed is none other than the gospel. The gospel is none other than Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is none other than the good seed. The seed that gave us life, made us righteous, caused us to be born again, and gave us eternal life—He is none other than Jesus. Jesus is the good seed. The perfect gospel is the good seed. The perfect gospel is that Jesus was born on this earth, received baptism from John at the Jordan River and had our sins transferred to Him, died on the Cross, and rose again, and so completely removed our sins—that He completely saved us from sin. This is the good seed. What about the bad seed, the tares? "He did not remove them all." This is the tares. What has no kernel is the tares. "Jesus did not remove all sin. He removed it, but there is still sin. Why? There is sin because the flesh commits sin."

As we believe in Jesus Christ, as we believe in the Lord, we are without sin because we have come to believe in our hearts

that the Lord removed all sin at one time. Dear fellow believers, we have been saved. We are lacking, but if Jesus had not removed all our sins, we would not receive the remission of sins until we die. Isn't that so, dear fellow believers? Therefore, dear fellow believers, the tares and this good seed are clearly divided there into wheat and chaff. So, first of all, we must truly give thanks to God that good seed has fallen into the fields of our hearts. That good seed has been sown—dear fellow believers, that tares were not sown in the fields of our hearts but, to begin with, good seed fell into our hearts—we are truly thankful for this.

When the gospel of salvation was planted, we did not really know. When it was planted, it was so very slight that we wondered whether it was anything great, and we did not really know. But as time passes, it grows; it pushes its way up from the heart, sprouts, and grows, and as it grows, we come to experience what a precious tree it is. How good a seed this seed planted in us is—this seed is truly good seed. It means it was no ordinary good seed. We come to experience this. So as it grows—as our hearts grow in faith, as the good seed truly shoots up and grows within us—it later becomes a large tree, a mustard tree. A mustard seed is hard to see with the eyes. So something so small that it is hard to see with the eyes is called a mustard seed. In this way, the gospel of the true truth is planted in our hearts and grows as time goes by, so that, though it seemed very weak at first, later it becomes very great; don't we experience how good this good seed planted in our hearts is? If tares had been planted, dear fellow believers, what would have become of us? If tares had been planted, at first they would swell up, and it would seem that there is something there. But as time goes on, it gets worse and worse. Unwanted evil comes out, filthy things come out, things that oppose God come out, and only things that

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are not good come out. When they are first planted, the tares look more impressive, and even when they sprout, they look better. Good seed and tares were planted as seeds, but at first the tares are stronger. The gospel is very slight. It sprouts late and is very weak. If you make even a small mistake, it dies. When, after we barely manage to raise it safely, the good seed has grown this much, from this point on the difference shows. The more the good seed grows, the more it becomes joy within us, and the more the tares grow, the more they bring worry to our hearts. And we come to act in ways directly opposed to God.

"Let both grow together until the harvest"

Dear fellow believers, I cannot tell you how fortunate it is. As I read this word, I am truly very thankful that good seed has been sown. God sowed good seed in this world, and the devil sowed too. What did the devil sow? He sowed tares. God sowed good seed. But what happens? How long does this go on—how long do the good seed and the tares go on? They go on until the end of the age. The good seed keeps growing, and the tares keep growing too. The word says, *"So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'" (Matthew 13:27–30)*. Dear fellow believers, in this way the tares and the good seed go on until the end of this age. The tares go

on until then, and the good seed goes on until then. And also, God does not want those servants to pull them up. He says, "Leave them alone," and He is concerned that while pulling up the tares they may pull up the wheat as well.

Dear fellow believers, in a rice paddy a weed called barnyard grass has come up; next to it there is rice, and here the barnyard grass has come up. Next to it the roots spread out in a similar way and are mixed together, and what is connected there together with it is this barnyard grass, that is, the roots of the tares. As for how far those roots have spread, they have spread all the way to the side of the real rice. In some cases, the roots of that barnyard grass are entangled with the rice and are tormenting it. If you pull this up, what else gets pulled up? If you yank them together, the rice is pulled up as well. That is why it says to leave it alone. There are many tares on this earth. The devil sowed many tares and went his way. But God also sowed good seed on this earth. He sent our Lord, who removed all our sins, to this earth. And He planted Him in our hearts. He planted Him in our hearts through the word. How long must we live with these tares? How long must we live in such distress? We must live this way until the day the Lord comes, until the last day. We must live among tares.

Here we must consider one thing before moving on: we must truly be thankful that the Lord has been planted in our hearts. We must truly be thankful that, although so many tares were sown, tares were not planted in our hearts. Dear fellow believers, are you thankful that truly good seed has been sown in our hearts? Dear fellow believers, do you know that good seed has been sown? We are thankful. We must know how to be thankful for this. And we must not try to pull up the people in whom tares have been sown. We must go about sowing good seed; we must not rush at the people in whom tares have already been sown in

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order to pull them up. Do you understand what I am saying?

What we must do is plant good seed

We must set aside the people with whom it does not work. As for a person in whose heart tares have already been sown, have taken root, and have come up a great deal, if we try to pull them up, that person instead rushes at us and harms those who have received the remission of sins. If, when we talk with someone, the tares can be pulled up, the small ones can be pulled out. In the seedbed they can be pulled out. In the seedbed, a person who is really good at spotting tares picks out the tares. But if they have already been sown and have grown to the point of becoming a tree, then it is already too late. It is already too late to pull them up. This is because the roots have already spread everywhere. Dear fellow believers, if we pull them up, we will surely hurt the righteous. So it says to leave them alone. It says to leave them alone and to sow good seed in truly pure souls, in good fields. We must sow our Lord. We must sow the Lord, who is the good seed, in the fields of the hearts of people in whom nothing has been sown. The heart of what the Lord is saying lies here: our work is not to pull up the tares but to plant good seed.

As we look at this word, although Satan the devil sowed many tares and went his way, we must not rush at them to pull them up; rather, if tares have not yet grown in the fields of people's hearts, we must sow truly good seed there and preach the gospel and sow good seed so that the good seed sprouts. What this word is saying is nothing else. It is saying, "Do not rush at them to pull them up." It is saying, "Check whether good seed has been planted in you." And it is saying to leave them

until the harvest. At the same time it is saying: “There are two people on this earth: there is one who sows good seed and there is one who sows bad seed. Which seed should you sow? Do not hide the good seed planted in your hearts, but sow it until the day the Lord comes.” Dear fellow believers, right now in this world there are a great many people in whom tares have been sown. As we know well, a person who believes in Jesus and still has sin in his heart is one in whom tares have been sown. And when I see how many such people there are, it is truly heartbreaking. It is not just truly heartbreaking; it is so heartbreaking that it is exasperating. But what can we do about it? Can we do it? We must live the rest of our life of faith looking to the Lord. Without looking on in exasperation. We do have a heartbroken heart, but what can we do about it? Even the Lord said to leave them alone, so what can we do?

We must be humble. On this earth there are still people in the fields of whose hearts tares have not been sown. As we go about preaching the gospel, we meet people whose hearts are truly pure. There are such pure people. We must meet such people and talk with them. If we lower our hearts and go looking for such people, we can meet many of them around us, because the end has not yet completely come upon the world. When we actually try sowing this seed, we see whether it is a field in which we can sow, whether it is already a field of tares in which tares have grown so thickly that we cannot sow, or whether there are tares but they are very weak, so that if we sow this good seed it will truly sprout; and if it looks likely to sprout, we sow the seed. We till the field of the heart a little, sow the seed, water it, and come back. Then, if it has not sprouted the next day, we go and water it again, heap up soil around it, and water it again, and as we keep doing this, though there are tares, good seed also comes up. Once the good seed comes up, from then on we do the work of

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weeding the field. We do not pull up the tares at the edges all at once but cut them back little by little. We cut them off so that they cannot come up, and then, once the good sprouts have grown a bit, we scrape away the tares in one sweep. Once we scrape them away, they all wither and die. Dear fellow believers, our being nurtured is like that. There are very many tares in the fields of our hearts. We must weed the field often.

Even after we have received the remission of sins, there are many bad things, aren't there? Satan the devil sowed tares and went his way, and there are many things through which we suffer and struggle because of those tares.

Dear fellow believers, if possible, we must seek out and meet good fields. Sowing seed in a field that has already completely become tares is dangerous; not only is sowing there useless and without harvest, but if we sow there, the seed cannot grow. Dear fellow believers, we have tried sowing a great deal of seed. We try sowing seed, but with people in the fields of whose hearts there are truly very many tares, sowing is in vain. It shines for a day or two and then comes to nothing. Go about humbly seeking people. And we must sow good seed and look to our Lord, who is the good seed. We must look to that good seed planted in our hearts. What do you and I look to? Do we look to the fact that good seed has been sown, to our Lord? We must look to the Lord and follow the Lord. Dear fellow believers, do you understand?

"Gather the wheat into my barn"

The wheat is all gathered at the end and put into the barn. The barn refers to the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven has the nature of a place. The Bible speaks of two places, heaven and hell. But some people say that hell, being called

Gehenna, is merely a place where garbage used to be burned, merely a grave. But that is not all there is to hell. Dear fellow believers, there is indeed a saying that it was a place where garbage used to be burned, but those people say that when a person's body dies, that is the end, that he ceases to exist. But people do not cease to exist. God raises people again, and they are surely divided and go to heaven or to hell. The tares go into the unquenchable fire, and the wheat, which is the good seed, goes into the storehouse, that is, God's barn. It speaks of the nature of a place. Although we have the flesh, we must know well whether or not we are people who will go to the kingdom of God in spirit, and we must know well the fact that heaven surely exists for us. We must become saints who believe the fact that heaven exists and who, while we are alive, believe this and preach the gospel. We must become saints who believe and preach, and believe and live.

In any case, the Lord is present, the Lord was the good seed, and the Lord has been planted in us, and through the Lord we go to heaven and enter the barn. But on this earth, Satan the devil preaches false religious doctrines and makes people believe in such a way that they have sin even though they believe in Jesus, so that they believe in Jesus yet have sin, and so there are also many souls who have not been born again, who believe in Jesus to the very end and then are bound in bundles and go into the unquenchable fire. When we see that, we must give thanks that God has planted good seed in us, and we must always look to the Lord and follow the Lord.

There are many things that make us lose our temper, but what I am telling you is that if you pull out white thread, white thread comes out. If you take hold of the pitch-black thread in the skein and pull it out, pitch-black thread keeps coming out. In our life of faith, we must always know the fact that good seed has been

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planted in us and must always draw out the good seed. When we draw out of our hearts that the Lord has given us salvation, that the Lord has given us this kingdom of heaven, that He has given us eternal life, that He has made us God's own children, that He has given us blessings in this way, and all these things the Lord has done for us—when we draw out the Lord—we can praise, we can rejoice, and we can live the rest of our days in this world truly rejoicing, praying without ceasing, and giving thanks. I too make a big fuss when I fall into temptation. But I give thanks and rejoice because our Lord, who is the good seed, is within me. I am truly joyful. That the Lord has been planted in my heart, and that the Lord has been planted in you saints, in our brothers and sisters, is the most fortunate thing and the thing for which I am most thankful. I am truly thankful. Do you feel that way too? I am truly thankful. We are persecuted, we are cursed, we are falsely accused, and there are many such things. Even so, through our Lord, we give off fragrance. We offer praise to our Lord. We give thanks. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Do not despise small beginnings

< Matthew 13:31–32 >

“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.’”

The kingdom of heaven, of which He spoke through the scene of planting a small seed

In the parable of the mustard seed, what is seen first is one seed, and what is seen last is a tree in which birds nest. In this way, Jesus explains the kingdom of heaven by showing the beginning and the end together. So we must not judge what God will accomplish only by the size of the beginning, but must look by faith even to the outcome Jesus has spoken of.

Let us read verse 31. *“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field’” (Matthew 13:31).* Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven to one mustard seed that a man took and planted in his own field. The seed did not end while being held in the hand; a man took it and planted it. The story begins with the work of actually planting a small seed in a field.

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If we regard the work of planting as futile because the seed is small, we cannot expect the growth that follows. The work of preaching the word, too, may seem at first to have no particular results. But if we know that the gospel God has given is the word that conveys life, we come to see its value not in the size of the reactions that first appear, but in the word itself.

Remember this scene in which Jesus explains the kingdom of heaven. It is not a word telling people to believe greatly in their own potential, but a word that lets us know what the kingdom God gives is like. Therefore, it matters on what our expectations are based, and that basis is the word of Jesus, who explained the kingdom of heaven with a small seed.

The work of taking and planting in one's own field

Verse 31 has the words *"took and sowed in his field."* The owner in verse 24, just before, sowed good seed in his field, but here a man appears who took a single seed and sowed it in his own field. Since he did not scatter a handful of seed but chose one seed and put it in the ground, the one who sows it actually moves his hands, even though the seed is small. That field is the field of our hearts, where the word falls; so do not stop at merely thinking about how precious the word is, but accept into your heart the word you have heard and believe it.

It is the same when the gospel has been preached to you. Do not acknowledge that it is good content and yet leave it aside as words that have nothing to do with your salvation. This is knowing and believing that the salvation Jesus has accomplished is the very salvation you need, that is, accepting the word of God as your sure basis.

Those who have believed the word can value even the small

tasks entrusted to them. Explaining the gospel to other people, examining the word together with people in difficulty, and serving by faith may not stand out greatly on the outside. But Jesus chose precisely the scene of planting a small seed as a parable of the kingdom of heaven.

Rather than what we can begin on a large scale, what we are planting comes first. If we take away from the content of the gospel in order to gain people's recognition, we cannot faithfully preach what God has given. So use even a small opportunity to make known clearly the salvation Jesus has accomplished. The value of the word remains the same regardless of the scale seen on the outside.

The seed that does not remain in its smallness

Let us read the first part of verse 32. *"Which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree" (Matthew 13:32)*. Jesus does not end His explanation with the appearance of the small seed, but goes on to speak of its appearance after it has grown. So, to know the kingdom of heaven, we must hear these two appearances together.

Jesus first says that it is *"the least of all the seeds,"* and that after it has grown it is *"greater than the herbs."* What was the smallest among the seeds is bigger when compared with the herbs, and it is finally called by the name *"tree."* When we first believe the gospel, too, we first hold on to the fact that sin has been removed. But as time passes and we serve the word, we come to know ever more fully that this salvation means having gained the kingdom of heaven, having become children of God, and having obtained eternal life. Faith is not exaggerating the

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present, but trusting the outcome the Lord has spoken of.

We easily draw every conclusion from only what is seen now. It is the same when someone who has just begun learning the word still seems lacking. But value the truthfulness of the gospel he believes, and help him to keep learning the word. The One who teaches people and makes faith grow is God, who works through the word.

The word "grow" contains the process between the beginning and the end. If we cannot wait for that process and demand only big results right away, we end up despising small beginnings. Treasure hearing and believing the word, judging according to the word you have believed, and learning that word again. The growth of faith appears in real life in this way.

The birds that nest in the branches

Let us read the latter part of verse 32. *"The birds of the air come and nest in its branches" (Matthew 13:32)*. Birds nest in the grown tree. Jesus does not speak only of the fact that the tree has become large, but tells even of the sight of other living creatures staying in its branches, so the benefit of the growth is revealed outwardly.

Birds also appear in verse 4 of this chapter. At that time, the birds came and ate up the seed that fell by the wayside, but in verse 32 the birds of the air come and nest in the branches of the fully grown tree. The same word *"come"* is used once in a scene of losing the seed and once in a scene of gaining a place to stay. The branches of a grown tree become shade that shelters from the sun and from wind and rain, so the birds that had been flying about rest and are protected beneath them. It is just so when people who were bound by sin and could find no place to rest

come to those who first believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, hear that word, believe in Jesus' salvation, and obtain rest.

The word you have learned is not knowledge needed only by you. It is also needed by those who have no assurance of salvation, those whose hearts are shaken because of difficulties, and those who want to know the gospel clearly. Thinking of the grace by which God let you know that word first, explain it sincerely so that the other person may understand.

The complete salvation that supports a small beginning

The fact that the mustard seed is small does not mean that the gospel is incomplete. The salvation Jesus has accomplished is complete, and even after coming to know that salvation, we learn the word and come to know the depth of that grace more. So we must distinguish between the completeness of salvation and the process by which believers grow.

God ordained that hands be laid on the sacrificial offering of atonement. *"And he shall lay his hand on the head of the goat, and kill it at the place where they kill the burnt offering before the LORD. It is a sin offering" (Leviticus 4:24)*. There was God's law by which sin was transferred to the sacrificial offering and that offering was sacrificed, and a sinner could not replace that law with his own efforts. The sinner had to believe in the way of salvation God had prepared.

At the very center of the kingdom of heaven, which begins with a small seed, is this complete salvation. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and He also had the

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sins of our entire lifetime, which are included in them, passed on to Him. Then, as the price of the sins that were passed on to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross in our place, and rose again from death. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, and from then on they grow in the word.

Therefore, the growth of faith does not mean that we add a lacking price to the salvation Jesus has accomplished, but that we know the salvation He has already given and live relying more surely on that word. The more we see the weakness that remains in us, the more we lean on that grace, and we come to preach to others, too, what Jesus has accomplished.

Faith that does not determine the end by present size

Some people neglect even learning the word on the grounds that their faith is lacking. But now, when you feel lacking, is precisely the time you need the Lord's teaching. Rather than closing your heart, learn the gospel clearly, and fulfill today's work according to the word you have come to understand. The One who spoke of growth is Jesus.

Other people think that everything they have done is in vain if the results of their service look small. At such times, look back on what you served for. If you expected only to be recognized by people, correct your heart; if you wanted the gospel to be preached, you need only keep faithfully preaching that word. The value of the work the Lord has entrusted lies in the Lord's will.

What Jesus speaks of through this parable is the kingdom of heaven, so our expectations, too, must be directed toward that

kingdom which God gives. Rather than taking this word as grounds for growing your own greed, accept it as grounds for treasuring the gospel God has given and believing that word. The center of what we are to look forward to is the kingdom of God.

The Lord does not value only what is conspicuously large from the start, but speaks together of the work of planting the seed, the process of growing, and the benefit of birds nesting in the branches. So you, too, must not hastily judge a person by outward appearance; rather, help him to learn the truth. Those who have believed first have the responsibility to wait and to serve.

Looking toward the ending Jesus has shown

The word of the two verses continued from a small seed to the birds nesting in the branches. It is a short parable, but it changes our judgment as we look at the present. We must not regard the word lightly because its beginning is small, but must look to the benefit that Jesus will accomplish through that word.

Treasure the gospel you have accepted into your heart. Believe clearly in the salvation Jesus has given, keep learning the word, and serve people according to that word. If others come to know the gospel through you, that is a precious benefit that has come from the word the Lord has given.

Even if the work entrusted to you today looks small, act sincerely in it. Rather than looking for work that would appear bigger, preach the word rightly and care for people in the opportunity given to you now. Jesus, who spoke of both the scene of planting the seed and the scene of birds nesting, is One who can be trusted.

Human eyes see the smallness of one seed, but Jesus makes

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known even the benefit after it has grown. Those who believe that word do not despise small beginnings. The reason we can value today's faith and service and wait is that Jesus, who spoke of the kingdom of heaven, is faithful. ✉

Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

Preach the word through which He revealed what was hidden

< Matthew 13:33–35 >

“Another parable He spoke to them: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.’ All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ‘I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.’”

The work of the kingdom of heaven that reaches the whole of the meal

Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven to leaven. A woman put leaven into meal, and the meal was all leavened. The word *“all”* that appears at the end of the parable broadens our view. The gospel God gives does not stop at being news that stays in one place, but is preached to people; so do not look only at the place it first went into and miss the whole of what the Lord spoke.

And after recording this parable, Matthew pauses for a moment and explains, in the light of the promise of Scripture,

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why Jesus spoke in parables in this way. So today's passage has us hear the story of the leaven that went into the meal, and leads us on as far as looking to the Lord, who reveals what was hidden through that story.

The woman who put leaven into the meal

Let us read verse 33. *"Another parable He spoke to them: 'The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened'" (Matthew 13:33)*. What the woman did, where the leaven went in, and what the result was follow one another within one verse. Because the woman did not put the leaven in a place apart from the meal but put it into the meal, after that meeting there follows the whole of the meal becoming leavened. Three measures of meal is no small amount, yet compared with that much meal, the leaven put in is no more than a little.

The word of salvation God has given is also preached to people in this way. Other people do not come to know the gospel just because you know it and rejoice in it, so explain the word to someone and serve so that that person may hear what Jesus has accomplished. Since it is more important that the word of salvation is preached to people than that the name of the one who serves becomes widely known, even service carried out quietly becomes a precious work that helps the gospel to be preached.

You, too, have people to whom you can preach the word. When someone who was saved first speaks clearly of Jesus' salvation, the one who hears comes to know what he must believe. Accept this work as a service God has entrusted to you.

The change that took place where the leaven went in

When the leaven was put into the meal, the meal did not remain as it first was. The parable moves on from the woman's action to the change in the meal; that is, the leaven she put in worked on the meal. The gospel, too, is not a word to be left as an explanation that has nothing to do with those who hear it, but is the news that Jesus has washed away our sins. Those who hear and believe that word receive the remission of sins and become people who belong to God, and they do not live judging themselves on the same basis as before they heard it, but live believing in the salvation the Lord has given.

However, we cannot produce the power that saves people. Just as the power by which leaven spreads lies not in the hands of the woman kneading the dough but in the leaven itself, even if our ability as those who preach seems lacking, the gospel spreads out according to the word, since the Lord said that the kingdom of heaven is like leaven. Since the One who saves is Jesus, those who preach the gospel make known accurately what He has accomplished and, rather than binding the other person to themselves, help him to believe in Jesus. If that person believes the gospel, he, too, can preach the word of salvation to others, so the benefit of that word is far wider than the small range we see.

His words about causing all the meal to rise

The story does not end with a part being leavened; Jesus tells us the result of all the meal becoming leavened. If the mustard seed just before is a picture of a single seed sown in one's own

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field growing, the leaven is a picture of spreading through the whole of the meal, so we come to see side by side the gospel growing in one person's heart and the gospel spreading to the whole world. When those who know the gospel look only at their own surroundings and are satisfied, they easily forget the people who have not yet heard it, but even if people's languages or circumstances are different, the fact that they are people who need the remission of sins is the same. Therefore, we need a heart that desires to make known to all people the salvation Jesus has accomplished.

The work each of us can take on is different. Some explain directly, some help the work of preaching the word to continue, and it is also possible to pray together and share the labor that is needed. However, the wider the range over which the gospel is preached becomes, the more its content, too, must be clearly kept. Zeal to make it known to more people cannot be a reason to take anything away from the word of salvation, so we must preach the complete gospel of the water and the Spirit so that those who hear actually come to know Jesus' salvation.

Looking back on His speaking in parables

Let us read verse 34. *"All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them" (Matthew 13:34)*. After the stories about the seed and the field, and about the mustard seed and the leaven, have been heard, Matthew looks back on the way Jesus spoke. *"All these things"* in this verse is a phrase that binds together the words He spoke before the multitude that day, from the parable of the sower that began on the boat by the sea through the tares, the mustard seed, and the leaven. Matthew uses the word *"parable"*

repeatedly within one verse and even adds the words *"without a parable He did not speak to them,"* clearly recording the fact that the teaching on that occasion was parables from beginning to end.

A parable is not a made-up story that takes the place of the reality, but a word that explains the reality in heaven by taking up what is seen on earth. So do not stop at gaining one plausible lesson from hearing the story of the leaven, but believe that the work of the kingdom of God to which that picture points is actually being accomplished.

The Lord, who fulfills the promise of Scripture

Matthew does not explain the Lord's teaching in parables as a chance choice; rather, with the words *"which was spoken by the prophet"* he calls up the word of Scripture that had already been given. *"I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old" (Psalm 78:2)*. The psalmist, speaking in a parable, told the people the work of God that had been handed down from of old, and Matthew, by quoting this word, makes clear that Jesus' revealing of what was hidden is the fulfillment of Scripture.

The psalm also says, *"Which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us" (Psalm 78:3)*. A community that preaches the word does not hand over to the next person stories of faith it has made up itself, but speaks again of the work of God that it first heard and received. So the work of spreading the gospel like leaven, too, is not adding a story we have newly made up, but handing to the next person the word the Lord revealed, just as we heard and believed it.

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He reveals what was hidden

At the center of the quotation Matthew recorded is the word *"I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 13:35)*, and here there is One who reveals. The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are not knowledge that people obtain for themselves at the end of observing the world for a long time; rather, because the Lord speaks and makes them known, we hear and come to know them. That work, which God planned from the foundation of the world, is the work of causing people who have fallen into sin to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the remission of sins, and become the people of the kingdom of God. Before we heard this gospel, we, too, did not know that sin could truly be removed, so we could not reach this mystery by human effort or devotion. If we hold on only to the words *"kept secret,"* it is easy to think of parables only as a means of keeping the truth far away, but this verse clearly says that He reveals them, and among those who have received that mystery are we of today as well.

That salvation, which He kept hidden from the foundation of the world and then revealed, and that gospel, which must be preached so as to reach all the meal, are as follows. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including without omission even the sins we will commit throughout our lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all. And as the price of all those sins that had been passed on to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross in our place, and rose again from death. Everyone who hears and believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, so we must not put the demand that people must become righteous by their own strength in the place of the gospel, but must explain so that people may hear and believe this

salvation Jesus has accomplished.

Preaching the word He revealed even more widely

The leaven the woman put into the meal leavened all the meal, and Jesus, through parables including that short scene, revealed what had been hidden from the foundation of the world. Even if all the results are not visible before our eyes from the beginning, we can serve believing that the word of salvation the Lord revealed is being preached to people.

Those who hear the word for the first time may need time to understand. Rather than pressing them by repeating words they do not understand, look at what they do not know and explain it clearly. Do not stop at speaking of the gospel only with people who already know it well, but also look for the opportunities God has opened up toward those who have not yet heard it.

The Lord, who spoke in parables, revealed the will of God. We who have received that word have the responsibility to keep faithfully what we have heard and to preach it clearly to the next person as well, like leaven that reaches all the meal. Today, too, listen to the Lord, who reveals what was hidden, and preach together the gospel you have received. ✉

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Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

The righteous shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father

< Matthew 13:36–43 >

"Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.' He answered and said to them: 'He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'"

The disciples, who asked for an explanation

Just because we have heard a parable does not mean that we immediately understand all of its meaning. The disciples came

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to Jesus, who had left the multitude and gone into the house. They had heard the story of the field in which there were tares, but they wanted to learn more about what that story pointed to. So, rather than finishing what they had heard with their own judgment, they asked the Lord, who had spoken it, for an explanation.

Let us read verse 36. *"Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field'" (Matthew 13:36)*. This request reveals the place of a learner. The disciples stood not in the place of evaluating the Lord's word, but before the word they had to understand. When we, too, read the Bible and do not clearly know its meaning, rather than passing over it as though we knew, look for the explanation in the text and examine it.

Jesus answered that request, and in verses 37 through 39 He pointed out one by one the sower, the field and the good seed, the tares and the enemy, and the time of harvest and the reapers, and paired each with its meaning, as though defining words. Since all seven pairs came from the Lord's mouth, the explanation we must follow first of all in understanding this parable is the Lord's explanation. Rather than putting into the parable the conflicts we have experienced or our dissatisfaction with the world, receiving the meaning the Lord has set for us comes first.

He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man

Let us read verse 37. *"He answered and said to them: 'He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man'" (Matthew 13:37)*. The beginning of the good seed lies in Jesus. Therefore, the fact

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that there are people who belong to the kingdom of heaven cannot be explained by their own efforts alone. Because the Lord first spoke and acted, people who believe that word come into being; so in the work of salvation, the One we must look to first is the Lord, who sows the seed.

The Son of Man is the name that Jesus, who is God and yet came clothed in a human body, used to refer to Himself. The very One to whom the disciples came to ask for an explanation was the One who sows the good seed in the parable. So the meaning of the parable does not remain in an abstract principle far away, but leads us to recognize Jesus, who is speaking now, and His work.

In a life of faith, too, this order is easy to forget. If we first look at how long we have believed or how much work we have done, we can miss the starting point of faith. When we first remember the work of salvation the Lord has done, the reasons for our gratitude and service also stand rightly. For the Lord's grace does not arise from what we have done.

He distinguishes the field and the two kinds of seed

Let us read verse 38. *"The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one" (Matthew 13:38)*. Jesus made it clear that the field is the world. Therefore, we cannot narrow the stage of this parable to only the inside of some gathering; the Lord is speaking of the reality that the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the wicked one are together in the midst of the world. Just because they are in the same field does not mean that they become the same seed.

The Lord called both kinds of seed *"sons."* One side is the

sons of the kingdom and the other side is the sons of the wicked one; so this distinction does not lie in comparing people of gentle character with rough people, but in whom they were born of. This term is connected with the word in verse 43 in which He called the place the righteous will enter *"the kingdom of their Father,"* so this status is not something to be measured only by the world's reputation or by visible religious activities.

Even so, this distinction does not give us the right to brand other people recklessly. While taking seriously the distinction the Lord has made clear, we must refrain from deciding a person's end by our own feelings. Our attitude toward people and the discerning of true and false in the word must both be set up rightly together.

The basis for becoming a son of the kingdom

Then on what basis do we become people who belong to God? We cannot answer this question by striving to look like good people while leaving the problem of sin as it is. Believing in the salvation the Lord has bestowed and receiving the remission of sins comes first; so we must understand even the activities of faith within the order of the basis of salvation and the life after being saved.

That basis lies not within us but in what the Lord has done. God did not overlook sin but made sure that its price would be paid without fail; so only when we know how the Lord dealt with our sins does the object of our faith also become clear.

In order to make us sons of the kingdom, the Son of Man, who sows the good seed, 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. And as the price

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of those sins, He poured out His blood on the Cross and died in our place, and He rose again from death and saved us completely as people who belong to the kingdom of heaven. We who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit have received the remission of sins and have received the Holy Spirit as a gift; so the gratitude of those who belong to the kingdom of heaven is directed toward the Lord, who accomplished this salvation.

He makes known the time of harvest and the reapers

Let us read verse 39. *"The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels" (Matthew 13:39)*. The Lord made clear the enemy, the time, and the reapers one by one. So there is no need to remain in fear, holding on only to the fact that there are tares. When we also hear who it is that sowed evil and that there is a time when He will deal with that evil, we come to know that even though there is evil in the world, it does not mean that even the final authority belongs to evil.

The time of harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. The Lord made clear that the workers who gather are the angels of heaven, and in verse 41, too, He says again that the Son of Man sends *"His angels."* In the light of this clear explanation, we must understand our own role with restraint. Just because we have been entrusted with the responsibility of preaching the gospel and discerning the truth does not mean that even the place of carrying out the final judgment has been given to us; so we must not try to take for ourselves the work the Lord has entrusted to the angels.

Nor can we use this word to set a particular year or the order

of events as we please. The text only tells us the fact that there is an end and what He will do at that time; so, rather than curiosity to find out the date, what we need is an attitude of believing and following the Lord's word now. Because there is One who presides over the appointed end, we can keep our faith even in the confusion of the present.

The judgment is carried out by the command of the Son of Man

Let us read verses 40 and 41. *"Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness" (Matthew 13:40–41)*. The *"as"* in verse 40 means that the scene in the parable earlier, in which He said to gather the tares first at the time of harvest and bind them in bundles to burn them, will be fulfilled just so at the end of the age. The Son of Man, who sowed the good seed in verse 37, appears in verse 41 as the One who sends the angels to gather. Therefore, we must see together both the authority of the Lord, who gives the word of salvation, and the authority of the Lord, who commands judgment. This is the reason we cannot treat His teaching lightly.

Let us read verse 42. *"And will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:42)*. The furnace of fire is the fire that melts even metal in a blacksmith's forge and a smelting furnace; so we cannot reduce this warning and read it as merely a figure of speech for a troubled state of mind today. The wailing and gnashing of teeth there also contain the bitterness of people who missed the

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opportunity they had to receive the remission of sins. The Lord is speaking of the judgment that will take place at the end of the age; so we who hear this must, rather than adding words that frighten others, take the warning the Lord gave seriously in itself.

Teaching that cuts the word of God into pieces and weaves it back together with human thoughts and doctrines, and that turns being saved from sin into human merit, causes people to stumble. Therefore, we cannot cover up matters of truth on the grounds that we love. While speaking clearly what the gospel is, guard against an attitude that occupies the seat of judgment and attacks people, and faithfully fulfill the responsibility of preaching the word rightly.

The righteous, who shine in the kingdom of the Father

The Lord's explanation does not end with the judgment of fire. *"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:43)*. The kingdom of their own Father is promised to the righteous, and the word in which He called that kingdom *"the kingdom of their Father"* becomes a comfort. Their future is not the situation of being barely accepted into a strange place, but the glory of children who belong to the Father.

The promise that they will shine like the sun keeps us from reckoning the value of faith by how much it is recognized in the world now. Even if the righteous look weak today or suffer unjust things, the end the Lord has set does not change; so the basis of the glory we wait for lies in the faithfulness of the Lord, who promised, rather than in present success or reputation.

Lastly, the Lord gave the command *"He who has ears to*

hear, let him hear!" The place where the disciples began by asking for an explanation leads in this way to a place of hearing and believing the word. So let us also accept, just as we heard them, the meaning, the time, and the roles the Lord has set for us, and build our faith on that word. Let us live keeping in our hearts the promise that He will make us shine in the kingdom of the Father. ✉

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Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

Sell all that you have and buy the pearl of great price

< Matthew 13:44–46 >

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

Dear fellow believers, how have you been? Today we want to know the meaning of what this word we have read together is saying, and to follow this word. The word tells us that the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, and also that it is like a merchant seeking a pearl of great price. Dear fellow believers, these two things speak of the gospel and speak of a life lived for the gospel. Our Lord came to this earth and spoke many of these parables recorded in Matthew chapter 13 to His disciples. He also speaks here of the four kinds of ground: the wayside, the stony places, the thorny ground, and the good ground.

While speaking of the wayside, the stony places, the thorny ground, and the good ground, He speaks of what was sown on

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the good ground last, and He says that the seeds sown on the good ground bear fruit a hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold. The three kinds of ground other than the good ground in the end all failed to bear fruit and caused the seeds to die.

The word says, *"Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside" (Matthew 13:18–19).* It says that when anyone hears the word of the kingdom of heaven, the word of heaven, and does not understand that word, the wicked one comes and snatches away the seed that was sown. It calls this the one sown by the wayside.

Dear fellow believers, being sown by the wayside refers to not discerning the word of God accurately. It speaks of a person whose thinking is captured by the thoughts of the flesh. People who know nothing but the things of the earth, people whose own hearts have not been clearly revealed, people who do not know themselves well and do not know human beings well—to such people, no matter how much you tell them the word of heaven, it does not get through. Just as the word says, *"Nor cast your pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6),* no matter how much you tell this story to people whose hearts have been captured only by the world, they do not understand.

Being sown on the stony places, the word says, is the one who sprouts for a while but, when tribulation comes because of the word, endures only for a while because he has no root, and immediately stumbles. It means that even after finding this treasure, he only said with his own thoughts, "Ah, this is truly precious. This word is truly right," and did not accept it with his heart. He did not accept it with his heart.

These four kinds of ground speak of people's hearts, and this

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means that one bears fruit only when one accepts the word of God with the heart. What happens if one accepts it only with one's own thoughts, saying, "Ah, that is really right"? What happens if one cannot deeply accept that word with the heart, saying, "Like this treasure hidden in the field, this is truly what I have been searching and searching for; this is truly everlasting life, and this is the truth. This is the Way"? The word of truth of God is the treasure of heaven, and if one cannot accept that treasure with the heart, one becomes like the stony places. If one says in one's thoughts, "Ah, it is right. This is right," yet does not truly feel in one's heart, "This is treasure. This is real treasure," then that person stumbles when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word. In other words, he ends up committing betrayal. "Bah, what of it? It is right, all right, but is that the only thing? That is not the only thing. You can believe this way, and you can believe that way."

Dear fellow believers, can precious treasure be compared with imitations or with ores such as copper or iron? Dear fellow believers, our Lord says that a person who has found treasure buys it, paying any price.

"Treasure hidden in a field"

The word says, *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44)*. Dear fellow believers, this treasure hidden in the field speaks of the kingdom of heaven. Dear fellow believers, if you have truly found the kingdom of heaven that you had been searching and searching for in your heart, and found true everlasting life, wouldn't you sell all that you have to buy it?

Only when one has the eyes of the heart to recognize that it is truly treasure, and so recognizes treasure as treasure and accepts it with the heart, does it become one's own.

Dear fellow believers, being sown on the stony places means saying only with one's thoughts, "Ah, that is right." What does the Bible say? It says that if one does so, one stumbles. Dear fellow believers, we must hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and find the treasure of the heart by which we receive the remission of sins. Only when we truly find God's precious treasure deep within us and accept it into our hearts do we receive the remission of sins. Only when one sells all that one has and buys it does one, in the end, not commit betrayal.

The treasure is bought only by selling all that one has

Dear fellow believers, if you want to receive the remission of sins, you must sell all that you have. That is, you must lay down all your own thoughts, your own righteousness, and your lingering attachment to the things of the world. Otherwise, you cannot accept this gospel with your heart. It means that one sells all that one has and buys the field where that precious treasure is hidden. A certain man saw a field, and he saw that something was in the ground. It was treasure. This man discovered that there was treasure in this field. He realized that this field did not merely yield things of the flesh, but that, besides soil, very precious and valuable treasures were buried in it. But as for how much the owner of that field demanded, it was not a few times or several tens of times the usual price of land, but an enormous, unimaginable price. Though the owner of the field demanded an enormous price, because there was treasure in this field, this man

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knew that if only he sold all he had and bought this field, he would gain a great windfall, and he did not hesitate to sell all he had and buy that field.

Dear fellow believers, this gospel of the water and the Spirit is exactly that. This gospel we have is the gospel of heaven, and it is the gospel of heaven that one can never buy unless one sells all that one has. This gospel of the kingdom of heaven truly cannot be bought unless one sells all of one's own. One cannot obtain this treasure without paying the price of that much sacrifice, even if one loses everything of one's own. The things of heaven are what God gives us for free, but the person who can receive what heaven gives for free is the one who recognizes the treasure and buys it, even if he loses everything on earth. This means that, to know that grace which is in heaven and to make that treasure one's own, one receives the remission of sins only when one seeks to obtain the precious gospel of heaven, even if one loses the things on earth.

Dear fellow believers, the remission of sins seems simple, but it is not simple. It seems very easy, but it is something one can never obtain unless one sells all of one's own. Many people say that they believe in Jesus. But when the time actually comes that they lose everything of their own because of the word, many people commit apostasy. "Is it only that? No." A person who does not sell all of his own and buy the things of heaven does not receive the remission of sins. No, even though he appears to have received the remission of sins, he ends up betraying.

Dear fellow believers, this gospel of the water and the Spirit is precious treasure. Many people around us hear this gospel. Through our books and sermons, and through the mouths of brothers and sisters, many people hear this gospel. They are finding the treasure. But the reason they do not receive the remission of sins is that they do not buy this treasure, for fear of

losing what is theirs. They must sell all that is theirs to buy this treasure, but because they try not to let go of what is theirs, they cannot buy the treasure and end up losing it. Think of haggling over a price at a market.

"How much will you sell this for?" "It is a very expensive thing, but I will give it to you at this price." "Oh, come on, just make it one hundredth of that." "Don't say anything else; don't knock off a single penny, and just pay it. If you knock off even a single penny, I cannot give it to you." "Oh, come on, let's knock off just a little more." "I told you, no." "Then I will give up."

When one meets something precious, one invests absolutely everything one has. One sells everything and buys it. If one cannot reach a compromise, one must give up what is one's own and buy the treasure.

Dear fellow believers, while we live on this earth, the opportunity comes to hear the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, the heavenly kingdom, and at that time a person who does not sell all that is his own does not receive the remission of sins. Only a person who sells all that is his own receives the remission of sins. He becomes the good ground.

Dear fellow believers, there are also people who were in the Church of God and then left. Even people who at first heard this gospel and gave splendid testimonies of salvation one day leave, saying, "Is this the only one? Won't there be salvation elsewhere too?" Dear fellow believers, we must clearly tell such people, "That is not the faith of the saved. There is salvation elsewhere too? There is salvation besides this gospel of the water and the Spirit, this truth? Then you are not even saved. It amounts to your swallowing the gospel and then spitting it back out." It is just like the word that the Bible speaks of: *"A dog returns to his own vomit" (2 Peter 2:22)*. "It is all right that you are lacking,

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but if you say that other things besides this truth are also the truth, you are abandoning the truth. The reason you spit this out is that you feel you would lose too much in order to follow this truth. You lose friends, lose money, and lose honor; because losing things in the world is too painful for you, and because you do not want to lose them, you spit out the gospel. You say that you have received the remission of sins, but you have not received the remission of sins."

Dear fellow believers, it is truly too foolish that, though we have something precious, we lose the gospel because we cannot overcome our circumstances, or because of some greed of ours. If a person abandons the things of heaven and falls away because he would lose much in the world, that person is not saved. Our Lord said, *"He who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God" (Luke 12:9)*. Dear fellow believers, when one meets the most precious thing on this earth, one sells all one's possessions and buys the most precious treasure.

The treasure I found, the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Dear fellow believers, as I read this word, I thought, "That's right. People who have truly met the pearl and met precious treasure fail to bear fruit because they do not know that the treasure is treasure, or because they do not want to lose what is theirs, or because of a heart that wants to have that and to have this as well." To give one example, I met the Lord while I was attending school. I met what I had been searching and searching and searching for. Should I try believing in Buddhism? Is there everlasting life in Buddhism? I looked through practically every religion that could be called a religion, including various new

religions besides. Then I met the Lord, and up until then I knew it only superficially, studying and so on, but there was something I always had doubts about. Why did Jesus receive baptism? And in the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, did the food multiply all at once because Jesus spoke, or did the food keep coming out without running out as it was simply being distributed? As I studied the Bible, I doubted such parts a great deal. And I wanted to know what the reason was. I wanted to know and to believe.

Then I found this treasure called the gospel of the water and the Spirit. "Ah, Jesus Christ had my sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again, and in this way removed my sins. In this way He removed my sins." Dear fellow believers, after I found this treasure, nothing could be compared with this treasure. And if only this treasure became mine, it did not matter even if I lost everything. It did not matter even if I lost my life. For the treasure was so dazzling and shone so brightly. After I met this treasure, I lost my friends, my honor, my property, and everything else, and I did not regret it. Rather, I was overjoyed. It is just as the word says about the treasure *"which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44)*. It means that he sold all that he had and bought that field. I, too, sold all that I had and bought this treasure. Dear fellow believers, those who receive the remission of sins are people who have sold all that is theirs. Only those who have sold everything without begrudging anything, only those who believe that nothing is too precious to lose even if they lose the things of the world, hear this gospel, receive the remission of sins, and do not lose this remission of sins. Only by selling all that is one's own and buying this treasure does one not defect.

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Dear fellow believers, to receive the remission of sins, one must sell all that one has. Before receiving the remission of sins, whether one's position was evangelist, pastor, deacon, choir conductor, or president of the youth association, if there is a treasure that can be bought only by throwing all of that away, shouldn't one throw everything away and buy the treasure? Only when one buys the treasure, even losing everything of one's own, does the treasure become one's own. But today countless people do not buy the treasure. They want to have this treasure too while keeping what is theirs. Dear fellow believers, the Bible clearly says that he sold all that he had and bought that treasure. Treasure can never be bought unless one sells what is one's own.

Dear fellow believers, have you sold all that is yours? Even if you lose anything of yours, is it still right that our Lord has saved you? Dear fellow believers, you must sell all that you have. This word right now is not telling you to bring all your wealth to the church. It means that in being saved, one is bound to lose all the things of the world, and that even if one loses everything, it is truly blessed to believe and follow this truth oneself. When you find treasure, you must accept it into your heart and keep it. The gospel of the water and the Spirit—this is treasure. Dear fellow believers, do you understand? It is right to sell what is yours and accept the gospel of the water and the Spirit by faith, and at that time you receive the remission of sins.

People who have not received the remission of sins are people who do not know how to see treasure. Even if you give them this, they are people who say, "Bah, there must be something else besides this." Dear fellow believers, have you seen a diamond? Have you seen jewels? Dear fellow believers, when people look at a jewel, they are drawn into the jewel. A jewel is so lustrous and so clean. But the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot even be compared with such precious treasure.

"One pearl of great price"

Now let us look at what happens after we meet the Lord. It says, *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45–46)*. Dear fellow believers, why does the Lord speak of these two things? The latter word speaks of following the Lord after we have met the Lord. Dear fellow believers, in following the Lord, too, one must again sell all that one has. As for where one must invest everything of one's own, one invests in the gospel. That is why it says that, when he had found one precious pearl, he sold all that he had and bought that pearl.

Dear fellow believers, pearls are the souls gained through the faith that follows the Lord. Therefore, to buy pearls we must sell what is ours, and if we do not sell what is ours, we cannot buy pearls. In other words, in living a life of faith, we can never follow the Lord while holding on to what is our own.

Dear fellow believers, do you know about this pearl? A clam is wounded, and sand or some foreign substance gets inside it. Then it becomes lodged in the clam's flesh. To get rid of the foreign substance lodged in its flesh and to heal the wound, the clam continually secretes fluid. That secretion accumulates and accumulates and hardens, and again coats and hardens, and what has grown together inside the clam in this way is called a pearl. Dear fellow believers, in order for us to follow the Lord, serve the Lord, cause souls to be saved, and expand the kingdom of God, our own sacrifice is required. It is saying that to gain a single soul, one must sell everything of one's own and invest with all one's heart and strength. You must know the fact that if, after receiving the remission of sins and following the Lord, we follow the Lord loosely because we have things of our own,

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thoughts of our own, and property of our own, we cannot buy the pearl. Dear fellow believers, if you truly want to obtain this precious pearl of saving souls, you can buy that precious pearl only by selling everything of your own and investing absolutely everything in it. It means that when we invest in it with all our strength, with all our mind, and with everything, with all our heart and strength, we can gain that soul and cause it to be saved.

In following the Lord and in causing souls to receive the remission of sins, if one says, "Oh well, it is fine to do it while taking it easy," that is wrong. What is wrong with us before God is precisely that we follow the Lord loosely. Dear fellow believers, if you follow loosely, you cannot save souls. While attending to all your own affairs and looking after all your own interests, you can never follow the Lord. That is why the Lord says, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24)*.

The purpose for which we live is to buy pearls

Dear fellow believers, why do we live our working lives and our family lives? We do so to gain souls on this earth. We do so to buy pearls. Dear fellow believers, why do we live on this earth after we have received the remission of sins? The purpose of living is to buy pearls. Those who have received Jesus Christ into their hearts and accepted the gospel of the water and the Spirit have a different purpose in life. Those who have sold all of their own to obtain precious pearls live in this world, after receiving the remission of sins, to cause souls to receive the remission of sins. The righteous live on this earth to cause people to receive the remission of sins. This is the purpose for which we live after receiving the remission of sins. Dear fellow

believers, do you understand? Do we just live because we have received the remission of sins? That is not so. Dear fellow believers, we must live on this earth for the purpose of buying pearls. We do not live with the purpose of thinking, "How can we succeed? How can we eat well and live well in comfort on this earth? How can we build a nice house and live comfortably all our lives with the person we love?" After we have been saved, we endure all difficulties and invest everything to cause the precious souls in the world to be saved. When we cause that soul to be saved, that soul becomes precious treasure.

Dear fellow believers, what is wrong with us before God? It is living without setting the purpose of a saved person's life on buying pearls. It is wrong to live loosely without setting our purpose on saving souls, with thoughts such as how we can eat well and live well on this earth and be comfortable. Dear fellow believers, it says that in buying the precious pearl, too, he sold all that he had and bought that pearl. The two have something in common: both say that he sold all that he had and bought.

Dear fellow believers, why do we live our working lives? Working diligently at our jobs, supporting our families, and educating our children—what is your main purpose as you live your social lives? The work of saving the souls around you must be your main purpose. It is for that purpose that we live our working lives and our family lives. It is to cause the people around you to be saved that we live our family lives and our working lives on this earth. Dear fellow believers, why must we have money? Why must we have power and have money? Dear fellow believers, we need the things of the world in order to save souls. Since we have received the remission of sins, we must follow the Lord with all our heart and strength.

Dear fellow believers, we must truly serve the gospel with all our heart and strength, selling what we have. It is because

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there are people who truly sell all that they have and serve the Lord that you have received the remission of sins today. If those who received the remission of sins first lived doing everything they wanted to do for themselves, not a single person would receive the remission of sins. Dear fellow believers, you must come to your senses. The ministers must come to their senses first. Though there are many things we want to do, we should do them if the Lord permits. We can never gain souls while doing everything we want to do. It says, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33)*. We first do what we must do before the Lord, and if God gives us grace even after we have done so, then we carry out the remaining tasks. Our attitude of heart must be like that.

Do you think God has placed us on this earth so that we may live happily and well on this earth after we have been saved? Do you think God has appointed ministers as ministers so that they may get ahead in the world? If we wanted to get ahead, we should not be doing what we do now. We would have to deceive and lie. To get ahead, we would have to do this: "If you bring a lot of material wealth to the church, you will earn ten times as much." We would have to lie like that. Dear fellow believers, many people fall for such lies.

Dear fellow believers, ministers, those who want to follow the Lord, and those who truly want to serve the Lord must sell all that they have and serve the Lord. Dear fellow believers, do you understand? How can one serve the Lord, and how can one live with all one's strength, while leaving what is one's own in place, with what is one's own still there? When there are many things pulling at us from the world, how can we run toward the Lord?

Dear fellow believers, you must sell all that you have. You must follow the Lord with all your strength. You must set your

purpose on one thing. We, the righteous, must set our purpose only on buying pearls. In this way we buy pearls and build a house of pearls. We build a city of pearls. Dear fellow believers, we cause souls to receive the remission of sins and present those souls before the Lord, and when the Lord has built the city of New Jerusalem, we go into it and live there.

God calls us members, and He calls us the temple. He says, *"In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21)*. Dear beloved saints, what should our attitude be in following the Lord? We must know the fact that we must follow the Lord with all our heart and strength. Our hearts must become like that.

If any of you has a heart attached to the world, wants to succeed in the world, and wants to be recognized in the world, you have taken the wrong road. Our preaching the gospel and building up the church is our living this way, serving the gospel, in order to sell all that we have and buy precious pearls; is there any reason for us to get ahead by becoming ministers? We did not receive salvation and run the church in order to get ahead. It is to buy pearls, to cause souls to be saved, to serve the Lord, and to follow the Lord that, after being saved, we run the church, receive the guidance of the church, and follow the Lord. It is in order to save souls. Unless one loses everything on this earth, one can never become a servant of the Lord.

Dear fellow believers, only such a person who sells all that is his own and buys precious pearls is a true servant of God, and only such a person is a worker of the kingdom of God. Those who want to follow the Lord must sell all that they have. That does not mean that you should sell all your property and bring it. It means that we must set our purpose on souls being saved and serve the work of saving souls according to need. It means that we must serve the gospel. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

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Dear fellow believers, it was said that those who want to follow the Lord do not entangle themselves with their own affairs of life. It is written, *"No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:4)*. You saints, too, if you want to serve the Lord, must sell all that you have and serve the Lord. Earning material wealth and offering material wealth before the Lord, setting aside what we need to eat, drink, and live, then earning again and serving the gospel, and doing so—this is the life of a saint. What do we earn a lot of material wealth for? Before we received the remission of sins, we earned a lot of material wealth in order to accumulate riches in this world and pass them down to our descendants for generations, didn't we? But why do we earn material wealth now? We earn material wealth the same way and do the same things, but hasn't the purpose changed now? Don't we earn material wealth in order to buy precious pearls and to save souls? Whether we live our family lives or our working lives, isn't that our purpose? Dear fellow believers, the purpose of our lives is to buy precious pearls. I hope all of you live that way.

Dear fellow believers, this life of being born again of the water and the Spirit and living while serving the gospel is a truly precious life. What will we do while living on this earth? At most, we eat and drink and merely go on living because we cannot die. There is nothing else to do but eat three meals a day, sleep, get up, and eat and live. Apart from serving the gospel, there is nothing worthwhile for us at all. After being born again, let us live doing what pleases the Lord while living on this earth. If the life we live is for the gospel, nothing is as blessed as that. A life lived entirely for the gospel is a truly worthwhile life.

Dear fellow believers, I feel our shortcomings so very much. I feel so much frustration. I feel that way when I see us

floundering in the world while saying that we follow the Lord and saying that we love the Lord. Dear fellow believers, do not forget that those who follow the Lord recognize the precious pearl, sell all that is theirs, and buy the pearl. Such people never live holding on to what is their own. Do not forget the fact that they prepare everything to buy pearls.

Our God, who has saved you and me, speaks to you and me. Our Lord speaks in the Church of God. Our Lord says that when one has seen a precious pearl, one can buy the pearl only by selling all that one has. He says that otherwise one cannot buy the pearl.

A life of buying pearls

Let us, you and I, live a life of buying pearls. Do not say that you follow the Lord while not buying pearls. And if one says that one has bought a pearl without selling all that one has, that is not a real pearl but a fake pearl. If one did not buy it by selling everything of one's own, it looks like a pearl but is an imitation that is not a pearl. We must know that the truly precious pearl can be bought only by selling all that is one's own. We must know how many pearls we have bought, how much we are giving all our heart and strength to buy pearls, whether we can sell everything of ours if it is to buy pearls, and whether we are actually living such a life right now to buy precious pearls even while sacrificing everything of ours. We must examine it. Serving the Lord with all our heart and strength, buying pearls, and causing souls to be saved—that is the church. You and I must live that way. Please know that we can never buy precious pearls while doing everything we want to do.

Dear fellow believers, if you knock off even a single penny

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in buying a precious pearl, you cannot buy it. This means that we can never buy the pearl while doing everything we want to do. Please know the fact that we can never buy the pearl while doing everything we want to do and thinking everything we want to think for ourselves, and taking everything we want to take—what is profitable for us and what we like. If your heart is like that right now, please know the fact that we are living without knowing what the truly right attitude of our hearts is. Please know that if one does not serve the Lord with all of one's life in all of one's life, that person is not one who buys pearls. And only the person who buys pearls by giving all of his life is like a merchant seeking precious pearls, and that person is the one who buys pearls.

Dear fellow believers, what does a spiritual pearl merchant do? He buys souls. Whosever soul it may be, souls are precious and valuable. To buy one soul more precious than the whole world, shouldn't one sell all one has? And when a person who goes about buying pearls meets a precious pearl, wouldn't he sell everything of his own? If we, too, want to save souls, won't we sell everything of ours and do the work of letting those souls hear the gospel and causing them to be saved? Dear fellow believers, is there in our hearts some selfish mind, a mind that wants to succeed on this earth, become rich, get ahead, and be recognized? With such a mind, living such a life, one cannot buy precious pearls. And through such a person souls are never saved. It is through the person who has given everything of his own that fruit is borne. One cannot buy precious pearls without giving what is one's own. Never—no matter how much one goes and haggles, it is useless. This means that even preaching the gospel is useless. The Lord is never deceived by us. He, who has determined that only those who have given everything of their own can preach the gospel and bear fruit, sees through to the

very center of the heart, and so He knows the state of our hearts all too well. He quickly recognizes the one who truly empties himself from the heart, fills himself with the precious gospel of the water and the Spirit, and seeks to live for it; He does precious work through that righteous person, and through him He causes souls to grow in faith.

Have you given all of yourselves before the Lord? Have you sold all that is yours and given it? How can you think of buying a precious pearl without selling everything and giving it? You must not knock off even a single penny.

Dear fellow believers, before God, like a merchant who searches for and seeks precious pearls, we must be people who sell all that is ours and buy this one pearl of great price in order to obtain it; we must live such a life. I must live such a life, and you must live such a life. Our brothers must live such a life, and our sisters must live such a life. Our adults, while living their social lives and while leading their families, must, even amid those difficulties, live a life of serving the gospel for the sake of the gospel. It means that whoever wants to follow the Lord must sell what he has and live a life of serving the Lord.

On this earth there are many people who want to follow the Lord, but there are few who sell all that they have, give it all to the poor, and follow the Lord. There are indeed such people in the Bible, but among the countless people of this world they can be counted on one's fingers. Rather, there are many who borrow the name of Jesus and live for themselves.

Dear fellow believers, how many saints are there who follow the Lord after being saved, selling all that they have and living the rest of their lives to save souls? I believe that you and I, who have been saved by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, will all become such people if we clearly know the purpose of our lives. We become people who live on this earth to buy one pearl

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of great price. Dear fellow believers, do you understand? If you and I want to follow the Lord, we can follow the Lord only by selling what we have. Otherwise, we can never follow the Lord. Let me make it clear, and I say it again and again: this is not telling you to sell all your property and give it. We must know the fact that what is ours is not ours, and believe it from the heart. If the Lord says He needs it, we can give it before the Lord, and also, if it is needed to preach the gospel, we must keep what is ours. We must know the fact that we are stewards. For now, we have only been entrusted with it and are keeping it. We must know that we are people who manage the Lord's property.

Dear fellow believers, among those who wanted to follow the Lord there was a rich young man. Saying that he had kept all the law, he asked, *"All these things I have kept. What do I still lack?" (Matthew 19:20)*. Then the Lord said, *"If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matthew 19:21)*. The Bible says of that young man, *"When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:22)*.

Dear fellow believers, if we want to follow the Lord, we must know that all that is ours is the Lord's, and, always preparing for the gospel and to buy precious pearls, manage it well, trade with it, and make it grow; then, when there is truly precious work, we must offer what is ours before the Lord and do the work of buying that precious pearl.

Let me make it clear: the Lord clearly says this. The Lord says, *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45–46)*. One thing is buying the treasure in the field. This speaks of salvation, and next, He said that if one wants to gain

souls, one must sell all that one has and offer it before the Lord, and, to buy the precious pearl of causing that soul to receive the remission of sins, live on this earth enduring suffering and sacrificing for the Lord. I said that a pearl does not simply come into being. Until a pearl is formed, it hurts terribly. In following the Lord, wounds occur. One cannot follow the Lord by doing it smoothly. Only when a wound occurs does a pearl form there.

Dear fellow believers, if you want to follow the Lord, you must follow Him that way, and if you yourself do not want to be hurt and do not want to serve the gospel, you cannot say that you follow the Lord. Dear fellow believers, do you understand? I hope that all of you become such saints, such servants, such brothers, and such sisters who truly follow the Lord.

Saints who know how to look after the church

And I want you to become people who know how to look after the church. "Oh, I can't because my circumstances are like this. I can't because my circumstances are like that." If you look after only your own circumstances like this, you cannot look after the kingdom of God. If you do not look after the church and do not look after souls either, who will serve the Lord? Dear fellow believers, you must know how to look after the church. For the household affairs of the church are the household affairs of the kingdom of heaven, the household affairs of the heavenly kingdom. Dear fellow believers, you must look after souls, and you must also look into such matters as in what areas the church needs material wealth. "As long as I am all right, that's enough. Whatever happens to the church, whether souls come and receive the remission of sins or not, it's enough if I just barely get by." If you live like that, you will live spiritually poor all

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your life. When your faith grows, you must know how to look after the church, know how to sacrifice yourself, know how to endure, and know how to value the work of preaching the gospel even if your circumstances are not abundant. If we are people who truly serve the Lord, then whatever hardship we suffer in our lives, the spread of the gospel must not be weakened because our serving the Lord falls short.

I believe that everyone who has received the remission of sins—whether pastor or saint, adult or young person, or even a little child—is a person who serves the Lord.

Dear fellow believers, you must look after the church. And when preaching the gospel, you must pay attention to what is needed. The one who looks into the work of the church as if it were his own work, pays attention, prays, offers material wealth, and manages the household in this way is precisely a steward before God. It is to the servant of God who manages God's property in this way that God, trusting him, entrusts much property.

Dear fellow believers, faith does not grow just because time passes. Dear fellow believers, what does talk of selling all that one has speak of? Isn't it talk of serving the Lord with all one's might, doing one's best in the situation one is in? Isn't that right? Of course you are serving well, but because there are also people who quietly slip out of serving, I am saying this again and again. Dear fellow believers, if your heart is pricked, serve the Lord when you have the opportunity. Dear fellow believers, if only you have the heart, you can serve, and if you do not have the heart and put off the opportunity, you end up missing the opportunity. It is by seizing the opportunity that one serves the Lord. One can serve at that time; when time passes, one cannot serve. After it passes, new areas in which to serve the Lord appear, and the work once missed does not come back. Also,

being able to serve the Lord in new areas is possible when one serves the Lord in the areas that face us now; if one misses the opportunity now, one ends up losing opportunities in the future as well.

And while serving the Lord with all one's might, one learns what faith is. One also learns what spiritual things are, what a spiritual heart is, and how precious this gospel is, and God grants the fruit of salvation through such people who seize the opportunity and serve the Lord with all their might. God joins souls to those who are united with God. To such people who are united with God and serve God, God deliberately draws souls and joins them. Even if they do not go around to preach the gospel, He joins souls to them, and even when they have not said many words, people receive salvation. That is because God has determined to give that person a reward.

Dear fellow believers, let us gather some strength. Let us not serve while holding back our strength, but serve the Lord with all our strength. Opportunity does not come many times, and the right time is not always there. Dear fellow believers, do you understand? Let us keep the treasure in the field of our hearts and buy the treasure, and also go about and buy precious pearls. I hope you will become saints who, in that work, sell all that you have and buy them. I hope you will all become servants of God. I believe that all of us are workers of God by faith.

Dear fellow believers, when you do not save your strength but serve the Lord with all your strength today, serve with all your strength tomorrow as well, and serve the day after tomorrow too, the Lord causes much fruit to be borne. Know this and do so. ✉

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Sermon 11 by Paul C. Jong

Confirm your faith before the last day

< Matthew 13:47–50 >

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

The time of gathering and the time of separating

The mere fact that people are gathered together does not mean that each person’s faith is also the same. Even if people hear the same word and sit in the same place of worship, the hearts that receive that word can differ. That is why Jesus teaches about the end time through a dragnet that gathers fish of many kinds and through the separating that takes place after the net is drawn out.

Let us read verse 47. *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind” (Matthew 13:47)*. What comes first is a net that gathers fish of every kind, and many fish come into that net together. But if we look only at what appears at this stage and end the

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story there, we miss the center of the parable, so the Lord speaks even of the separating that will come after the gathering.

In the church, the opportunity to hear the gospel is precious. But we cannot take the fact that we are in that place as a guarantee that substitutes for actual faith, so we must examine whether we know what the Lord has accomplished and whether we believe in that gospel. Rather than first making us judge where other people belong, this parable makes us look back seriously on our own state as we hear the word.

When the net was full

Let us read the first part of verse 48. *"Which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down" (Matthew 13:48)*. The net that was gathering fish in the water comes out to the shore. In the parable there is a moment when time passes and things change, so that it does not just keep on gathering, but a time comes to separate what has been gathered. Through this flow, the Lord makes us think about the end.

A large net cast into the sea does not pick out the fish one by one in the water; rather, the full net is drawn up whole, and then they sit down and sort them out. The time until the net becomes full is the time when the Lord patiently waits for us, and when the time comes, the Lord gathers it in. So do not put off your wrongs, saying you will look back on them later even though you know them, and do not put off the word you must hear to a later opportunity. The present time in which He waits for us is not time that stretches on endlessly, but time given so that we may set right our attitude today.

Yet there is no need to use this fact as material for calculating the date of the end of the age. Here the Lord did not tell us any

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year or period, but He made it known for certain that there is an end and that the separation will take place. So rather than guessing at a time we do not know, it is fitting to respond now to the word we have clearly heard.

The good and the bad are separated

Let us read the latter part of verse 48. *"Gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away" (Matthew 13:48)*. The fish that were in the same net meet different outcomes. Having been together in the net does not do away with the final separation, so when we hear this parable, we come to guard against the attitude of reassuring ourselves only with shared activities that are visible to the eye.

That does not mean, however, that we should divide good fish from bad fish by a person's personality or ability. Since the Lord's explanation that follows speaks of the righteous and the wicked, we must follow that explanation. Doing church work well or being recognized by people does not by itself make one a righteous person before God, so we must make clear the problem of sin and the object of our faith.

To see a single weakness in another person and conclude what his end will be is also a misuse of this word. A person who, because the flesh is weak, does not yet follow well is not the same as a person whose heart has left and who only pretends to follow, and the Lord looks at the center of the heart rather than at the outward appearance. In the parable, too, the one who separates the good from the bad is the one who drew out the net, not the fish inside the net. So we are to discern the truth, yet cast off the attitude of rashly condemning others, and simply respond faithfully to the word we have heard.

The basis of the righteous who have received the remission of sins

The name "righteous person" is not a name obtained by highly valuing one's own conduct, but a name given to a person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the grace by which God solved the problem of sin for us. So what the Lord has accomplished comes before what or how much we have done, and our confession of faith must also be connected with the concrete content of salvation.

"And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD. Then the bull shall be killed before the LORD" (Leviticus 4:15). The Bible records laying hands on the offering that was to have sin passed on to it and killing that offering. God did not vaguely overlook sin, but made known the way of salvation through the relationship in which the offering that had sin passed on to it receives judgment.

To make us stand as righteous people at the end of the age, Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world, including the sins we commit throughout our lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all. And as the price of those sins, He received judgment in our place on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and rose again from death, and so He completely saved us who believe as righteous people. We receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, so this faith that believes in the Lord's grace is the basis of the righteous.

So it will be at the end of the age

Let us read verse 49. *"So it will be at the end of the age. The*

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angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just" (Matthew 13:49). Jesus Himself tells what the separating in the parable points to. It is that at the end of the age the angels will come and separate the wicked from among the righteous. Therefore, we cannot reduce this parable to a piece of everyday wisdom that a good person must choose good friends. This is a word about the final judgment.

The fact that it is the angels who do the separating makes our place clear. We do have a responsibility in the church to correct what is wrong and to keep sound teaching, but we cannot claim that we have become those who carry out the final judgment. Those who preach the word must not regard their own authority as the same as the Lord's final decision either.

Also, the mere fact that we are with the righteous does not do away with the need to examine our faith. Just because your parents or those close to you believe in the gospel does not mean that their faith automatically becomes your faith, so examine whether the gospel you have heard has truly been accepted in your heart. To think, "I have already been born again, so now I can live as I think," is also, in the end, one's own judgment; the standard lies in what the word of God says. That separating at the end of the age is something each person will also face on the day his life ends, so each person will stand before the Lord's word himself.

We do not take the warning lightly

Let us read verse 50. *"And cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:50)*. The Lord clearly speaks of the judgment the wicked will receive, and when He explained the parable of the tares in verse 42 of the

same chapter, He also spoke this word in the same words. Wailing and gnashing of teeth is the picture of people gnashing their teeth in regret only at that time, and regret that comes after the time of His long-suffering has passed has no way of being turned back. We cannot leave this word out because it sounds heavy, so even when you speak of God's love, accept along with it the warning the Lord actually gave.

However, refrain from the attitude of using this word to press people by saying that if they do not obey a certain person's demands, they will be judged. If we depart from the standard and the agent that the text has set, we end up establishing human power in the name of a warning. We only need to preach the word the Lord spoke just as it is and fulfill our responsibility of helping people believe in the gospel.

Nor does saying that we believe in the remission of sins mean that we may ignore the Lord's will. Those who have received grace treasure the Lord and learn how to live in a way worthy of the word, so rather than hiding our shortcomings and boasting of ourselves, we need the attitude of acknowledging our wrongs and setting them right. While keeping the basis of salvation, we earnestly go on learning a life worthy of grace.

We stand before the word we have heard now

The parable of the net makes us see both the present gathering and the final separation together. In people's eyes, being together is what is seen first, but the Lord knows the end. So we must not cling only to the membership that is seen outwardly, but set our hearts on the word and the gospel the Lord has given, and live the present honestly before the One who speaks of the end.

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What we must do today is not to imagine and pass sentence on the end of others, but to clearly confirm the salvation we believe in, correct thoughts that are contrary to the Bible, and faithfully fulfill the responsibilities entrusted to us. With the people who worship together with you as well, rather than urging them only to take part outwardly, help them to know the content of the gospel. Treasure the grace of the place where we gather, and respond in faith to the word you have heard in that place. Now, when the Lord has made the end known, is the time to look back on our faith before the word. ✉

Sermon 12 by Paul C. Jong

The One who saved us is the One who has power

< Matthew 14:13–21 >

"When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.' But Jesus said to them, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.' And they said to Him, 'We have here only five loaves and two fish.' He said, 'Bring them here to Me.' Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children."

Today we have seen and heard this word. There is no one among us who does not know this word. When the Lord spoke this word, it was after John the Baptist had been beheaded. When

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the daughter of Herodias, King Herod's wife, danced and pleased Herod, Herod promised to give her whatever she asked for, and that daughter asked for the head of John the Baptist. King Herod could not but grant it, so he ordered that John the Baptist, who was in prison, be beheaded and his head brought. A soldier beheaded him, put the head on a platter, and brought it, and it was given to that daughter, and the daughter brought it to her mother. That mother killed John the Baptist in this way because she hated him for pointing out her sin. After this had happened, it is written, "*When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities" (Matthew 14:13)*. When Jesus heard this news, He crossed the Sea of Galilee by boat and was in a deserted place, and as word spread that Jesus was there, many people followed Him. Since many people had followed Him into the field, the field was full of people, just as, in today's terms, many people gather at a big event. So many people had gathered there, heaped up like a mountain, and Jesus saw the great multitude, had compassion on them, and healed the sick among them. Looking at today's word, the disciples made a request to Jesus: since this was a deserted place with nothing to eat, and the day was ending and it had become evening, He should send these people to the surrounding villages to buy themselves food, and let them go, eat, and then come back to hear the word or the like. So what Jesus said was as follows: "*But Jesus said to them, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat'" (Matthew 14:16)*. Ah, indeed, He said that they did not need to go and that the disciples should give them something to eat.

"They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat"

Dear fellow believers, when Jesus was in the deserted place, many people came, and there were sick people among them, so Jesus healed them. Then, as time passed, the sunset glowed in the evening sky, and it became time for supper, and smoke rose from the chimneys of the farming villages; since the people gathered there had nothing to eat, the disciples suggested telling them to go into the town, buy food, eat, and come back, but Jesus said that they did not need to go and that the disciples should give them something to eat. Fundamentally, what does this word have to do with us? Looking at the word here, Jesus is different from us. Of course, we all know that Jesus is different. We know that He can speak in this way because He is Jesus, because He is God. We know this, but when many people had gathered like this, Jesus looked on them with compassion. He saw the great multitude coming to Him and had compassion on them, and He healed those who were sick; and when, because there was nothing to eat, the disciples made the request, "Should we not let these people go into the town, buy food, eat, and come back?" He said that they did not need to go, that there was no need even to go, and that the disciples should give them something to eat, and He did just that.

Dear fellow believers, you may think that, of course, since He is Jesus, He could say such a thing, but let us think about it once more. You and I would say, "Isn't Jesus saying this because He has power?" That is, He says that they do not need to go because He Himself can solve the problem. "Let us have all these many people go to that town at sunset, in the evening, buy food, eat, and come back." "They do not need to go." He does this because He has power. Dear fellow believers, what would

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we have done? Would we not also, if we had power, say to someone who comes with some problem, "Don't worry. I will solve it for you"? But because we are human beings, suppose, for example, that many people came to our church to hear the word, and while they were listening, it became time for supper, and they were hungry, and we heard someone say, "Let us eat something first and then continue"; would the ministers not suggest, "Let us give them an hour or two for a while so that they can go into the town, buy something, anything, and have a bite to eat"? Then would I not also say, "Let us do that," and tell them to go, buy food, eat, and come back? But what if I really had power and could solve the problem of their food right there on the spot? If I also had such power, I would say, "You do not need to go. There is no need to go. I will solve it all," and I would say to our fellow workers, "You bring them something to eat." Where was there anything to eat? When Jesus said there was no need to go and told them to give the people something to eat, the disciples looked over what they had, and there was only one packed lunch. A certain person who was very well prepared had packed one lunch and brought it. In that packed lunch were five barley loaves and two fish. There were five things like small breads, and two things like salted fish a little bigger than anchovies. When He told them to give the people something to eat, Jesus' disciples said, "This is all we have." Then the Lord said, *"Bring them here to Me" (Matthew 14:18)*, and He took it, looked up to heaven, and blessed it. "Let there be blessing. Let everyone eat, and let there be some left over." That is what He did. And after it had all been distributed, after five thousand people had eaten, twelve baskets were left over. Would we not also do so if we had power? If we had power, we would say, "You do not need to go. Don't worry. I will solve it all." But when we meet with some situation, we are at a loss. Who will

go up on the roof? What if someone goes up and falls? Who will go up to the high place? Before going up, we must set up safety equipment and be careful, and until we do so, we must prepare many things. Even after doing so, we are anxious, and even then an accident may happen. Are we not that weak? But Jesus said, *"They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat" (Matthew 14:16)*, and He saw the great multitude, had compassion on them, and healed the sick.

The One who cannot be compared with us

What I want to tell you is that Jesus, this One, is not like us. There are special people in this world. People who have supernatural powers are called people with superpowers. Some people do certain things extremely well. Such people are called masters. Do such people not appear on television from time to time and do things we cannot do well? There are many such people on this earth. There are magicians, like people who bend spoons, and there are strongmen who stack up fifty bricks and strike them, and all the bricks break. There are people like that and people like this, and there are many famous people in this world who are said to be outstanding, but can Jesus be compared with such people? Can He be compared with famous people such as the conquerors of history or renowned generals who are said to be good at waging war on this earth? In fact, when compared, they are no match for Him at all. Many people had come into the field. Jesus healed the sick immediately. There was nothing to eat. *"They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."* And when He blessed it, five thousand people ate from one packed lunch, and twelve more baskets were gathered up besides. Can He be compared? He is the One who cannot be compared.

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He is the One with whom we human beings are no match. Such a One is Jesus. As we know well, Jesus is God, who made the universe. We know that He is the One who made all things in heaven and on earth, the world of the Milky Way, the stars, the flowers, people, and all these things, with a single word. That is so lofty that it is hard to understand, but because He is God, because He is the One who can do such things, we believe. Jesus, this One, put on a human body and came to this earth to save us sinners, yet He Himself is not a created being. He is not someone to be compared with a very capable person among human beings. He is God, who is omniscient and omnipotent, so there is nothing He cannot do. Because He is such a God, when a great multitude had gathered and there was nothing to eat, and the disciples said, "Let them go into the town and buy food," He said, "They do not need to go. You give them something," and the Lord blessed it and provided all the food. He gave it to the disciples and had them distribute it all. He has that much power. That One, who has such great power, became our Savior. He became the Savior who saved us from sin, and He became the Savior who saved us from hunger, from weakness, from every curse, from every suffering, and in every area. In the miracle of the five loaves and two fish that appears in this word, among the five barley loaves and two fish in the one packed lunch, the fish speak of the church. They speak of the church that has met the Lord and received the remission of sins, and the five barley loaves speak of the word of God. In other words, taken together, it speaks of the church in which there is the word of God.

"Bring them here to Me"

God has blessed the Church of God until now, and He is still

blessing us now. He has become the Head of this church and is supplying everything the church needs. Even now, it is continuing in the present progressive tense. When the disciples said, "Let them go into the town and buy food," He said, "They do not need to go," and it is written, "*'We have here only five loaves and two fish.' He said, 'Bring them here to Me.' Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed" (Matthew 14:17–19)*. Let there be blessing. And He told them to distribute it, and after it had been distributed, twelve baskets were left over. God says about the things the church needs, "Bring them to Me. I will fill them. I will give My blessing." Just as the Lord received the packed lunch and blessed it so that everyone ate and there was some left over, so it is with us now. At times we are wrapped up too much in worry. Even trying to accomplish one thing is very hard. But God tells us to bring the things the church wants, the things it needs. "Bring them to Me. Pray to Me. I will solve it for you." The Lord Himself will solve it. The Lord is the One who has such great power and is omniscient and omnipotent. The very One who has such power that there is nothing He cannot do is Jesus, in whom you and I believe. You and I must live knowing this. This is because we are so weak that we live suffering, wrapped up in our own weakness. In fact, because we are human beings, we are usually weak and are also under a lot of stress. But when there is a need, the Lord says, "*Bring them here to Me,*" and the Lord blesses it and solves it for us.

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The One who saved us is the omniscient and omnipotent God

Dear fellow believers, we now believe in such a One. The One who helps us, the One who saved us from sin, the One who made this universe, the One we believe in, is the very One who has this omniscient and omnipotent power. That is, He is God. We believe in God. We are those who have been saved by believing in God. Jesus, in whom we believe, put on a human body just like ours and lived a life of thirty-three years on this earth, but although He became a human being, He is not merely a human being. He is God, yet to save you and me, He lowered Himself for a little while and became a human being. And He received baptism from John at the Jordan River and had our sins transferred to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again, and so He saved you and me. What the Lord shows us through this word today is a word He speaks to the Church of God: "Do you have difficulties? Bring them to Me." Whenever we are in difficulty, we pray. We can see that when we bring things to the Lord and pray, He accomplishes them. We can also see that He protects us. The One we believe in is just such a One. He is the One who is omniscient and omnipotent. Sometimes, although we believe in Jesus, there are times when we forget Him as if we did not know Jesus and seem to live apart from Him. That is our weakness. We must know and believe the fact that the One who saved you and me is God, who is omniscient and omnipotent in this way. We must chew on it once again. The Lord is helping us even now. He will continue to help us in the future as well. He will protect us. Jesus is not a person who is a created being. He is the One who cannot be compared with us. He is the One who has far more power and strength than we do. If we believe this, then as we go on living, serving the Lord and

preaching the gospel, we can solve all the problems that confront us on our way ahead by bringing them to the Lord by faith. We can have them solved. We must know this. We must live knowing this.

When we live knowing this, I believe that we can truly enjoy peace in our hearts, receive many blessings, and solve any great problem in doing the work of God. Because our Lord has such great power, we can have those difficult problems solved. If our Lord were like us human beings and were no more than a strongman or a great investor, if He were no more than the chairman of a worldly conglomerate or the president of a country, we would be people of little worth. Because we are those who believe only in Him and live only for Him, we too come to have worth according to how much power He has. We too come to have worth according to His worth. If He had no worth and no power, we too would have no worth and no power. But because He is the One who has worth and power, we too have become those who have worth and power. That is what we are.

The powerful of the world shout and give orders, but they cannot accomplish things as they wish. But when countless people had nothing to eat right then, our Lord said, *"They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat,"* and when there was only one packed lunch, He said, *"Bring them here to Me,"* and He blessed it, prayed a prayer of blessing, and said, "Distribute it," and in this way He is the One who solved the problem. He has that much power. Which of the powerful of the world can do this? Can they do it just by shouting? Those who have no power can do nothing but shout. The One who has power says, *"Bring them here to Me."* The One who truly has power is gentle. The Lord saved us gently, with His hand that is great in power. Truly, the Lord follows after us and says, "I love you. I have saved you." How gently, through the word, and how

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courteously He does so! For example, if the Lord appeared amid thunder and lightning and thundered at us with a voice louder than the lightning, "If you do not believe, it is hell. Believe quickly!" would we not faint and die? Would we not say, "Lord, hell aside, Your voice is so loud that our eardrums have burst and every cell of our bodies has ruptured, and we are already dead. Please do not speak anymore"? But the Lord is the Lord who has such great power that He gently says, *"Bring them here to Me,"* blesses it, and says, "Distribute it." He is our Savior. The Savior of you and me is the One who has such great power. I believe that.

A life that relies on the Lord, who has great power

Our faith grows according to how much we know the Lord, according to the knowledge we have of Him. We seem to know the Lord, but in fact we do not know Him well because we have not experienced it. When we go through hard things, we can come to know that it is truly good to believe in the Lord. "You do not need to go. Bring them to Me. You give them something to eat." The Lord is the One who solves our problems and the problems of the church. Until now, when we, being in the church, tried to do something, we brought it to the Lord, prayed, and took on the challenge, and the Lord accomplished it. We are living while experiencing this. We thought we had done a lot of work until now, but we must do much more work in the future. We intend to preach the gospel to many more people in the future. Can we handle that? "The Lord is the One who has great power, so, Lord, give us the power to be able to do this. Give us blessings." The Lord hears our prayer, and the Lord Himself accomplishes it. We believe that. That is what faith is. Dear

fellow believers, it is because our Lord has great power and is omniscient and omnipotent that the Lord Himself accomplishes it; how could we handle all that work? Isn't that so? We had no power. We prayed because we had needs, and because we had needs, the Lord gave. That is how it is. Then, in the future too, if the church needs something, the One who has great power and is omniscient and omnipotent will give it to us. I believe that. Therefore, we can go on living and breathing.

As I looked at this word, I thought, "The Lord, who saved me and saved everyone, is the omniscient and omnipotent One!" Although we actually say that we believe in the Lord and have received the remission of sins, we have lived until now without really comparing, and without thinking much about, how different in dimension the Lord is from human beings and how great His power is. We knew it, but we were very lacking in feeling it with our bodies and experiencing it. But as the work now entrusted to us keeps increasing, in the end we have no choice but to borrow the Lord's power. Borrow? What would we borrow? If we borrow, we must repay, but since we can never repay, we must simply take it for free. Although we can never repay, we still have no choice but to do the Lord's work. Because the Lord has great power, I believe He will say, "You do not need to go. You give them something," and will do so for us. Dear fellow believers, do you believe so? I hope you believe so. That is why I am so happy and glad. Although I have no strength in many areas, my heart is strengthened because of this. As I look at the word in this way, I come to feel that the Lord's great power is truly a great blessing both to me and to you. If the Lord had no power, you and I would be unhappy. This is because you and I live believing only in the Lord. So many people rely on the Lord and say, "We believe only in You. Take responsibility for all of us," and if it were a human being, he would have been so

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stressed that his head would have burst and he would have died. But the Lord says, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)*. The Lord Himself delights to show us that He Himself is the One who has such great power. We, too, must acknowledge Him. The Lord Himself asks us to acknowledge that He has such great power, and we must become those who acknowledge Him. We must not keep underestimating Him. Let us not say, "He has only saved us; what has He ever done to help us?" The life we have lived until now we have lived because of the Lord's power and because of His blessing. I believe so. I believe that you also believe so.

The One who saved you and me is the One who has power. He is the One who possesses power. How fortunate this is! How good it is! If He had saved us from sin but had no power for the rest and said, "Take care of it yourselves," we would be as good as dead. But the Lord has power. I am so thankful. ✉

Sermon 13 by Paul C. Jong

The responsibility of the disciple who brings out the word he has understood

< Matthew 13:51–52 >

“Jesus said to them, ‘Have you understood all these things?’ They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ (And he said unto them, Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old –ASV).”

The Lord asks whether they have understood

Even after we have heard the word sufficiently, there is something to check: whether we have actually understood what we heard. After Jesus had spoken many parables, He asked His disciples whether they had understood all these things. It is a question that makes us think of both having heard the teaching and having understood its meaning.

Let us read verse 51. *“Jesus said to them, ‘Have you understood all these things?’ They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord’” (Matthew 13:51)*. When the disciples answer that it is so, the Lord accepts that answer and speaks about the scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven. After confirming

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their understanding, He continues with a word that makes known the responsibility of those who learn; so teaching does not end with storing up what we have learned within ourselves. The word "understand" has also appeared several times earlier in this chapter. When He explained the parable of the sower, the Lord said that if anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in the heart (Matthew 13:19), and He said that the good ground is the one who hears the word and understands it, and so bears fruit (Matthew 13:23). This question is placed at the end, after He had told all those parables.

We too can check in our own words what we have learned after hearing a sermon. Remembering an impressive expression and knowing the meaning of the text can be different, so examine whether you are listening well to what the word you heard in worship is saying, believing it, keeping it, and doing it just as it says in the place entrusted to you. Where your understanding is lacking, you need only learn it again.

A person who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven

Let us read the first part of verse 52. *"Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 13:52)*. Here the important words describing the scribe are *"made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven."* The Lord did not say that merely having knowledge for handling the word is enough; one must be a person who has first learned about the kingdom of heaven and accepted the Lord's teaching. Also, since He said *"every scribe,"* this is a word spoken to each and every disciple who follows Jesus, that is, to us.

Those who intend to teach others also need, first of all, an attitude of learning. When you are in a position where you receive many questions, it is easy to act as if you always have the answers, but a disciple of the Lord is a person who keeps on learning before the word. So keep the attitude of clearly preaching the parts you know and faithfully checking the parts you lack.

The name "disciple of the kingdom of heaven" keeps us from using knowledge as a means of raising our own authority. It is because we have learned from the Lord that we preach the Lord's will, and rather than making the listeners rely only on the one who explains, it is important to help them understand the word. The one who teaches is also under the Lord's word together with those who listen.

The householder who brings things out of the storehouse

Let us read the latter part of verse 52. *"Is like unto a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Matthew 13:52)*. The householder in the parable brings out what is in his own storehouse. He explains the work of one who has learned, not with the picture of making things up from a place where there is nothing whenever they are needed, but with the picture of taking out and using what has already been kept.

So those who preach the word must also have the word they have kept by regularly reading the Bible and learning its context and meaning. If they try to find plausible words only when the time comes to explain, it is easy for them to preach unverified thoughts as if they were the word; so learning, keeping, and

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preaching are connected to one another.

Yet it is not that merely having a large number of remembered verses makes for a right explanation. One must know in what context each verse says what, and rather than attaching many quotations unrelated to the listener's question, it is beneficial to explain precisely the word that is needed. The purpose of bringing things out of the storehouse lies in giving the listeners what they need.

We examine things new and old together

When we reflect on this word in the light of our Bible reading, we can think of the responsibility of examining the Old and New Testaments together to preach the gospel. We learn the salvation God has bestowed by examining together the promises of the Old Testament and what Jesus has accomplished. So we must not lightly cast aside either side or divide them into stories unrelated to each other, but must read according to the testimony of the Bible.

Because the householder knows the storehouse of his own house, he brings out, at the time they are needed, both what he has newly brought in and what he has long kept. One who has been entrusted with the word is likewise a person who brings out the words of the Old Testament and brings out the words of the New Testament, explains the two and connects them, and sets them out as food that the listeners can receive and eat. Therefore, when you read the Old Testament, first examine accurately what is recorded in that text, and explain, according to the testimony of the Bible, how that promise is connected to what Jesus has accomplished.

Nor must we take the word "*things new*" to mean that we

should keep making up new doctrines that are not in the Bible. The basis of the salvation we preach is what the Lord has accomplished; so although we can make our explanation easy to suit the circumstances of the listeners, we cannot change the content of the gospel we preach according to the demands of people.

We preach the work of salvation specifically

"He shall bring the bull to the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, lay his hand on the bull's head, and kill the bull before the LORD" (Leviticus 4:4). We read the word about laying hands on the offering and killing it in the sin offering of the Old Testament. In this word we come to see both the sacrificial offering that has the sins passed on to it and the death of that offering. So when we explain salvation, we must not stop at a brief demand to believe, but must make clear how God dealt with sin.

Just as the householder brings out things old and new together from the storehouse, when we set the laying on of hands in the Old Testament and the baptism John the Baptist gave side by side, we can see that salvation was accomplished as follows. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including even the sins we will commit throughout our lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all. And just as the sacrificial offering of the Old Testament was killed, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place as the price of those sins, and He rose again from death. By believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift; so helping people know and believe this salvation is the precious responsibility of those

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who have been entrusted with the word.

We cannot assume that listeners have understood everything just because they repeat familiar terms of faith. James says that even the demons believe that God is one and tremble (James 2:19). Together with who Jesus is, we must let them know what Jesus has done, that is, how He removed our sins; so explain step by step what the remission of sins is based on. Rather than showing off your own knowledge with difficult words, it is important to help the listeners know the fact of salvation clearly.

We rightly share what we have learned

Where the word is shared, value questions. If you make someone who says that he does not know well feel ashamed, he may come to pretend to know only on the outside. Just as Jesus asked His disciples whether they had understood, we too can help others while checking how far they have understood. Explanation begins with looking into the actual needs of the listeners.

Also, if you come to know that there is an error in what you have taught, you must correct it. This is because we cannot twist the meaning of the Bible out of a pride that seeks to defend what we have already said. The faithfulness of one entrusted with the word does not lie in claiming never to have been wrong even once, but is revealed in the attitude of checking again by the standard of the Bible and seeking to preach accurately.

The same responsibility exists when you preach the word to your children at home. Rather than making them memorize only the conclusions, you can read together what is recorded in the Bible, and even if you do not know the answer to a question right away, you need only search for it again and check. While you

learn the word together in this way, the listener also learns an attitude of treasuring the Bible.

Understanding leads to the responsibility entrusted to us

Remember the fact that the parable of the householder followed the disciples' answer. The confession of having understood carries with it the responsibility to keep the word we have learned well and to bring it out rightly. So rather than remaining in the satisfaction of having come to know much, we must be able to give real benefit to others with that word.

The preparation we need is not merely splendid eloquence, but the attitude of reading the Bible accurately, learning the Lord's will, knowing the content of salvation clearly, and attending to the listeners. Let us treasure and keep what we have learned from the Lord. Let us fulfill the responsibility of faithful disciples who bring out the precise word at the time it is needed and help others know the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 14 by Paul C. Jong

Familiarity blocks faith

< Matthew 13:53–58 >

“Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, ‘Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?’ So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.’ Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”

The people of His hometown, who heard the teaching

At the end of Matthew chapter 13, Jesus returns to His own country. After the scene of the disciples who heard the teaching of the parables, there appears the figure of people who see the same Lord and yet do not accept Him. The opportunity to hear the word up close does not become faith by itself, so the passage asks us how we treat that opportunity.

Let us read verses 53 and 54. *“Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their*

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synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, 'Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works?'" (Matthew 13:53–54). His own country here is Nazareth, where Jesus grew up from His childhood (Matthew 2:23). The people heard His teaching in the synagogue and were astonished, and they recognized that His wisdom and mighty works were not ordinary. Yet in their eyes Jesus was a man of their town who had grown up with them without having studied anywhere in particular, so their astonishment did not lead to faith. The questions that follow show by what standard they were judging Jesus.

We too may hear the word and judge it to be excellent, and yet not actually accept that word for ourselves. The impression of having heard good teaching and believing in the Lord who speaks are different things, so as you read the passage, examine where the response of the people who were astonished stopped.

The family they knew

Let us read verse 55. *"Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?" (Matthew 13:55)*. The people brought up Jesus' family. They were saying that He was the carpenter's son, that His mother was Mary, and that they even knew the names of His brothers. This information was the basis that made them think they knew Jesus closely, but the problem lay in the fact that they tried to judge everything about Jesus by that knowledge.

Let us read verse 56. *"And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" (Matthew 13:56)*. They named the four brothers one after another and said that even His sisters were *"all"* with them; then, bringing up again the question they had asked in verse 54, they asked where

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all these things had come from. Although they saw the fact that He had wisdom and mighty works, they tried to explain it only within the bounds of the family and the life they knew, so the familiar information, far from helping them to know the Lord better, became a reason for not accepting Him.

We too sometimes do not listen to the end to the content of what someone says, because we know that person's background well. But what the people of His hometown missed was the fact that He, who appeared to them to be only the carpenter's son, is the Son of God and the One who came as the Savior. We must not let our knowledge of a person's origin or family block the truth of the Lord's words and of the works He did.

The questions led to rejection

Let us read the first part of verse 57. *"So they were offended at Him" (Matthew 13:57)*. The passage clearly records the people's response. They are not rebuked merely because there were questions; the problem is that those questions did not lead to a heart willing to learn, but went as far as rejecting Jesus. Questions that seek to learn more and questions that look for reasons to refuse have different results.

In the same chapter the disciples came to the Lord and asked Him to explain the parable, but the people of His hometown, even after seeing His wisdom and mighty works, rejected Jesus by citing the background they already knew. When we look at the two responses together, we can see that a heart willing to learn is more important than the pride of knowing much. Being familiar is no guarantee that one's faith is deep.

Even a person who has read the Bible for a long time can think that he knows the whole word because of familiar words.

The people of His hometown were also people who had heard the same Scriptures in the synagogue, but they did not look at the One who was before their eyes in the light of that word. So check again now what the passage actually says, and laying down the attitude of picking and choosing which words to hear in order to defend your own conclusions, entrust your judgment to the words the Lord has spoken.

The honor not received in one's own country and in one's own house

Let us read the latter part of verse 57. *"A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house" (Matthew 13:57).* Jesus spoke of being without honor in one's own country and in one's own house. He revealed that the very fact of being near can instead become a reason for not acknowledging true worth, so the Lord's words shine a light on their attitude.

Even so, we cannot drag this word into use for the claim that everyone who criticizes us is wrong. Whether someone is a true prophet is revealed not by whether he has been rejected, but by whether the message he preaches agrees with the word of God. The passage deals with the problem of the people who actually rejected the Lord, so rather than turning this word into words that defend our own authority, we must examine our own attitude toward accepting Jesus' words.

Even when you preach the gospel to people close to you, rather than demanding that they acknowledge you unconditionally, preach the content of the Bible clearly. Family relationships or long-standing friendships cannot take the place of faith. A born-again person and family members who are not

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born again may differ even in the starting point of their thinking, so rather than letting your heart be taken by whether you are acknowledged or not, look back on whether you are now faithfully doing the work God has entrusted to you. What is needed is an attitude of explaining sincerely so that the other person may understand the word, while not hastily pressing him for a response.

We believe what the Lord has done just as the word says

If we evaluate Jesus only by His fleshly background, we cannot properly see the salvation He has accomplished. Faith is receiving the word God has testified rather than the impression we had held, so rather than remaining in vague sympathy or goodwill toward the Lord, we must know clearly what He has accomplished for us.

"Then he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill it as a sin offering at the place where they kill the burnt offering" (Leviticus 4:33). As we read the word about laying hands on the sacrificial offering of the sin offering and killing that offering, we see together the offering that has the sins passed on to it and the judgment. God did not let people resolve sin merely by their feelings, but made known through His word the way of salvation He had set.

The One whom the people of His hometown saw only as the carpenter's son is the very One who accomplished this salvation. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, in which even the sins we commit throughout our lifetime are included without exception, transferred to Him once and for all. And as the price of those sins, He was nailed to

the Cross, shed His blood, and died 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 and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, so believing in the Lord is accepting this salvation He has accomplished just as the word says.

The last verse, which records unbelief

Let us read verse 58. *"Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matthew 13:58)*. Matthew links the fact that Jesus did not do many mighty works there with the people's unbelief. Earlier they asked where His wisdom and mighty works had come from, but while rejecting the Lord, they could not go forward to the place where they would experience more mighty works.

We cannot use this word as a formula for judging that the cause of every illness or hardship is a lack of faith. The passage is a record of the particular rejection by the people of His hometown and of the works He did there, so rather than concluding that there is hidden unbelief when you see people's difficulties, beware of the attitude clearly revealed here: the rejection of the word.

There may be in us too the contradiction of speaking of the power of God while actually rejecting the word of God. While we want Him to accomplish the things we desire, we may put off learning the will of the Lord. The passage calls us first to accept the Lord and to return to the place of believing the word.

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We hear anew even in the midst of familiarity

The people of His hometown listed the names they knew, but they did not believe in the Lord, and their knowledge did not lead them to know Jesus more deeply. Therefore, we must not stop at knowing well the names or the events of the people in the Bible, but must believe in and follow the Lord of whom that word testifies.

As you hear today's word, examine whether there are any parts you pass over, thinking that you already know them. How you accept the Lord's word now is more important than a record of having believed for a long time, so beware of the thought that since you have grown this much, you may now judge for yourself without asking the word. When your judgment goes against the Bible, willingly correct your familiar thoughts. Faith makes us keep an attitude of continuing to learn before the Lord's word.

Jesus is greater than people's background knowledge. Do not confine Him within your familiar judgment, but accept Him just as He is testified of in the word. I hope that you will treat with faith today's opportunity to hear the Lord up close. ✉

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CHAPTER

14

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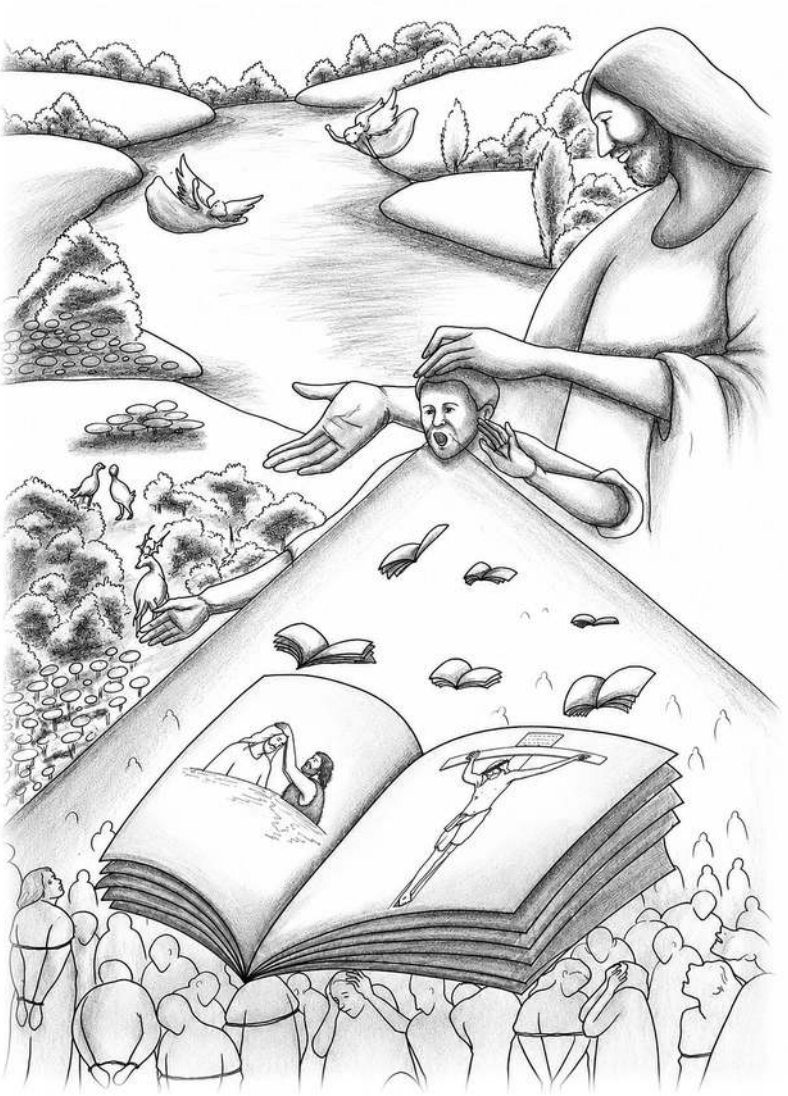

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Be honest before God rather than in the eyes of people

< Matthew 14:1–12 >

“At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus and said to his servants, ‘This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.’ For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. Because John had said to him, ‘It is not lawful for you to have her.’ And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod’s birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, ‘Give me John the Baptist’s head here on a platter.’ And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her. So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus.”

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Herod, who heard the report about Jesus

Matthew chapter 14 begins with the reaction of Herod, who heard the report about Jesus. When he heard that report, he said that John the Baptist had risen from the dead. Yet it is not that this statement was recorded in the Bible because it was a correct explanation; rather, it was recorded to show how Herod received the report about Jesus.

Let us read verses 1 and 2. *"At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus and said to his servants, 'This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him'" (Matthew 14:1–2)*. Herod connected the report he had heard with the dead John, and the text that follows goes back to a past event, to why John died. So we must read while distinguishing between Herod's words and the actual event. Just because a person who has power speaks with certainty does not mean that his words become the truth.

When people hear a report, they easily attach a meaning to it with the thoughts that are already in their hearts. So in order to know the Lord, rather than merely repeating people's assessments, we must examine the words the Lord actually spoke and the work He actually did. Herod's reaction recorded in the text makes us also take care not to harden our own thoughts as if they were facts.

John, who said it was not right

Let us read verses 3 and 4. *"For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Because John had said to him, 'It is not lawful for you to have her'" (Matthew 14:3–4)*. John did not

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change his words and call a wrong thing right just because the other person was the king; he said that Herod's action was not right. But instead of accepting those words and correcting his own action, Herod seized John and put him in prison; so the problem grew deeper in the response of the man who heard the rebuke.

He was able to bind John by the authority of a king, but imprisoning him did not make what he himself had done right. Getting rid of uncomfortable words and resolving a wrong are different things, so Herod used his power against John, but he could not resolve the sin John had pointed out. The text clearly shows this difference.

We too may come to want to keep away first from the person who points out our wrongs. At such a time, what we must examine first is not how much we like the person who spoke, but whether what was pointed out is true. If a wrong has been revealed, acknowledge it and set it right. If we blame the person who spoke the truth in order to get rid of our discomfort, the same wrong may continue.

The king who feared the people

Let us read verse 5. *"And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet" (Matthew 14:5)*. It is recorded that the reason Herod could not kill John was that he feared the people. The fact that the people regarded John as a prophet only tied his hands; just because he was outwardly not killing him did not mean that the direction of his heart had been set right.

The gaze of people can stop wrongdoing for a while. But if one fears only that gaze, one will do the same evil again when

the situation changes, so a standard by which we believe and follow what is right is needed. With a heart that calculates only the possibility of being exposed to others, it is hard to keep the attitude of turning from sin.

So we must distinguish between being careful not to lose our reputation and acknowledging a wrong before God. Even if it is something that could pass without anyone knowing, if it is not right, stop. The responsibility to judge our actions before the word does not change according to whether many or few people are watching.

The oath made out of pleasure

Let us read verses 6 and 7. *"But when Herod's birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask" (Matthew 14:6–7)*. At his birthday feast, Herod was pleased and swore that he would give whatever was asked. In the word *"whatever,"* the scope of what was to be granted had not been set. Having great authority does not make the responsibility for one's words lighter; rather, the influence those words have on other people becomes that much greater as well.

Let us read verse 8. *"So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, 'Give me John the Baptist's head here on a platter'" (Matthew 14:8)*. The daughter, prompted by her mother, demanded John's head. The joy of the feast led to a demand that took away a person's life.

Our words too can grow larger by following the emotion of the moment. To please others, we may make promises we cannot keep, or to show our ability, we may say that we will do

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something for them no matter what. So before you make a promise, examine whether it is a proper thing. What matters first is whether the content of a promise is honest and right, not how large the promise is.

The command he gave even while he was sorry

Let us read verse 9. *"And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her" (Matthew 14:9)*. Herod was sorry, but that sorrow did not go so far as to stop the evil command. Because of his oath and those who sat with him, he commanded that John's head be given. The man who at first had feared the people was now conscious of the words he had spoken in front of those sitting at the feast.

Keeping a wrong promise to the end is not always right. If what was promised is an evil that harms a person, acknowledging that wrong and stopping must come before saving face. In trying to avoid the burden of going back on his word, Herod committed a far heavier evil.

Let us read verses 10 and 11. *"So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother" (Matthew 14:10–11)*. The command led to an actual death. The power of the king, which had imprisoned John, was in the end used to take his life; the result of a decision made while conscious of people's gaze was as heavy as this.

We do not run away from acknowledging sin

Clearly acknowledging sin as sin is necessary for ourselves as well. If we speak sternly of other people's wrongs while continually attaching reasons to our own wrongs, our hearts become dishonest. So acknowledge the sins that God reveals through the word, and come by faith to Jesus, who has accomplished salvation.

"And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill the sin offering at the place of the burnt offering" (Leviticus 4:29). The problem of a sinner does not disappear by hiding it or making excuses. The word of atonement that God has established shows the offering that has sins passed on to it and the death of that offering; so what is needed before God is not an explanation that protects our reputation, but the grace of salvation that deals with sin.

That John whom we saw earlier, the John who lost his life to Herod, was the man who had earlier given baptism to Jesus. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins we commit throughout our lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all, and as the price of those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross in our place. And He rose again from death. We who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift; so those who believe in that grace can honestly acknowledge their wrongs and set their lives right, rather than hiding their wrongs to establish righteousness.

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John's disciples, who went to Jesus

Let us read verse 12. *"Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus" (Matthew 14:12)*. John's disciples took the body of their teacher, who had been put to death, and buried it, and they brought that matter to Jesus and told Him. With this scene, the story of the feast and the prison is connected to Jesus.

John's being put to death did not make what was not right become right. Power can harm the person who speaks the truth, but it cannot change the truth itself; so we must not decide right and wrong by who appears to have won before our eyes, but must examine matters by the standard of the word of God.

As we read this word, let us look back on whose gaze is determining our actions. When we come to know a wrong, let us not continue in it because of saving face, but honestly acknowledge it before God and set it right. We need the faith that does not remain in a place of merely being sorry, but turns back to the right choice. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

You give them something to eat

< Matthew 14:13–21 >

“When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, ‘This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.’ But Jesus said to them, ‘They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.’ And they said to Him, ‘We have here only five loaves and two fish.’ He said, ‘Bring them here to Me.’ Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.”

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The people who followed Him even to the deserted place

After John's disciples brought the news to Jesus, the Lord departed by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But people followed Him there too, and the Lord saw the multitude who had come to Him and had compassion on them. As we follow the Lord's actions in dealing with them, we learn the Lord's heart.

Let us read verse 13. *"When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities" (Matthew 14:13)*. People from many towns followed Jesus on foot. We cannot know all their circumstances, but it is clear that they gathered to the place where Jesus was. So what follows begins with the Lord's care toward this great multitude.

The place called *"a deserted place"* helps us understand the disciples' words that come later. When evening came, they judged that it would be hard to get food here, so the place and the time were a real problem that had to be solved. Faith is not an attitude that pretends not to know such realities, but an attitude that listens to the Lord, who knows the needs of reality and works.

He saw the multitude and had compassion on them

Let us read verse 14. *"And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14)*. The Lord saw the great multitude and had compassion on them, and that heart was shown in His action of healing the sick. The people were not

numbers showing the size of a gathering, but people with concrete needs whom the Lord cares for.

So when we serve people as well, we must first look into their needs. When there is much work to do, it is easy to treat people merely as a task, but the Lord saw the multitude and had compassion on them. A heart that looks into the circumstances of those who need help is the beginning of service.

Having compassion is different from an attitude of looking down on others. The Lord actually healed those who were sick, so you, too, rather than making someone's difficulties a topic of conversation, look for what you can do to help. More important than showing how warm a person you are is doing what brings real benefit to the other person.

The disciples' proposal to send them away

Let us read verse 15. "*When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food'" (Matthew 14:15)*. The disciples thought about the multitude's meal. The hour was late and the place was a deserted place, so the way they put forward was to have the people go into the villages and buy food to eat. They recognized the need, but they tried to send the work of meeting that need back to each person.

The disciples saw the problem of the meal and spoke to Jesus about it. However, they did not yet know how the Lord would work beyond the range of solutions they themselves had thought of, so the passage widens that range through the Lord's answer. We, too, when we find a need within the community, easily come right away to the conclusion that we cannot handle it.

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Knowing your own circumstances honestly is also necessary, but rather than closing the conversation there, examine the word and look for what you can do together. Like the disciples, who brought the problem before the Lord, it is important to make known clearly what is needed.

You give them something to eat

Let us read verse 16. *"But Jesus said to them, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat'" (Matthew 14:16)*. In response to the proposal to send the multitude away, Jesus said that they themselves should give, and so made the disciples take part in that work. This command does not mean that they should boast of a power the disciples did not have, but that He intended to show them, through the words and actions that follow, how they could serve.

Let us read verse 17. *"And they said to Him, 'We have here only five loaves and two fish'" (Matthew 14:17)*. The disciples said that what they had was only five loaves and two fish. The limits of what they had are revealed in their answer, so the fact that many people later came to eat was not because the disciples had plenty of food from the beginning.

Acknowledging lack is not the opposite of faith. If we hide the facts and speak as though we have plenty, we instead become dishonest. What matters is whose word we listen to after speaking of our lack; the disciples told Jesus what they had, and the Lord commanded what they should do next.

The Lord receives it and gives it to the disciples

Let us read verse 18. *"He said, 'Bring them here to Me'" (Matthew 14:18)*. The Lord told them to bring what they had. He did not tell them to leave it alone because it was little, and what had been in the disciples' hands was entrusted into the Lord's hands. In this scene we learn the attitude of using what we have according to the Lord's will.

Let us read verse 19. *"Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes" (Matthew 14:19)*. The Lord had the multitude sit down and took the loaves and the fish. Looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the multitude. The passage records in order the Lord's work of giving and the disciples' work of distributing, so the place of the One who provides and the place of those who serve are clear.

The disciples received what the Lord gave and handed it out to the people, so there was no reason for them to act as though the source of all power were in themselves. We, too, while serving, must lay down both the burden that we have to produce everything ourselves and the pride that we have accomplished everything. It is fitting to do the work entrusted to us while giving thanks for the grace we have received from the Lord.

In the work of sharing the word as well, the gospel we have received comes first. It is not that we produce, out of our own experience or zeal, the content to give to those who listen, but that we know through the Bible the salvation the Lord has accomplished and preach that fact clearly. The labor of those

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who serve is precious, but we cannot attribute the source of salvation to ourselves.

The grace of salvation He has given us

The Lord, who cared for the hungry multitude, bestowed the grace of salvation on people who were to perish because of sin. So even as we read about this event in which He met the needs of the body, we also remember the salvation that we need most deeply. That salvation is not covering up people's lack with fine words, but the work of God, who actually dealt with sin.

"Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:4). We read the word commanding that, in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, hands be laid on the head of the offering. There was a way in which the offering God had established took the place of the sinner, so when we explain salvation, we must make clear what God has accomplished rather than ways by which people build up their own righteousness.

The Lord, who had compassion on the hungry multitude, also had compassion on us, who could not but die because of sin. So through the baptism He received from John, He had all the sins of the world, including the sins we will commit throughout our lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all; as the price of those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place; and He rose again from death and saved us abundantly. Since we have received the remission of sins and received the Holy Spirit as a gift by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, the work of explaining this grace we received first, so that other people may also know and believe it, has been entrusted to us.

As we preach this grace, we do not need to treat people's immediate, difficult circumstances as something unrelated. The Lord in the passage healed the sick and fed the hungry multitude. So we, too, while clearly preaching the gospel, can look into the needs we can actually help with and handle them together. There must be a heart that values the help the other person needs.

The fragments that remained after they ate their fill

Let us read verses 20 and 21. *"So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children" (Matthew 14:20–21)*. Everyone ate their fill, and the fragments that remained were gathered up, filling twelve baskets. Those who ate were five thousand, besides women and children; so when we look together at the small amount at the beginning and the result confirmed at the end, we can see how abundant the provision the Lord gave was.

The passage records that they also gathered up the fragments that remained. They did not treat what remained as trivial just because they had received abundantly. Here we learn the attitude of gratefully receiving what the Lord has given and treating with care what has been entrusted to us, so abundance does not become a reason that we may use things carelessly.

Today, too, there are people we must look after and work we must carry out. First, do not turn away from needs; honestly confirm what you have; and, relying on the Lord, serve together. Following the heart of the Lord, who had compassion on the

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multitude and fed them through the hands of the disciples, let us faithfully care for the people entrusted to us. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Let us look to the Lord in the midst of fear

< Matthew 14:22–33 >

“Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’ And Peter answered Him and said, ‘Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.’ So He said, ‘Come.’ And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’ And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’ And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God.’”

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The wind met on the way on which the Lord had sent them

Jesus first put the disciples in the boat and sent them off, and the disciples were going to the other side according to His word. But the wind blew against them, and they suffered hardship because of the waves. So this beginning keeps us from hastily concluding, merely from the fact that we have met difficulties, that we have strayed from the Lord's will. They were on the way on which the Lord had sent them.

Let us read verses 22 and 23. *"Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there" (Matthew 14:22–23)*. The Lord sent the multitude away and went up on the mountain by Himself and prayed; so when the disciples were on the sea, the Lord was alone on the mountain.

Let us read verse 24. *"But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary" (Matthew 14:24)*. The disciples' boat was far away from land, and because of the wind blowing against them and the waves, crossing over became painful. So, while acknowledging that the difficulty is real, we must look to the Lord, who comes to such disciples.

Jesus, who comes on the water

Let us read verse 25. *"Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea" (Matthew 14:25)*. Jesus came walking on the sea, toward the very place where the

disciples were suffering hardship. Even the sea with its rising waves could not stop the Lord from coming; so this event shows who Jesus is rather than the disciples' outstanding handling of the situation.

Let us read verse 26. *"And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out for fear" (Matthew 14:26)*. Even when the disciples saw Jesus, they thought He was a ghost and were afraid. Because they did not rightly recognize the scene that came before their eyes, they were instead afraid when they saw the One who was coming to help them. The text shows that the impression of what our eyes have seen does not always become a right judgment.

In a moment when the difficulty is great, a wrong interpretation can make fear grow even greater; so we need to distinguish what we have seen from the guesses we have attached to it. What set the disciples' fear right was not more imagination, but the word of Jesus. The Lord makes Himself known directly.

Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid

Let us read verse 27. *"But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid'" (Matthew 14:27)*. Jesus spoke immediately to the disciples, who were afraid, and made known to them who He was. So the command *"Be of good cheer"* was not a demand to make up their minds firmly without any basis. The fact that the One who had come to them was Jesus was the basis on which they could be at ease.

The ceasing of the wind follows after that. Before the wind ceased, the disciples first heard the word of the Lord, who

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revealed who He was. So this makes us think about the difference between a heart that only waits for circumstances to change and faith that trusts the Lord, who speaks; the basis of faith does not lie only in whether the situation we hope for has come about first.

We, too, must clearly know to whom we are making our requests when we pray. Going beyond a heart that vaguely hopes only that things will work out, believe that Jesus is our Savior and God. Rather than looking for the power of prayer in your own feelings or in the length of your words, you need only set your heart on faith that relies on the Lord, who is listening.

Peter, who went down following the word

Let us read verse 28. *"And Peter answered Him and said, 'Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water'" (Matthew 14:28)*. Peter asked that, if it was really Jesus, He would command him to come on the water. In this way, before Peter's movement there was the Lord's word.

Let us read verse 29. *"So He said, 'Come.' And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus" (Matthew 14:29)*. When Jesus said *"Come,"* Peter came down out of the boat and walked on the water to go to Jesus. What Peter could do was bound to the Lord and His word; so he walked toward Jesus in response to the Lord's call.

So our obedience today, too, must follow the word the Lord has actually given. The reason Peter could walk on the water was that there was the word of the Lord, who said *"Come"*; so we, too, must confirm the word and act honestly, following its meaning.

He caught the one who was sinking

Let us read verse 30. *"But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!'" (Matthew 14:30)*. Peter saw the wind, became afraid, and began to sink. The experience of having walked on the water at first did not automatically keep away the fear that came afterward. Still, he cried out to the Lord to save him; so even in the moment of crisis, the One to call on was Jesus.

Let us read verse 31. *"And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?'" (Matthew 14:31)*. The Lord immediately stretched out His hand and caught him, and, calling him one of little faith, asked him why he had doubted. The hand that caught him and the word that set his faith right were there together; so the Lord, while not approving of Peter's doubt, still caught him as he was sinking.

So you, too, do not look for any reason to avoid the Lord when your weakness is revealed. You need only acknowledge your wrong judgment, ask for help, and learn the word again. The Lord's rebuking us does not mean that He does not care for us; so we must hear even the words of rebuke as teaching that sets our faith right.

Peter's cry was not long, but it was clear from whom he was asking for help. We do not need to express our prayer perfectly to come to the Lord in the midst of difficulty; so tell Him honestly of your present need and rely on the Lord. And after that, an attitude of accepting what the Lord teaches through the word must follow.

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The Lord, who became our Savior

Seeing the Lord catch Peter on the sea, we think of the salvation the Lord has bestowed. Jesus, who helps us, is the One who came to save sinners; so at the basis of our placing our faith in the Lord is the work of salvation He has accomplished.

"And he shall lay his hand on the head of the goat, and kill it at the place where they kill the burnt offering before the LORD. It is a sin offering" (Leviticus 4:24). In the word on the sin offering, the laying on of hands on the offering that was to have the sins passed on to it and the death of that offering are recorded together. Since sinners cannot remove judgment by their own strength, they must receive the salvation God has established.

The Lord, who stretched out His hand to sinking Peter, had all the sins of the world, including the sins we commit throughout our lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, in order to rescue us, who had sunk into sin and could not help but perish. And as the price of those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place, and He rose again from death and held us up completely and saved us. We who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift; so the Lord on whom we rely is the Savior who has accomplished this salvation for us.

The confession offered in the boat

Let us read verses 32 and 33. *"And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God'" (Matthew 14:32–33)*. When the Lord and Peter got into the boat

together, the wind ceased, and those who were in the boat worshiped Jesus and confessed that He was the Son of God. The story does not end with evaluating how far Peter walked, but moves on to a confession acknowledging who Jesus is.

When we remember this ending, the center of the text becomes clear. It is not using the Lord as a tool to build up our courage, but knowing the Lord and placing our faith in Him. What the Lord did revealed His authority, and the disciples worshiped before Him. So we, too, must not hold on only to the result of having received help, but must know the Lord, who helps us.

When we meet a storm, our hearts can be shaken. Rather than hiding that shaking, tell it to the Lord and listen to His word. Make clear the obedience you can offer now, and rely on the Lord's faithfulness rather than on your own ability. What must grow deeper in us as we pass through a crisis is faith toward Jesus.

The Lord, who came on the water and caught Peter as he was sinking, is the Son of God. Since you can ask Him for help and follow His word even in the midst of fear, let your gaze and your confession remain on the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Make Jesus known and bring those who are sick

< Matthew 14:34–36 >

"When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well."

The movements of the people who recognized Jesus

Knowing a person is revealed in the way we act toward that person, so remembering someone's name and asking that person for help are different things. When the people of Gennesaret recognized Jesus, they spread the news to those around them and brought those who were sick. The fact that they knew Jesus led to a movement of coming to Jesus. Today's word shows both that movement and the grace the Lord bestowed.

Let us read verse 34. *"When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret" (Matthew 14:34)*. Jesus and the disciples crossed the sea and came to Gennesaret. In the boat the disciples had worshiped Jesus and confessed that He is the Son

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of God, and now, as they come ashore, the people of that place come before Jesus. Jesus, who met the disciples on the sea, also meets the people who seek help on land.

In this short record, the movements of the people follow one after another. They know Jesus, make Him known all around, bring those who are sick, and make supplication. Those movements are all directed toward Jesus; they do not end with talking with one another about someone's difficulty, but go to the Lord together with the person who has that difficulty. When we confess that we know the Lord, we too come to look back on this direction.

They spread the news they learned throughout the surrounding region

Let us read verse 35. *"And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick" (Matthew 14:35)*. The people of that place did not keep the fact that Jesus had come to themselves, but made it known throughout the surrounding region. Before the sick were brought to Jesus, the news that Jesus was there was spread first; so those who recognized Him first did the work of making Him known, so that the people who needed help could come to the Lord.

What we know carries with it a responsibility to make it known, and all the more so if it is news that others need as well. When the people of Gennesaret learned that Jesus had come, they thought of the people who needed that news, and their action turns us back from a heart that would cling only to the opportunity that has come to us. Knowledge of Jesus can appear in this way, in actions that look after the circumstances of others.

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In the gospel we preach as well, the center is Jesus. Rather than words that show how much we know, we must clearly preach who Jesus is and what He has accomplished. The purpose is to help those who hear to know and believe in Jesus; so, just as the news that spread through Gennesaret gathered people to Jesus, our words too must turn the hearts of those who hear toward the Savior.

They come to Jesus bringing those who are sick

After spreading the news, the people brought those who were sick. The work of making Him known and the work of bringing the sick are recorded together; so they knew the circumstances of each sick person and helped that person from beside him so that he could meet Jesus. Whether a sick person was healed depended on the power of Jesus, but in bringing him there was the labor of the people around him.

Here the place of those who help and the place of Jesus, who gives help, become clear. The people did not produce the power to heal disease; they only brought the sick before Jesus. So knowing our limits does not mean that everything we have to do disappears. Even when we cannot solve that person's problem, we can come to the Lord together with him and seek help.

Our service also needs this kind of distinction. If we think that we must resolve all of someone's burdens ourselves, we are crushed under a responsibility we cannot handle; conversely, if we do nothing because what we can do is small, we miss even the labor of helping the person beside us. Listening to that person, looking after what he needs, and reading Jesus' word and praying together with him are the service we can offer today.

The purpose of that labor lies not in making the other person depend on us, but in helping that person open his heart to Jesus and seek the Lord's help. Those who serve by faith know that they themselves are not the Savior, so instead of holding people at their own side, they preach the word so that people may know and believe in the salvation Jesus has accomplished. We ourselves are also people who live by the same grace.

They ask that they may touch even the hem of His garment

Let us read verse 36. *"And begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well" (Matthew 14:36)*. The people begged that they might touch even the hem of Jesus' garment. That plea was directed toward Jesus; the One they relied on was Jesus, who was before their eyes, and the One who gave healing to the sick was also Jesus. Therefore their touching the hem of His garment must be read within this event, in which they came to Him and sought help.

They made their needs known to Jesus, and they did not consider everything finished once they had brought the sick, but sought the Lord's help. We too, when we pray before God, do not need to dress up our circumstances. If you have suffering that is hard to bear and problems you cannot solve, lay them before Him just as they are. For those who seek help, there is the Lord, who is greater than we are.

Supplication carries a heart that acknowledges our limits. While we strive to look like people who have enough in ourselves, it is hard to ask for help; but before the Lord there is no need to keep up such an appearance, so we come as people

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who need grace. The more we know who Jesus is, the more precious it becomes to rely on Him rather than to hide our shortcomings.

The One who grants healing is Jesus

Let us read the last words of verse 36 again. *"And as many as touched it were made perfectly well" (Matthew 14:36)*. The sick coming to the Lord and seeking help was not in vain, and healing came to them. The people's making Him known, their labor, and their supplication came first, but the One who gave the fruit of this work was Jesus; so the people of Gennesaret experienced the power of the Lord, which went beyond their own labor.

Those who brought the sick must also remember this fact. We cannot credit grace to our own merit on the grounds that we made it known and we labored; it was because the Lord worked that the sick were healed. The joy of those who serve lies not in their being noticed, but in the people they helped receiving the Lord's grace. That joy makes us thankful and keeps us serving.

So as you read this word, when you meet someone who is sick today, first look after that person's suffering. Instead of looking for grounds to judge him, you need only pray together with him and share the help he needs. Just as the people of Gennesaret brought the sick to Jesus, our hands and words, too, must be used to stay by the side of those who are hurting while relying on the Lord, rather than pushing them away to be alone.

We turn our hearts to Jesus, who saved us

The sick of Gennesaret came to Jesus with the suffering of their bodies. In this event we look to Jesus, who bestows grace, and we also bring the problem of our own sins before the Lord. The way for people to obtain salvation from sin lies in knowing and believing what Jesus has accomplished; so we must go further than remembering many words that others have conveyed to us, and believe that gospel as our own salvation.

The very Jesus who healed everyone who touched the hem of His garment had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, in order to solve even the problem of our sins. The sins of my whole lifetime and of yours are also included in all those sins. And as the price of those sins, Jesus shed His blood on the Cross and died 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 and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.

This salvation is not the reward for the labor of bringing many people. We ourselves first believe in the salvation Jesus has accomplished and receive grace, and then we make that grace known to others as well. So even while you preach the word, do not forget that you are a person who has received grace. A hand that helps others becomes humble and warm when it remembers that fact.

Even those who still harbor sin in their hearts and are in anguish can seek the Lord’s help. Ask God that you may know through the word and believe how Jesus removed your sins. Do not try to complete your faith by yourself and present it to the Lord; you need only hear of the salvation He has already accomplished and accept that word. The One to whom our hearts must turn is Jesus Christ, who saved us from sin.

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So that the person, too, may meet the Lord whom we know

The movement that began with the people who recognized Jesus continued until the sick were healed. In between there were mouths that made Him known, hands that brought the sick, and supplications that sought help, and each one of them was directed toward Jesus. In light of today's word, we too reflect on the people with whom we are sharing the grace we have come to know and have received.

The people of Gennesaret knew that Jesus had come, and they acted. Let us not merely keep the gospel we have received in our hearts and stay there. Let us open our mouths to preach Jesus' salvation, stretch out our hands to help those who are in suffering, and make supplication to the Lord together. I hope that you will begin the service you can offer today, so that those people, too, may know and rely on Jesus, whom we know and believe in. ✉

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CHAPTER

15

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Examine your heart in the light of the word

< Matthew 15:1–20 >

"Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, 'Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.' He answered and said to them, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, "Honor your father and your mother"; and, "He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death." But you say, "Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God'— then he need not honor his father or mother." Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."' When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, 'Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.' Then His disciples came and said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?' But He answered and said, 'Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the

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blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.' Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Explain this parable to us.' So Jesus said, 'Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.'"

The word that came back to those who asked the question

The Pharisees and scribes looked at the disciples' hands and made an issue of them, but Jesus revealed the hearts of the people who were asking that question. So the question of what defiles a person must not end with sorting out the actions of others, but must go on until we, who hear the word of God, come to know what kind of people we are before that word.

Let us read verse 1. *"Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying" (Matthew 15:1)*. The fact that they came from Jerusalem is recorded, but whether their words are right is revealed in the conversation that follows. So we must examine not so much where a person has come from as by what standard he judges.

In verse 2 they ask, *"Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" (Matthew 15:2)*. Within the question there was already a judgment that had settled the fault in advance; they put forward a custom the disciples had not kept and made it a matter that Jesus had to explain.

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The action they pointed out is clearly stated in the words *"they do not wash their hands when they eat bread" (Matthew 15:2)* in the same verse. They took issue not so much with the food the disciples ate as with what they did before eating, and through this question Jesus corrects the standard by which a person judges himself before God.

Let us read verse 3. *"He answered and said to them, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?'" (Matthew 15:3)*. This time Jesus asks why they do so. At first it seemed as though the disciples were being interrogated, but now the very people who had been asking the question stand before the word, and so the distinction that they are the ones who judge and others are the ones who are judged collapses.

You too, accept this change when you hear the word. If you stop at agreeing while calling to mind the faults of other people, your heart remains just as it is. When Jesus questions your judgment, your words, and your actions, you must hear that word as a question that has come back to you.

The commandment that sheds light on the responsibility toward parents

Let us read verse 4. *"For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death'" (Matthew 15:4)*. Jesus does not speak only of a goodness that anyone might vaguely agree with; rather, He brings forward a commandment that reveals actual behavior toward parents, and so makes clear what the words of exalting God mean in daily life.

The word to honor your parents has a clear object who is to be honored, so it is a command that cannot end in words that boast of our faith. If, while having something with which we could benefit our parents, we avoid that responsibility, we must examine by the word even the pious appearance of saying that it is given to God.

Let us look at the words in verse 5. *"But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"—'" (Matthew 15:5)*. The text says that there was something with which to benefit the parents. So this is not a passage rebuking a situation in which one has nothing at all, but a passage in which He takes issue with words that do away with responsibility even while one has something with which to benefit them.

Let us read in verse 6 the result those words produced. *"Then he need not honor his father or mother. Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition" (Matthew 15:6)*. The expression that something had been given to God led to the conclusion that one need not honor one's parents; thus the words of serving God became a reason to stop doing what God had commanded.

Jesus makes clear what is being done with those words rather than their outward form. The verdict *"you have made the commandment of God of no effect"* is solemn. For even if one does not say with the mouth that the word does not exist, if one makes void the responsibility to follow that word, one nullifies what the word requires.

So examine the words of your faith together with your actual responsibilities as well. Look back on how you are actually caring for the people near you while confessing that you serve God. A heart that gives to God cannot go together with a heart that takes lightly the responsibility God has entrusted.

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The One who speaks the word is also clear, for verse 4 begins with *"For God commanded, saying."* Honoring parents is a responsibility to be accepted and carried out according to the will of God, who gave the commandment. If we know who it is that gave the commandment, we cannot put an explanation we have made for our own convenience ahead of His word.

The prophecy that reveals the gap between the lips and the heart

Let us read verse 7. *"Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying" (Matthew 15:7)*. Jesus applies the words of Isaiah to the people with whom He is now conversing. A prophecy recorded long ago clearly illuminates the faith of the present, so those who know the word may also become those who receive the rebuke of that word.

This is verse 8. *"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me" (Matthew 15:8)*. The words of honor are on the lips, but the distance from God is revealed in the heart. So how familiarly we speak words toward God and how much we accept God's will are matters to be examined separately.

Yet this does not mean that removing the honor of the lips makes true worship. What Jesus rebukes is that the words of honor and the heart that should be contained in those words are split apart from each other; so the confession offered to God must be connected to a heart that receives His word when God speaks.

Let us read verse 9. *"And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9)*. When the commandments of men became the standard of teaching,

worship also became vain. This means that we cannot judge it to be worship that God accepts merely because the act of worship was performed.

So we cannot lightly pass over the word *"in vain they worship Me."* For even if the name called upon is God, if the teaching that actually governs the heart has come from men, one grows distant from worship that obeys God.

Becoming honest before God is more important than your appearing godly. When you must acknowledge that you have failed to keep the commandments, acknowledge it, and when you must learn rightly, learn. The more religious explanations you add to cover your wrongs, the farther the heart moves from the word.

The understanding that the multitude also needs

Let us read verse 10. *"When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, 'Hear and understand'" (Matthew 15:10)*. Jesus does not end His teaching with the dispute with those who had asked the question; rather, He calls the multitude and tells them to hear. So even those who had been watching the rebuke others received are called as listeners who examine themselves.

Hearing and understanding are connected. Just because we have heard the sound and remember the sentences, we cannot say that the word has changed our judgment; only when we know what Jesus calls right and what He calls wrong can we see ourselves according to that teaching.

Let us read verse 11. *"Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man" (Matthew 15:11)*. Jesus distinguishes between what goes in and

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what comes out. By the direction of passing in and out of the mouth, He teaches where the source of a person's becoming defiled lies; people look at the outside, but the Lord has us look at what comes out from within.

Earlier He examined the words spoken toward parents. The words that something had been given to God were used to avoid the responsibility of honoring parents, and now He says that what comes out of the mouth defiles a person. So words are not sounds separated from the heart, but actions that reveal what is held in the heart.

Therefore, to see this matter rightly, we must examine, together with the words spoken outwardly, the heart that caused those words to be spoken. Those who covered with pious words a heart that did not honor their parents had a problem in their heart rather than in their expression; so only when we hear the word in which Jesus makes clear the source of defilement do we come to know our own condition rightly.

This teaching is a word that makes us realize our true selves and seek the grace of the Savior. To a person who does not know his own condition and considers himself clean, the grace that washes away sins does not sound necessary. But if we know what comes out of us, we lay down the heart that relied on our own righteousness and seek the Savior.

The Father's judgment, clearer than people's reactions

Let us read verse 12. *"Then His disciples came and said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?'" (Matthew 15:12)*. The disciples convey to Jesus the fact that the Pharisees were offended. Their minds were

drawn more to the reaction of the people who had heard that word than to what Jesus had made clear.

People's reactions can shake us even after we have heard the word. When someone we respected is displeased, and someone who supported a familiar teaching objects, we want to resolve that reaction first. But the wrong that the word has exposed does not disappear just because those who hear it feel uncomfortable.

Let us read verse 13. *"But He answered and said, 'Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted'" (Matthew 15:13)*. Jesus speaks of the judgment of the heavenly Father rather than people's feelings. Even something that has continued for a long time is uprooted if it is not what the Father planted, so how long it has been kept or how many people acknowledge it cannot be the final standard.

This is the first part of verse 14. *"Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind" (Matthew 15:14)*. Walking ahead and knowing the way are different matters. So even a person who follows someone must examine whether that guide is seeing the word of God rightly.

Jesus also makes the result clear. *"And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch" (Matthew 15:14)*. The one who leads and the one who follows meet that result together. Since the one who follows also falls in with him, we cannot entrust all our judgments of faith to others.

Do not measure the word by the reactions of familiar people. While receiving help from those who teach the word rightly, listen to what Jesus actually said. Hearing the Father's judgment comes before keeping people's approval.

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Peter's question and the disciples' learning

Let us read verse 15. *"Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Explain this parable to us'" (Matthew 15:15)*. Peter does not pass over it pretending to understand, but asks for an explanation. If the earlier questioners pointed out the disciples' fault, Peter asked Jesus about what he himself needed to know; so even though it is likewise a question, a question that seeks to learn has a different direction.

This is verse 16. *"So Jesus said, 'Are you also still without understanding?'" (Matthew 15:16)*. Just because the disciples followed Jesus closely did not mean that they had already understood every word, and Jesus reveals their shortcomings as well. A disciple is not one who avoids rebuke, but one who receives the Lord's teaching even in the midst of rebuke.

Jesus continues His explanation to the disciples who lacked understanding. Let us read verse 17. *"Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated?" (Matthew 15:17)*. By speaking of the way along which food goes in, He distinguishes it from the matter of sin coming out of the heart, and so the judgment that placed the source of defilement in outward food is corrected.

When we hear this explanation, the matter of washing hands that came up at first also looks new. Those who judged cleanness by the standard of what was done before a meal did not, in fact, examine their own hearts. Jesus turns the disciples back from a judgment that measures only outward actions while leaving the center of a person as it is.

What Peter asked for was this: *"Explain this parable to us" (Matthew 15:15)*. We, too, need learning before a word we find hard to understand; so rather than settling its meaning by our

own thoughts and repeating those thoughts, we must receive the explanation Jesus goes on to give.

Learning the word is not gathering many verses that are favorable to us, but becoming able to correct judgments we have thought right until now. If we accept that Jesus is the One who teaches us, then along with the joy of coming to know what we did not know, the way to correct our wrongs also opens.

The sin of the heart and the grace of the Savior

Let us read verse 18. *"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man" (Matthew 15:18)*. Jesus finds the beginning of the words that came out of the mouth in the heart. So a person who attributed the words that came out only to accidental mistakes must examine, before this word, what was within him.

This is verse 19. *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:19)*. Jesus names one by one the thoughts and deeds that become defilement. He reveals everything from evil thoughts to harming the lives, bodies, possessions, and reputations of others, so sin does not stay in one person's heart but destroys actual relationships.

That list also includes *"false witness, blasphemies."* This means that a person who examined whether hands had been washed could harm other people with his own mouth. Such sins cannot be washed away by a tidy appearance that people approve of, so we must acknowledge our sins before God just as they are.

God made known through the word the way of dealing with sin, and that is the ordinance of laying hands on the sacrificial offering. *"Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt*

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offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:4). The way in which a sinner tries to be accepted by proving his own cleanness and the way of obtaining atonement by relying on the offering God established differ in their basis.

To wash away all those filthy sins that come out of the heart, Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of your entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all. And as the price of the sins that had been passed on to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross in our place, and He rose again from death, saving us completely, even to our innermost being. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit have the sins of their hearts washed away and receive as a gift the Holy Spirit, whom God gives.

If we believe in the grace that has washed away sins, the reason to hide the sins of the heart and guard our own righteousness disappears. The word that exposes sin and the gospel that has removed sin lead us to the same Savior, so, relying on the salvation the Lord has accomplished, we can honestly examine even our wrong words and actions and turn from them.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, we must examine our thoughts and words by the word. For if the confession of having received grace becomes a reason for not needing to listen to what others say, we exalt our own judgment again. The basis of our having been made righteous is the unchanging salvation of the Lord, so those who know that grace keep listening to the word that teaches them.

A life that places one's own heart before the word

Let us read verse 20. *"These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man" (Matthew 15:20)*. Jesus returns to the question raised at first and finishes His answer. The standard that judged the disciples defiled merely on the charge that they ate without washing their hands was not right; what defiles a person is the sin that comes out of the heart.

The words *"These are the things which defile a man"* refer to the sins He made clear earlier. Do not turn this word into an outward standard that is easy to hold up against others, but examine what the thoughts and words that come out of your heart are like.

Now we also come to see the responsibility toward parents again. Give ear to the word to honor your parents, and if there has been a time when you avoided, with pious words, help you could have given, correct that behavior. This is not piling up a price for obtaining the remission of sins, but a person who has received grace acting according to the word.

Examine your heart even before you speak. Look back on whether there is an intention to exalt yourself in words that judge someone, and whether there is a heart that belittles others while claiming to convey the facts. Do not stop at polishing the form of your words, but bring before God the heart from which those words came.

Jesus taught all of them—those who had asked the question, the multitude who listened, and the disciples who followed closely—so no one was left who had no need to learn. You too, do not leave this word only as a lesson that other people need, but receive it as the word of the Lord who teaches you.

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When the Lord exposes the sins of the heart, let us honestly acknowledge them and rely on the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which has washed away sins. Learning what we have not understood and correcting what we have judged wrongly, let us examine ourselves so that the confession of our lips and a heart that receives the word go together. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

You who regard the teachings of men as greater than the commands of God

< Matthew 15:1–20 >

“Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ‘Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.’ He answered and said to them, ‘Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, “Honor your father and your mother”; and, “He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.” But you say, “Whoever says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God’— then he need not honor his father or mother.” Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”’ When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, ‘Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.’ Then His disciples came and said to Him, ‘Do You know that the Pharisees were offended

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when they heard this saying?' But He answered and said, 'Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.' Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Explain this parable to us.' So Jesus said, 'Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.'"

There are people who, even after coming to church to hear the word of God, do not listen to the word. Among Christians, instead of saying that they are going to offer worship, there is an expression that they are going to "see" worship. It means that they go to see the spectacle of how worship is offered, how the sermon is preached, and how praise is sung. Such people only watch the worship service, and even when the word of God is preached, they do not listen. Even if the denomination is different and the minister who preaches the word is different, during the time of hearing the word of God they ought to listen attentively, also raise questions, and open the Bible to check whether it is really being preached according to the word.

People often regard everything as wrong if it is not their own denomination, and regard anyone who is not the pastor of their own church as untrustworthy. I think it is because the leaders within Christianity have taught them that way.

"Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"

Such people also appear in the Bible. The Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and challenged Him. *"Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread" (Matthew 15:2).* Then Jesus answered. *"Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?" (Matthew 15:3).*

It means that they transgress the commandment of God by the tradition of the Pharisees and scribes, that is, by religious habits and customs handed down by word of mouth. In Jesus' eyes, they were ignoring the commandment of God, and in the eyes of the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus and His disciples were transgressing the tradition of the elders. Tradition refers to customs that have been handed down from earlier generations. The Jews had a habit of first washing their hands and feet clean and then eating food when they entered a house.

This was the habit of all the people of Israel, whether high or low. Before eating food, the Jews always washed their hands clean in the prescribed manner.

But the point is that Jesus and His disciples alone did not keep it. So a dispute arose. Earlier a dispute had arisen over their plucking heads of grain and eating them as they passed through the wheat fields on the Sabbath, and this time a dispute arose because they did not wash their hands. Then Jesus rebuked them and said, *"For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"— then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you*

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have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition" (Matthew 15:4–6).

In the law there are 613 commandments telling what to do and what not to do, and they are all right. But the point is that they nullified all those commandments by their own habits, by customs handed down by tradition.

The law said to honor your father and mother, and said that the one who curses his parents must surely be put to death. But while they neither served their parents nor listened well to what their parents said, they said of the food or money they had, "This has been given to God." In another Gospel, this is called *"Corban (that is, a gift to God)" (Mark 7:11).*

For example, if they had a very expensive vessel, they should have served their parents with it, but they thought that if they said, "I have resolved to give this to God," they did not have to serve their parents. Such a rule is not in the word of God. It is a rule that the leaders and elders of Israel set up for their own convenience, and it has been handed down from generation to generation.

Hypocrites worship God in vain

That is why Jesus called them hypocrites. *"Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men'" (Matthew 15:7–9).* It means that although they seem to honor and worship God with their lips, they worship God in vain because they teach as doctrine the ethics and morals that men have taught them.

If God said to honor your parents, we should accept it purely, just as it is, and honestly confess before God, "There are ways in which I have honored them and ways in which I have failed." But the point is that it is wrong for them to teach as though honoring parents were not the word of God but fine ethics and morals that men have established.

In the Christian world there is the law of God that God has taught, that is, the truth of the word of God. And because we live in this world, there are also rules of ethics and morality that people have established. Of these two laws, which should Christians follow? Naturally, they must accept the word of God and follow, obey, and keep that word by faith. That is right.

For example, someone tells his children to honor their parents while setting up a rule that offering ancestral rites to one's ancestors is the duty of a child. But God said not to have any other gods before Him. At such a time we are faced with two laws: Shall we follow the command of God, or shall we follow the command of man? When we are placed in such a situation, which is it right to obey? Naturally, it is right to obey the command of God.

But the people of Israel—the whole nation, all its elders and leaders—followed the command of man more than the word of God. So when Jesus came, He rebuked them. Taking up a whip, He overturned the tables of those who were doing business in the temple and drove them out. *"And He said to those who sold doves, 'Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!' Then His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up'" (John 2:16–17)*. Jesus Christ obeyed the command of God.

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The teachings of men must not be taught as if they were the commandments of God

Christians today are the same. Within Christianity, within their denominations, what do they regard as important and teach? Some denominations value overseas missions, and some denominations regard service as great. There are also denominations that regard service or social movements as the will of God and concentrate on them. But Jesus said to save people from sin with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Our Lord said, *"For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always" (Matthew 26:11)*, and He said that wherever this gospel is spread in the whole world, what the woman who poured the fragrant oil had done should also be told as a memorial.

Our Lord says to help the poor and have compassion on them, but in reality He speaks with greater emphasis on the work of saving people from sin. This is because it is written, *"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27)*. Our Lord regards the work of saving souls from sin as more important. Yet among people, the direction each denomination pursues is different.

What the Christian denominations of this world mostly pursue is to be at peace with their neighbors, to help their neighbors, and simply to make people believe in Jesus as the Savior. That is, rather than aiming to have people believe in the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit according to the will of God and receive the remission of sins, they concentrate on the work of living well in peace with their neighbors, helping one another, and making people believe in Jesus only in form.

That is why they find the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we preach unfamiliar, and they dislike it. When we speak

about the sin of man and preach that the Lord came to this earth and had the sin of mankind transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, that He bore the sin of the world and went on to be nailed to the Cross and receive the judgment for sin, and that He rose again from death and became our Savior, they dislike it. They have never once heard it, and when they hear it, it is too unfamiliar, and although it seems right, it is different from their own denomination, so they dislike it.

Why does a feeling of dislike arise in their hearts when they hear the word of God? It is because they are worshiping God in vain by making the teachings of men like the commandments of God and teaching them. It is backward. Man must receive the commandments of God and obey them just as they are, but man has become higher than God, has regarded the ethics and morals of man as greater than the commands of God, and has taught them. So the word *"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me" (Matthew 15:8)* was fulfilled in them. They were hypocrites.

What comes out of the mouth defiles a man

So the Lord called the multitude and spoke. *"When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, 'Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man'" (Matthew 15:10–11)*. The Lord is speaking of the heart of man, that is, of spiritual things. A man's heart does not become defiled because he has eaten something dirty.

Rather, what comes out of a man's heart defiles a man. For the heart of man is full of very filthy things. *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts,*

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false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man" (Matthew 15:19–20).

And concerning those who teach their own ethics and morals as if they were the word of God, He said that in the end they will be uprooted like tares and suffer destruction. *"But He answered and said, 'Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch'" (Matthew 15:13–14).* It means that the blind lead the blind. It means that what God the Father has not planted will be uprooted, that is, cast into hell. On this earth there are many people who take pride in themselves, saying, "We are the Christians—who else is a Christian? We are the orthodox—who else is orthodox?"

But as our Lord sees it, those who teach the ethics and morals of man as if they were the commandments of God are neither children of God whom God has planted nor servants of God, and therefore they will surely be uprooted and cast into the fire. That is, they will be destroyed. Those who think of themselves as orthodox Christian believers and leaders of orthodox Christianity will suffer this judgment.

Yet within a denomination that calls itself orthodox, who would even dare to think that they themselves are people who practice lawlessness and commit sin before God, and so will be uprooted and cast together into the hell into which the devil goes? There is no one who thinks that way.

A denomination cannot remove our sins

I too once lived a life of faith within a denomination. The various denominations within Christianity each think that they are orthodox. They say that they believe rightly, and that if they do not go to the kingdom of heaven, who would? But within them there is no gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord says of such people that He will uproot and destroy everything He has not planted. The thoughts of the Lord and the thoughts of those in the Christianity of this world who say that they are orthodox and believe well are different.

So the Lord draws a conclusion: it is not what goes into a man's mouth that defiles a man, but what comes out of a man's heart that defiles a man. Out of a man's heart come evil thoughts, a murderous heart, an adulterous heart, a thieving heart, a heart that bears false witness, and a blaspheming heart. Man was born as a descendant of Adam and Eve, that is, as a child of sinners, and inherited the heart of a sinner just as it is. Because he was born with sin, he lets that sin out of his mouth, defiling and wounding people, and if he acts according to what is in his heart, he even goes so far as to kill people. That is how he torments people, throws this world into confusion, and makes it like hell.

Who is like that? It is man who is like that. The scribes and Pharisees, that is, those belonging to Judaism, taught the words of man as if they were the word of God, but Jesus said that what comes out from within their hearts is what defiles a man, and that a man does not become defiled by eating without washing his hands. Of course, it is true that we must wash clean before we eat so as not to get sick. But that does not make the heart defiled as well. The Lord is speaking of the heart, but people are speaking of outward appearance.

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Therefore, if those in Christianity who are called orthodox do not know the will of God well and do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, then no matter how much they claim to be an orthodox denomination, in the end they will be judged before God because of the sin they have and will be destroyed. Concerning hell, the Lord said that it is the place *"where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched'" (Mark 9:48)*. Then what kind of people are those whom the Lord has planted?

Those whom the Lord has planted are those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

They are those who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father, came to this earth, had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, bore the sin of the world, was nailed to the Cross and received the judgment for sin, and rose again from death and became our Savior. They are those who have believed in this salvation, received the remission of sins, and become children of God, that is, those who have been planted in the kingdom of God. Our Lord said, *"Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18)*.

If we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit on this earth and receive the remission of sins, then in the kingdom of God as well, God the Father and the angels all know that we are children of God. So our names are written in the Book of Life of the kingdom of God. On the other hand, even if people on this earth say that they believe in Jesus well and that they are an orthodox denomination, those who have sin because they do not

believe that the Lord has saved us with the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit will be judged as sinners before God, and in the end they will go into the unquenchable fire where the devil goes.

The Lord says as follows: since what comes out of a man's heart defiles a man, you must believe in Jesus Christ, who had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, was hung on the Cross and received the judgment for sin, and made our hearts clean, and so become children of God. This is the conclusion the Lord has drawn. Dear beloved saints, what about us?

When I meet people who come to hear the word but only judge and do not listen, it is truly regrettable. They ought to listen and see whether there is something to learn, whether the pastor is speaking of what they themselves do not know, whether he is preaching by faith even what they already know, and whether he is doing it for himself or truly doing the work of God, examining the center of his heart, but they simply say that their own denomination is the best. Does a denomination let you go to the kingdom of heaven? Does a denomination remove your sins? There are not a few among the Christians of this world who live a life of faith only by outward appearance in this way. Then who are the people who believe according to the Lord's will? Though we are lacking, it is none other than us.

Open your spiritual eyes and preach the word of God as the word of God

Those within Christianity who take the lead in teaching, calling themselves an orthodox denomination, are corrupting the word of God into the teachings of men and teaching it. So the

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people who come into the church and hear the word do not hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and do not know it. Because they do not know it, they cannot believe it, and because they do not believe it, they cannot spread it either.

So they think that they are carrying out world missions by going and doing service. Even when they say they preach the gospel, they often stop at making people believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior. Is that preaching the gospel? In the sight of God, believing that way is religion. One becomes exactly like the scribes and Pharisees who appear here. If religious leaders are blind, then the blind lead the blind, and both fall into a ditch.

Dear fellow believers, we must open our spiritual eyes. We must believe the word of God as the word of God and teach it to people. We must not confuse or mix the words of man with the word of God. We must know exactly what the will of God is and preach it. Even though I may seem to preach the word slowly and always in the same way, I preach exactly what that word conveys and stop there. Then I move on to the next word and again preach that much. Even though this seems slow, it covers the whole world, just as leaven spreads through the whole lump.

So I give thanks to God. This gospel is not something I serve alone; it is spread as my fellow workers and all the brothers and sisters serve it together. People hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit, have all the filthy things of their hearts washed away, and receive the remission of sins. Whoever knows and believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins.

The field of the heart must be plowed first

There are times when people do not accept the gospel even when we preach it. Dear fellow believers, there needs to be a process of meeting people one-on-one and actually plowing the field of their hearts. I mean a process of talking with them concretely, asking, “Do you have sin, or do you not?” Only when the field of the heart has been plowed can seed be sown there and the gospel be accepted. We must not just give people a book without plowing the field of their hearts.

Because we preach the gospel to people who are living a wrong life of faith according to customs inherited from generation to generation without first speaking to them about that error, they do not realize that the gospel is the gospel, nor do they know that it is different from what they believe. Therefore, we must preach the gospel well. I give thanks that we have been established as servants of God whose hearts are with God and whose lips are also with God. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Seek the Lord's grace to the end

< Matthew 15:21–28 >

"Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.' But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us.' But He answered and said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!' But He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.' And she said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour."

A person who came to Jesus

The woman of Canaan came to Jesus carrying her daughter's torment. Although she did not immediately hear the answer she wanted, she asked Him for help even while she was hearing Jesus' words. So the greatness of the faith revealed in this conversation lies in the woman's attitude of accepting the word,

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and the text shows whom the woman relies on and how she receives His word.

Let us read verse 21. *"Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon" (Matthew 15:21)*. The event begins with Jesus going into the region of Tyre and Sidon. Since Jesus came to that place first, before the woman made her request, the One we must look to first in the encounter that follows is also Jesus, who is able to give help.

Verse 22 records that *"a woman of Canaan came from that region" (Matthew 15:22)*. In this scene, the one who asks for help is the woman of Canaan, who came out carrying her daughter's suffering. A woman came to Him with a desperate problem of her own, so it was her own supplication, which could not be replaced by other people's words.

In the same verse the woman cries out, *"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!" (Matthew 15:22)*. Since the words calling on Jesus and the words asking for help follow one after another, the woman sets her heart on who Jesus is and reveals that what she needs is His compassion.

What the woman put forward was not her own good deeds or status, but a supplication that Jesus must have mercy on her. Those who seek grace rely on the heart and power of the One who bestows help, rather than listing at length the reasons they deserve to receive it.

When you come to Jesus as well, the object of your faith must be clear. Faith is not explained merely by the fact that there is something you want; so, just as this woman called on Jesus, the Son of David, know who the One is who saves and helps, and ask Him.

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The mother who embraced her daughter's suffering as her own supplication

Let us read the end of verse 22. *"My daughter is severely demon-possessed" (Matthew 15:22)*. The woman told Him her daughter's condition just as it was. What she brought before Jesus was not the appearance of a family to be proud of, but her daughter's torment, which she could not resolve by her own strength.

While speaking of her daughter's problem, the woman pleads with Him to have mercy on her. It was because her daughter's suffering was a keen pain in the mother's heart as well. Those who know someone's pain and ask on that person's behalf do not push the problem aside as someone else's matter but embrace it in their own hearts; so the woman's words contained both the fact that her daughter needed help and the faith that Jesus was the One who would give that help.

The record that the woman cried out must also be read in connection with her daughter's condition. It is not that we should learn a method whereby crying out loudly obtains the same result; what matters is the fact that a mother is calling on Jesus with a deep need. The power of supplication lies with the One who receives that cry.

You, too, do not have all the answers in the face of the suffering of someone you love. Even while doing what you can to help, you come up against the limits of your own ability; so pleading with Jesus at that time is not giving up on that person but making a request of the One who will have compassion on that person.

The woman's supplication, which spoke of her daughter's suffering, was honest, and she had no need to dress up the problem nicely before Jesus. So we, too, need only ask the Lord

for the help we actually need, rather than making our difficulties look small or hiding them with words that sound full of faith. The heart that comes to the Lord becomes honest in that way.

Mark also records this encounter. *"The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter" (Mark 7:26)*. While revealing the woman's origin, Mark also records the fact that she pleaded for her daughter; so he lets us see together who the person was who came to Jesus and what help she needed. What is heard in this encounter is not a person's name or status but a specific supplication directed toward Jesus.

The encounter that continued in the midst of silence

Let us read verse 23. *"But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us'" (Matthew 15:23)*. An answer was not given as soon as the woman cried out; Jesus' silence and the disciples' request are recorded together. So we must examine in order through what conversation the woman's supplication reaches an answer.

The record *"But He answered her not a word"* shows that the woman had to wait. Even in the interval between offering her supplication and hearing the answer, the woman was before Jesus; so it is only when we hear the words that follow that the meaning of that encounter is revealed more clearly.

The reason the disciples gave was *"she cries out after us."* The daughter's suffering that the woman embraced and the situation that the disciples described had different focuses; so

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even when we hear the same cry, the words with which we treat a person differ depending on what we see and hear first.

The disciples' request was *"Send her away,"* but the One who determined the end of this event was Jesus. The woman did not disappear from the conversation at a single word from the disciples, and Jesus spoke directly and at last personally made a judgment about the woman's faith as well.

When we meet someone asking for help, we easily think first of how inconvenient that request is to us. Those who read this text must go beyond that inconvenience and hear who is asking for help and for what reason; for a heart that tries to end a person's supplication hastily makes us miss that person's need.

On the other hand, you who are making supplication, too, do not determine Jesus' will by people's reactions alone. The woman kept coming before the Lord and offered her words. The waiting we learn from this event is deeply connected with the faith that listens to the Lord's word to the end, rather than with the stubbornness that tries to obtain the desired result by force.

The word of Jesus, who was sent

Let us read verse 24. *"But He answered and said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'" (Matthew 15:24)*. Jesus speaks of whom He was sent to. People's urgent requests do not become the standard that changes God's will; rather, the word of Jesus, who was sent, becomes the standard of the conversation.

This word has *"the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* as its object. Since Jesus is the One who seeks and saves the lost, with a heart that considers itself sufficient in its own strength and

merely adds words asking for grace, one cannot properly know one's own condition of needing a Savior.

Hearing this word, the woman comes closer to Jesus. Let us read verse 25. *"Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!'" (Matthew 15:25)*. Before, she cried out and called to Him; now she comes and bows down. This is what the woman actually did after hearing Jesus' words; so when explaining her faith, we must not miss this movement.

"Lord, help me!" were the words the woman offered. The woman did not restate Jesus' mission according to her own thoughts, but asked Him to bestow grace, with faith that Jesus was the One who would help her.

Even though her words asking for help grew shorter, the woman pleaded with Jesus steadfastly. What the woman held on to was not a way of solving the problem that she herself knew, but Jesus Himself; so even when there are not many words to explain, if it is clear to whom one is asking, that supplication can be offered wholly toward the Lord.

So you, too, while knowing your own shortcomings, do not be trapped in the thought that you must resolve things alone; come to the Savior whom God has sent. A heart that knows its own state and seeks the Lord's grace is more ready to accept Jesus' word than a heart that tries to make itself look great.

The master's grace, which the lowly also need

Let us read verse 26. *"But He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs'" (Matthew 15:26)*. Jesus speaks of the children, the bread, and the little dogs. The woman was not given only words that were

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comfortable to hear; so the faith revealed here is faith that accepts Jesus' judgment even after hearing a hard word.

First, if we look at the words *"to take the children's bread,"* there is an order as to who the owner of the bread is and to whom it is given. The woman could not set that order as she pleased on the grounds that she needed it; those who seek grace respect the will of the One who gives.

The woman also had to hear the words that follow, *that it is not good to "throw it to the little dogs."* Instead of raising up her own qualifications before Jesus, the woman speaks of what help she can ask for within that word. That answer appears in the next verse.

Let us read verse 27. *"And she said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table'" (Matthew 15:27)*. The woman's first answer was an acknowledgment that Jesus was right. She did not push the word away in order to explain her situation to her own advantage; rather, she sought grace while accepting the Lord's judgment.

Among those words, *"Yes, Lord, yet"* contains an important order. The confession that Jesus is right comes before her own petition; so it is asking that very One for help while accepting that the Lord is the One who knows and judges her.

Those who come to know their own sin also need this heart. If, when God reveals our sin, we make excuses that there is more good in us, the lips that seek grace and the heart are split apart. So we must acknowledge ourselves according to the word and rely on the Savior who washes away that sin.

The abundant help contained even in the crumbs

The woman then says, *"Even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."* She received the bread Jesus had spoken of as the basis of her own words. It was not asking Him to take away the children's bread, but confessing that help can be obtained even from the crumbs that fall from the master's table.

In the woman's answer, the crumbs show how abundant the grace she needed was. They are words that ask while saying that even a small grace is enough; since she did not think that she had to exalt herself to receive help, she could rely on the master's abundance while acknowledging her lowly position.

Look again at the expression *"from their masters' table"* in verse 27. The help the woman hoped for was the very grace Jesus bestows, grace belonging to the master. The woman did not stop at looking at her own lowered state but set her heart on the One who would bestow it.

Acknowledging our own sins before God does not end at that point either; God, who makes us know sin, has also given the way of atonement. *"He shall bring the bull to the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, lay his hand on the bull's head, and kill the bull before the LORD" (Leviticus 4:4)*. In the ordinance of laying hands on the head of the offering and killing that offering, both the offering that has sin passed on to it and its death are revealed together.

To bestow grace even on us, who are unworthy like the woman who asked for the crumbs that fall from the master's table, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins of your whole lifetime and mine, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. And as the price of those sins He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our

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place, and He rose again from death and saved us abundantly. Whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This is why we can be sure of salvation even while acknowledging that we are unworthy. The salvation Jesus accomplished came from His grace, by which He loved sinners; so those who believe in the grace the Lord has bestowed receive His sure salvation with thanksgiving, while not hiding their own shortcomings.

The woman revealed her heart longing for grace with words asking for crumbs, and that faith made her sure of Jesus' help while not exalting herself. The content of the salvation conveyed to us today is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and by believing that gospel we have all our sins washed away.

Jesus, who recognized faith and answered

Let us read verse 28. *"Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour" (Matthew 15:28)*. Jesus said that the woman's faith was great. If we had taken the initial silence or the disciples' reaction as the final judgment about the woman, we would have missed the conversation that leads to this word.

It is Jesus who judged the greatness of faith, as we see in the words *"O woman, great is your faith!"* The woman did not evaluate her own faith and present it by herself; the Lord knew the heart that relied on grace while humbling itself.

After that follows the answer *"Let it be to you as you desire."* The woman's desire was fulfilled by Jesus' word; the power to

heal her daughter was not in the woman's persistence itself, but in Jesus, on whom the woman relied.

The last record is *"And her daughter was healed from that very hour."* The result of the conversation actually reached the daughter, and Jesus resolved the need the mother had carried as she came out. The word about the woman's faith and the fact that her daughter was healed are recorded together, showing the result of grace.

Right after the words Jesus spoke, the fact that the daughter was healed follows. When the Lord bestowed grace, a change also took place in the suffering the woman had been carrying; so His power was not confined to a process the woman could confirm before her eyes. Jesus spoke, and help came about just as He had spoken.

So you who read this ending, look to the One who answers rather than to the one who makes supplication. Faith does not mean only a power that makes your heart firm; it is trust that knows who Jesus is, receives the word that judges you, and asks Him for help.

Mark also records what happened after she heard the answer. *"Then He said to her, 'For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter'" (Mark 7:29)*. Also, *"And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed" (Mark 7:30)*. The woman heard Jesus' word and went back, and at home she saw that word fulfilled. Here is revealed the power of Jesus, who can help even without being at the daughter's side.

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Supplication offered while accepting the word

From beginning to end, the woman asked for help for her daughter, and meanwhile she also heard Jesus' words. She did not erase the Lord's will on the grounds that her need was desperate; the mouth that offered her own supplication and the heart that heard the word moved together.

Treasure this relationship in your prayers as well. Tell Him in detail what you want, but also accept what you are, as the Lord teaches it through the word. The time of asking for an answer is a time of letting God know your wishes and also becomes a time of humbling yourself before the word of God.

When you pray for others, too, do not think that you have the power to heal them according to your will. Though the mother loved her daughter, the One who healed her was Jesus. As you embrace the needs of the people you love specifically and ask the Lord, you can learn both helping and entrusting.

Remember the word in which Jesus acknowledged the woman's faith. The fact that verse 28 begins with *"Then Jesus answered and said"* shows that the Lord opened the ending of this encounter. Because the One who hears our supplications and speaks is Jesus, we can rely on Him.

Do not give up asking Jesus for help on the grounds that you have nothing to put forward. Even those who humble themselves before the Lord can rely on His abundant grace; so those who believe in the gospel through which all sins have been washed away can rely on the grace they have received and honestly tell Him even today's needs.

The Psalms, too, speak of God, who knows the humbled heart. *"The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:18)*. Acknowledging our sins before the Lord is not abandoning

ourselves, but turning to the Savior who washes away sin. Looking to Jesus, who heard the woman's answer, have the faith that tells Him your needs without hiding them.

Offer the confession that the Lord is right, rather than words that raise up your own qualifications. While asking for the help you need, listen to His word to the end. Trust Jesus, who bestows grace, and tell Him even the pain of those you love. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

To receive salvation, we must first come out of the world

< Matthew 15:21–28 >

"Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.' But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us.' But He answered and said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!' But He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.' And she said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour."

Many people bow down to their ancestors who have already died and offer them devotion. If we look at it only as a courtesy to honor their ancestors, it may not be such a bad thing. But if they serve the spirits of their dead ancestors like gods and

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believe and rely on them, thinking that they look after them, that is serving idols. When things go well, they say that things went well because their ancestors helped them, and when things do not go well, they look for the reason there, saying that it is because the grave site is not good. It is not good because it has become their faith. God said, *"I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me" (Exodus 20:5).*

The woman of Canaan comes to Jesus

In today's word, the woman of Canaan and Jesus exchange words, and at the end the woman of Canaan obtains what she desired. Her daughter is healed. Jesus was performing many miracles and went into the region of Tyre and Sidon. At that time *"a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed'" (Matthew 15:22).* Saying this, she came before Jesus.

According to the word of the Bible, if we are to be saved from sin, we must come out of the world. It is impossible to remain in the world along with it and yet believe in Jesus and obtain salvation.

This woman is a woman of Canaan. When we speak of the land of Canaan, we often say that it symbolizes the kingdom of heaven, but originally Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Canaan was the place where the descendants of Ham settled and lived. Ham was not united with Noah, nor was he united with God, and in the end his son Canaan was cursed.

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The Bible records that this woman came out from that region and cried out. Can we believe in Jesus while remaining in the world? Generally, when we look at people who believe in Jesus, there are many cases in which they come before Jesus and believe only after they have gone through many difficulties in the world, such as suffering tribulations or disasters.

If we are to receive salvation, we must come out of the world, and when we hear the word, the Lord's word must come all the way into our hearts. It makes no sense to claim to believe in Jesus while one's heart is soaked in the world and is set on the riches, honor, or power of the world. It does not fit the word of the Bible at all, and it is far removed from reality. Therefore, to receive salvation, we must first come out of the world.

This woman, too, was sick and tired of things because of her demon-possessed daughter. She could not heal her herself, and although she took her to many people, her daughter was not healed, so she came before Jesus and cried out for Him to have mercy on her. This woman saw Jesus accurately.

This woman came out of the world, and she received salvation because she knew and believed Jesus to be her God and her Savior. That is why her daughter was healed as well. If you and I do not come out of the world, and if, without our thoughts coming out of the world, we stay there and drift along with the world, it is hard for us to receive salvation even if we have heard and believed the gospel.

No one can serve two kings

When we look at people who go wrong after hearing the gospel, their hearts are usually set on the world. They think, "If I were in the world, I could earn money and do well, and my

abilities could be recognized too." Dear fellow believers, the world is a world that will perish. It is a place God hates, a place where many people serve idols and many are false, and a place where Satan the devil reigns as king. If you like such a place and stay there, how can you serve two kings?

You cannot serve two kings. You must serve one King. If people remain in the world, no matter how much they hear the word, they do accept it, thinking, "How thankful I am that He removed sin," but in the end they go off to serve their own king. That is why it is hard for them to receive salvation.

Only when we come out of the world can we obtain salvation. We must know that the world is vain. We must know that honor and power are vain, and that the material world, people, and everything in the world are nothing.

Some people feel proud when a person of high position sends them a wreath. What is so great about that? When there is a death in the family and a high-ranking person sends a wreath, they feel proud, but he sent it because there was some connection; what does that matter? No matter how high and powerful a person of the world may be, that power does not last long. Before long, power falls away entirely. Even the most powerful person in a country sometimes loses power and suffers hardship. Power is nothing. People enjoy it for ten or twenty years or so, then lose it all and depart, and they cannot take it with them either. Material wealth is the same. There are many people who have much material wealth but suddenly become poor one day. So the things of the world are nothing.

The many gods that people serve cannot save us from sin, and no matter how much we pray, they cannot answer our prayers. What great thing is it to rely on such things, or to rely on power or honor? A person who enjoyed great honor

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sometimes loses everything overnight. Honor and power vanish overnight.

Health is nothing, either. Even a very healthy person can lose his health. I am not telling you to abandon the world. We do live in the world, but we must quickly realize that this world is a world that will perish in the future, and that it will never give us any benefit.

And the way for us to live is to know Jesus Christ. We must know and believe that He is the Creator, our God, and our Savior, and that He is God, the true shepherd, who gives us the kingdom of heaven and everlasting life. Only when we know and believe this way can we come to Jesus like this woman of Canaan and obtain salvation.

The Lord, who seeks the lost sheep

Although this woman cried out for her daughter to be healed, Jesus did not answer her a single word. And the word Jesus then spoke is remarkable: *"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24)*. This means that He came to this earth for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and that He did not come for the sheep that were not lost.

What does this mean? He is saying, "Do you really know that you are lost? Do you know that you are a sinner, one who is bound for hell, and one who will suffer eternal destruction if you do not believe in Me?" What happens if a sheep loses its home and loses its master? It is killed. A sheep may butt with its horns, but it has no sharp claws or fierce teeth, so it can die even if any dog attacks it, and if it meets a wolf, it becomes prey all too easily. He is asking this: "I came to this earth for the lost sheep.

Are you a lost sheep, or are you one who has made the world your home?"

Then the woman clung to Jesus again, asking Him to help her. Then Jesus said, *"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs" (Matthew 15:26)*. Because this woman was a woman of Canaan, He likened her to a dog, following the expression the Jews used at that time. At that time the Jews regarded Gentiles as dogs.

When this woman took up His words and answered, Jesus acknowledged her faith. *"And she said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour" (Matthew 15:27–28)*.

This woman was confessing as follows: "I am a dog-like person and a Gentile woman, and I truly have nothing to put forward before You, Lord. But can't even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table? Lord, please speak just one word. Please help me. I believe in You, Lord, so why do You turn away from me?" Jesus was testing this woman's faith. He was saying, "Do you truly know and believe that I am your God, your Savior, and the One who has the power to help you?" This woman truly believed. When she expressed that faith with the words that even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table, Jesus acknowledged her faith, saying that her faith was great.

We receive salvation when we return, knowing that we are lost

Dear fellow believers, it is the same with us. If you and I are

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to be saved from sin, obtain everlasting life, and go to the kingdom of God, we must be like this woman. Our ancestors ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God had told them not to eat, and sinned and were driven out of the Garden of Eden, and we, too, who were born as their descendants, are beings who deserve to be driven out from before God. Living in this world, we have lived in a culture that stands against God, and we have lived having inherited all kinds of sins, so we are people who deserve even to go to hell. When we acknowledge all of that and truly return to God, we can receive salvation.

Jesus seeks such people. When the lost return, He welcomes them, embraces them, and saves them. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had our sins transferred to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again, and so He saved us. But if people still have their names registered in the world, still like the world, see many people in the world as great, and envy them, they are still far from meeting Jesus.

No matter how much we preach the word to such people, it is hard for them to meet Jesus. They must go through a crushing failure. Only when they get into great trouble do they come to know. The woman of Canaan, too, had not come before Jesus until then, because she could endure as long as things were bearable. Then, when her daughter became completely demon-possessed and could no longer function as a person, she came before Jesus and asked for help.

It is so with those who believe, and it is so with those who believed and then left: the people of the world look so great to them. Technicians, people who earn a lot of money, people who trade stocks, people who speak well, and the presidents of companies or people in high positions all look great to them. If that is so, they still have a long way to go. They do not know

how to see, and they are still far from meeting the Lord. When we come to know it, all that is nothing, and it does not last long. Honor, riches, and the things of the world do not easily become one's own even when one chases after them; they keep running farther away. Therefore, we must come out of the world and ask the Lord for help, and we must know and believe that the Lord is the true King of kings and the true God, who made the material world and the spiritual world.

If people regard Jesus as one of the many sages of the world, it is hard for them to receive salvation, and if they think that believing in Jesus is easy, they are greatly mistaken. When we lay everything down and ask Jesus for help, we can truly receive salvation. Now you and I, too, are inside the church, and so we say that we believe and that we have been saved; but even so, if our hearts are set on the world and we envy the honor, riches, or power of the world, we can go wrong at any time.

Having been afflicted is rather to our benefit

Dear fellow believers, who is believing in Jesus and living inside the church because he is a fool? Not just anyone can believe in the Lord. The world is full of people who pretend to be smart. A truly smart person knows that the things of the world are nothing. Dear fellow believers, have you ever lost your health? Have you ever lost money? Have you ever lost your family or your honor? You must lose something. The more a person has lost of what he had, the more he can meet the Lord and recognize the Lord rightly. That is how he obtains salvation.

Dear fellow believers, have you ever suffered a crushing failure in the world? That is why the Lord led you. If you live without suffering a crushing failure in the world, comparing

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ordinary things with others and saying, "Do you live that well too? I live this well too. Did you learn that much? I learned this much too," you will not meet the Lord. The Lord said, *"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24)*. So it is a very good thing that we have gone through difficulties in the world.

Just as the psalmist said, *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted" (Psalm 119:71)*, those who have gone through such things can meet the Lord, and even after meeting Him, they can believe properly. What we have in the world can be lost in an instant. How thankful we are that the Lord has led us in this way! Dear fellow believers, have you ever fallen into despair in the world? That is the Lord calling us and leading us. When Adam and Eve sinned, the Lord said to Adam, *"Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you" (Genesis 3:18)*, and He drove them out of the Garden of Eden. Just as, when thorns spread out, one cannot push through them the way one would push through ordinary undergrowth, people seek God only when life in the world is that wearisome.

Living in the world, we have gone through difficulties, we have been in pain, there have been times when we lost everything, and there have been times when we were deeply sad. It was not that we sought God first, but because we went through such things, we were able to come to the church, meet the Lord, and believe, and we were able to pray to God, somehow asking Him to help us. The Lord called you in order to meet you. Had it not been so, you would not have met Him. Among the countless people in this world, how many have come before the Lord like the woman of Canaan and obtained salvation?

Therefore, we should not resent having nothing and having failed, but should rather be thankful. As today's word shows,

those who have failed in the world can meet the Lord. We obtain salvation only when we know and believe that the world cannot give us any benefit, and that Jesus alone is the One who gives us benefit, gives us salvation, gives us food to eat, and leads and protects our lives. We do not only receive salvation, but we also come to receive blessings from God.

The blessed life of coming out of the world and serving the Lord

We must know and believe this way. I believe this way. If we do not come out of the world, we cannot obtain salvation. If someone is still inside the church yet wants to go to the world, that person has not yet received salvation. Of the four kinds of ground, three kinds do not bear fruit. We must be the good ground. How fortunate it is that you and I have met the Lord like this and can live! We have met the Lord, and we live like this day by day and pray.

Those who have not yet suffered a crushing failure come to know only when they suffer a crushing failure in the world. Only then do they seek God. They do not seek Him because life is still bearable. They say that they believe in Jesus, but they are only pretending to believe because it is fun to keep company with the world and enjoy it; have they ever met Jesus, who came by the water and the Spirit? Such people do not even seek Jesus, who came by the water and the Spirit. When they suffer a crushing failure, they seek Him.

Those who already seek and believe in the Lord are blessed people. It says, *"Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful" (Psalm 1:1)*. Even if the people of the world

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pretend to be smart because they have much, I do not envy even a person who has a great fortune. Before long, that money will sway him around and then be scattered entirely. That we have met the Lord among these many people is the greatest fortune of all. It is truly an amazing thing.

How thankful I am! I, too, was a person like the woman of Canaan, but I met the Lord. I serve the Lord. Yet when I work very hard all day long and look back, what I have done is very small. It is truly feeble. Even so, I have lived for the Lord. I have not lived for anything else, but for the Church of God and the Lord, and for the spread of the gospel.

Even so, when it piles up day by day, it piles up and piles up over a month, six months, and a year, and forms a great mountain. That is why the word says, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field" (Matthew 13:31)*. At first it is nothing, but as time passes, it grows enormously, and many people come and rest under it and obtain salvation. I have received such a blessing. I am truly thankful and so very happy.

Dear fellow believers, how hard it must be for you to serve the Lord every day! When you think about it, there must also be many things that worry you. The souls of our family members do not turn out a certain way because of anything we do; they turn out according to the word of God. When they go through difficulties, they come to submit. We only need to entrust them to God, pray, and diligently do the work of God. When God hears our prayers, God the Father leads them to His Son Jesus Christ according to the word that says, *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44)*. Then they obtain salvation. Even when it seems it will not happen, it may happen easily.

What will come of our worrying? What will come of worrying for our children? The more children know that their parents are worrying, the more they may instead dig in their heels and hold out. Our children's lives are their own lives, and our lives are our own lives. We who already believe must follow the Lord, entrust them to the Lord, pray, believe, and wait.

Dear fellow believers, let us set everything else aside and remember just this one thing today. The woman of Canaan came out of the world and asked Jesus for help, and so she received salvation, and her daughter was healed as well. Let us apply this to ourselves. Have we come out of the world? Even though we say that we believe, aren't our hearts still in the world? If our hearts are in the world, our salvation has not been made complete.

Such people can leave the church at any time. Is the world that good?

We are lacking, but we are people who are inside the Church of God. Life inside it is sometimes hard and sometimes lonely, but we live for the Lord, though in very small ways. Living like this, we will pray, preach the gospel to people, and pray for them until we meet the Lord. We will live a blessed life and then go. I give thanks to the Lord, who has allowed us to live such a life. Let us pray together that the Lord will lead and save the souls of our remaining family members. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord healed us, who were powerless, blind, lame, and weak

< Matthew 15:29–39 >

"Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel. Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, 'I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.' Then His disciples said to Him, 'Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?' Jesus said to them, 'How many loaves do you have?' And they said, 'Seven, and a few little fish.' So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were four

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thousand men, besides women and children. And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala."

We must not trust our own thoughts

In Matthew chapter 15 the Lord spoke of many things, and broadly He spoke of four events. First, concerning people washing their hands and adorning their bodies while living a religious life, the Lord said that what defiles a person is not what goes from outside into him, but what comes out of the mouth from a person's heart. Many evil things come out of our hearts, as we were born as descendants of sinners, and first of all evil thoughts come out.

Because people's thoughts are evil, every time they speak they bring evil things out. I cannot tell you how filthy people's thoughts are. If you listen to human thoughts, you can see, "They are truly filthy."

And within that heart there is a heart of murder, that is, a heart that wants to kill. There is also a heart of adultery, a lewd heart, a heart of theft, a heart that bears false witness, and a heart of blasphemy. To bear false witness is to make oneself a witness with a lie, saying that another person did something when he did not do it.

God told Adam and Eve not to challenge God, telling them not to pick and eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but they fell for the enticement of the devil and picked and ate it. And after they ate it, they were driven out of Eden. From then on, all human beings are stained with sin and iniquity and are born with evil hearts. Because they are born with evil hearts, they think evil thoughts, do evil deeds, and speak evil

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words. Therefore, neither you nor I should trust our own thoughts.

People say, *"I will do this" (Luke 12:18)*, and think that their own thoughts are sound, fresh, and good, but people's thoughts are filthy. You must know that your own thoughts are filthy: "My thoughts are always filthy." Then how should you live without your own thoughts? If you see, hear, accept, and follow the word of God, you can live cleanly, you can receive the remission of sins, you can benefit other people, and you can live in holiness. God will do that for you.

We must not live by what comes out of the human heart. The evil things that come out of a person's heart defile that person. When people try too hard to prosper according to their own thoughts, the world is defiled instead. In this way, one's own thoughts are not right. People think many wrong thoughts and make many wrong judgments.

People often live without being able to think of the precious things of God and without being able to think of God's great and far-reaching will. So they speak wrongly and act wrongly, bringing harm and wounds to others, sometimes even killing people, and sometimes being resented. All of this is ruin that comes from bringing out what is inside their own hearts. The Lord spoke of this.

The woman of Canaan, who confessed that she was lower than a dog

Second, a woman of Canaan came out and called to Jesus. This woman threw herself flat on the ground, saying, "I am one who is lower than a dog and is bound for hell. I know that You are the Messiah, the Savior, the Son of David, the King of kings,

the Lord of lords, the Creator who created the whole universe, and the One who came to save us. I believe." By accepting who Jesus truly is in this way, this woman received salvation. The Lord is telling us that.

If we too say that we believe in the Lord while still holding on to the desires of the world, we cannot receive salvation. There are many constraints in believing in and following the Lord. Following the Lord is not that easy. Although receiving the remission of sins may seem easy, there must be this premise to it.

If we receive only the remission of sins and then say that we will live by our own stubbornness and as we please, without following the Lord, that becomes opposing the Lord. If we oppose the Lord while saying that we believe in the gospel, we must look back on whether we have truly believed. The Lord said that at the end of the age He will judge as follows: *"The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just" (Matthew 13:49)*.

Therefore, the Lord is telling us that only those who have completely come out of the world and are wholly united with the Lord, like the woman of Canaan, receive salvation.

The Lord, who healed the sicknesses of the great multitude

The third is the word we read today. After meeting the woman of Canaan, Jesus left that place and went to the Sea of Galilee. The people of Israel call Galilee both a sea and a lake. Jesus went there, and a great multitude had brought many sick people and was waiting for Him in advance. Perhaps they had heard the news that Jesus was coming across to this side, for they

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had brought many sick people such as the lame, the mute, the maimed, and the blind, and were waiting for Jesus. Jesus healed them all. He spoke and touched them and healed them all. So they were set free from their sicknesses and went back glorifying God. This is the third event. The fourth event is the miracle of feeding four thousand people with seven loaves, but first I want to speak about the third event.

The Bible says, *"So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel" (Matthew 15:31)*. In this way Jesus healed the sick. But after I believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, there was something I wondered about a little. There were times when I had this question: "I certainly believe in the Lord, so why does the Lord not do such things? When our saints are sick and I pray for them, their sicknesses should be healed, so why does He not do so?" After all, healing sickness is not something I do, and it is not that I do not believe in the Lord. So I thought about it. Jesus' disciples also did such things, and so did Paul and Peter. Dear fellow believers, just think about it.

If all sicknesses were healed when we born-again people prayed for people and touched them, would there be order in this world? Would doctors be needed? God has what is called God's providence. People seek God only when they fall ill and suffer. Of course, even in Jesus' time, the Lord did not heal every person of that age. If God answered everything we prayed for and healed everything, the order of this world would also be broken. But this is not the part I want to speak about. Jesus healed the mute, healed the lame, made the maimed whole, and made the blind see. Jesus did this for the people of that time, and the point is what He has done for you and me.

The Lord healed our powerlessness

When we come to know it, you and I are also mute. You and I are also maimed. Our hearts are earnest, but there is much that we cannot do. And we are blind. There is much that we see and yet do not see. It says that the Lord healed the lame, and when I look at this word, I think, "That is truly so. The Lord did not heal only these people, but He healed us too." It means that the Lord has healed you and me as well. "Ah, so this is what this word means. He healed the people of that time too, but He has bestowed the same grace on us." Dear fellow believers, after being born again, have you not experienced many amazing things while serving the Lord? Are you not now doing things that you could never have done in the past? Do you not now see and understand things that you could not see in the past?

It is not that we had talents from the beginning and so see the things of God, see what is in people's hearts, and heal it. All the abilities we have now are what the Lord made for us by healing us in this way. Our brothers are doing many kinds of work while serving the gospel. It may seem that they are doing it simply because they happened to start doing it, but when you come to know it, that is not so. They were not people who were good at this kind of work from the beginning. Because we believed in the gospel, God gave us ability and made us able to do it, made us see with our eyes, and made us able to heal. It means that God has given you and me such talents. Taking on the challenge of work one has never done even once is something a person who has not been born again cannot even dream of. It means that the Lord has healed me.

The Lord has healed all the shortcomings and sickness within me, that is, my being lame, blind, and a mute who cannot even speak. Just as He healed those people, today He has touched and

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healed all of you and me, who have received the remission of sins. So when we are entrusted with work needed in the Church of God, we can do it. Even if it is work we have never done once, when we are entrusted with it, if we say, "Yes," and obey and do it, try to do it while learning in union, and accept it by faith and do it, the work gets done. God makes it happen. We can see, "The Lord did not heal only the sick of Jesus' time, but He has healed you and me, who live today. He has healed the parts that are lacking in you and me." I believe so.

Even in my own eyes, it is true that I have a daring spirit, but with the daring of the flesh I can do nothing. I would only talk big for nothing. But after meeting the Lord, even for work I have never done once, work that even large companies do not easily jump into, if the Lord has me do it, a heart arises that says, "What is so hard about that? I just have to do it." Just as God made all things in heaven and earth, the Holy Spirit is within us, the righteous, so we have a heart that says, "Something like that, I just have to do it. What is there that I cannot do?" Even something that another person has mastered over twenty years, once we begin to learn it, God gives us wisdom and enables us to do it. It is not that we can do well in a few hours or a few days what a person cannot acquire even by devoting a whole lifetime, but we have the faith that we can do it. And there is power in our hearts: "I just have to do it, something like this." It means that God has healed our powerlessness.

The Lord healed all the functions we had lost because of sin and all our diseases, and restored our ability. Because the Lord healed the sick in this word, it is easy to think that He will heal sicknesses in this age too if we pray, but God does not heal everything in that way. If He healed every sickness just as we pray, God's providence and plan would be broken.

In this age God has healed us and healed all our powerlessness too, and has given us ability so that we can do things if only we unite our hearts with the Lord and make up our minds to do them. It means that He has healed us. It says that the lame walked and the maimed were made whole; what is a maimed person? It is a person with a disease that cannot be completely healed. Dear fellow believers, can we live for others all our lives? People cannot help but live only for themselves all their lives, but our hearts have changed so that we are people who can live for others. This is God's healing of the maimed. God has healed a disease that could never be healed for all eternity.

We, who have become new

The Lord has healed your hearts and mine too. Yet even after receiving the remission of sins, there are times when we say, "I can do this, but I cannot do that." If something does not go well while you are doing some work, pray to God: "God, I am not good at this. Please give me ability. Did You not heal the sick long ago? Did You not heal all of them, the maimed, the mute, the blind, and the lame? I have only one body, but I have many sicknesses of the heart. I am lame, mute, blind, and maimed. I have many sicknesses I was born with and many traits of character inherited from my ancestors. Please heal these too." The Lord has healed all of that. If you accept it by faith, you have been healed of everything, and you can live anew.

The Bible says, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17)*. We have become new. After meeting the Lord, I came to hold this heart: "If the Lord

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needs it, I can do anything. If the Lord wants it, I can do anything."

You must believe the fact that the Lord has healed you and me. He has healed you, and He has healed me. That is why you and I are now doing the Lord's amazing work. If this is entrusted to us, we do this too, and if that is entrusted to us, we do that too; although we are only a few people, we do all kinds of work. It is not easy work. God healed our sickness of powerlessness and made us people who are able to do it. It means that He has healed our sickness. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? If you look with faith, you can do everything.

If people hear the word of the gospel that we preach, they receive the remission of sins, and their sins are removed. It is because people do not recognize us and are hostile to us, and because they cannot get out of the world, that they bear their own sins and go to hell; but if they truly want to receive the remission of sins and come to us, nothing is as easy as that. Their sins are removed. The Lord said, *"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:23)*. You and I are guides on the way to the kingdom of heaven. If people do not listen to the words of the righteous, they cannot go to the kingdom of heaven. That is why Jesus said to Peter, *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:19)*. It means that if Peter opens, it is opened, and if he shuts, it is shut.

It means that He has given this authority, which He gave to Peter, to you and me today as well. He did not give it to the religious leaders of the world. This means that He has given it to those who have come out of the world and believe in the Lord as our Savior, that is, to those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? Is it not amazing? It is something to be so very thankful for.

The miracle of feeding four thousand people with seven loaves

The fourth event is the miracle of feeding four thousand people with seven loaves. The Lord works without change. He healed the sick and sent them back home, but some people had followed the Lord around for as long as three days. And when He was about to send them home, they had nothing to eat. The multitude was very glad to see the wonders and miracles, but Jesus was worried that if He sent them back, they would collapse on the way. When we look at the word, it says, *"Jesus said to them, 'How many loaves do you have?' And they said, 'Seven, and a few little fish'" (Matthew 15:34)*.

What the disciples had was a few little fish the size of a finger, salted and brought along, and seven loaves that would fit into a single lunch box. Jesus had them bring these and gave thanks. Then the same things kept coming out. And He told the disciples to distribute these, but first He had the whole multitude sit down on the ground. Dear fellow believers, if you want to taste the Lord's work, you must not be proud. When there are many people and food is distributed, by mob psychology they rise up like a swarm of bees and rush forward, each trying to receive it first. That is why Jesus had the whole multitude sit down on the ground, and the disciples received the food and distributed it in order. It was just like distributing the wine at the Lord's Supper. It means that the Lord gave them food in that way.

When Jesus blessed food that was no more than a single lunch box, these people all ate, and the word says, *"Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children" (Matthew 15:38)*. If women and men were one to one, there would have been nearly ten thousand. Even after this many people ate, food was left over. The Lord performed such

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miracles not just once or twice. Then did the Lord perform them at that time and does He not perform them now? Did the work of blessing end with that? The Lord is not saying so.

The Lord told His disciples to break the food and distribute it, and the multitude all ate, and there was still some left over. And the Lord got into the boat and went to the region of Magdala. The Lord works. Through what does He work? He works through the church and through the bread of life. He says to distribute the bread of salvation to all mankind. And He makes that possible. Now the Lord has entrusted us with preaching the gospel to the whole world, and we can handle all of this. The Lord blessed seven loaves and a few little fish, distributed them to this many people, and let them eat and live, and this is a word spoken about us. Through the Church of God, where those who have become saints and workers by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are gathered, that is, through these people, He says, "You distribute food," and He has made us people who distribute the bread of life to all mankind. It means that He has made you and me such people. It is truly amazing.

I am a person who says that large numbers are not good. People may think, "That man says something different. To preach the gospel to the whole world, there must be large numbers, so how can he say that there should be few?" But if there are many people who are not prepared, the work becomes harder instead. It is enough for pure workers who have been chosen and chosen again to come forth as a small number. Through them we can do the work throughout the whole world.

God wants to do it that way. That is why I sometimes think the exact opposite of what people think. While preaching the gospel, I think, "At this rate, many people will come. Then what shall I do?" If we strove only to draw in many people, we might be able to gather a great multitude, but then we would be busy

managing that many people and could not carry out overseas missions and the literature ministry. When the shell grows large, the inside becomes poor, and when the inside is rich, the shell becomes meager.

Matthew chapter 15 is speaking of this. It is telling us that the blessings, wonders, and miracles that happened here were all His blessing us, that He has blessed you and me in this way today. I believe this. I believe that through us the gospel can be preached to the whole world. Even though we look few now, I believe that the Lord will work so that the gospel will be made known and spread to the whole world. I look at it with the eyes of faith. Because I look at it, I do it. Because I believe, I speak. It means that God has blessed us in this way.

The Lord healed our sickness of sin

Today we have seen that the Lord healed the sick, that is, that He healed the sickness in your hearts and mine. The Lord also healed the sickness of sin. If we have sin, are we not spiritually maimed? If we have sin, we are spiritually maimed and go to hell. A maimed person cannot use his body as he wishes. In the old days people became so when they had arthritis or injured their knees. There were people who injured their knees and stayed only in a room for the rest of their lives until they passed away. Such a person is called maimed. Being maimed is when the body does not function properly. We too are maimed in many ways. We had the sickness of sin. We had sin.

We could not help but commit sin. We commit sin even just by breathing. We commit sin with our eyes and commit sin with our actions, and that is not healed. But the Lord came to this earth, had your sins and mine transferred onto His body through

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the baptism He received from John, bore those sins and was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, rose again from death, and healed us. He healed our being maimed. He healed all of them, the lame, the crippled, and the blind.

The Lord enables us to see even what we cannot see, and He gives us ability and enables us to do even the work we cannot do for lack of ability. Dear fellow believers, do you not experience such things? God has you and me do the work of God through us, and has us see. In worldly terms it seems very difficult, but to us something like that looks like nothing at all. It means that we can make even the impossible possible as much as we like. Even if people say this and that, it is fully possible.

Now we are seeing with the eyes of our hearts all the things that cannot be seen with the eyes of the flesh. We see all of it. God has enabled us to see. When we look at people, we come to know, "That person too can receive the remission of sins." The apostle Paul and Peter too, while looking at people, could see, "This person will be saved. This person has faith. He has something he relies on." We too can see.

People, no matter what country they are from, are all spiritually blind before God. The spiritually blind gather together and, as if tapping with a cane, say, "I know there is a ditch. There is a ditch around here. Water flows. Here the ground sinks in, so you have to plant your cane firmly right here and leap and fly about one meter. Only then will you not fall into the pit." A person with experience is talking about that. So he always boasts that he himself has not fallen into the pit, and he leads others: "There is a pit here, so you must plant your cane firmly and jump." If we show the true way to such people, they too will receive the remission of sins.

It means that the Lord has cured the powerlessness of our hearts. So He has given us ability and given us blessings so that

we can work for the Lord. If you believe in the Lord, He does that for you.

Ask for wisdom and understanding

We must know this. If, knowing that, you realize, "God has given me ability, but there is still something I have not received," you only need to ask. The Bible says, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5)*. If you have no wisdom and no understanding, you only need to ask.

Some people have no wisdom, so when they try to do some work, they just try to do it no matter what. That is having no wisdom. "How shall I accomplish this? What should I do to do this? How should I set the order? Through what process shall I accomplish it?" A wise person thinks in this way and does things step by step from the beginning. Then in a little while all the work gets done. If you do work backwards, trying to do it all at once, the work does not get done. If you do it step by step, all the work gets done. That is wisdom.

"God, I have no wisdom. I want You to give me the wisdom that the Lord has. Lord, give me wisdom, and since I do not seem to have understanding, give me understanding. Give me wisdom and understanding so that when I hear one thing, I learn that one thing properly, and when I learn one thing, I can apply it to ten." If you pray like this, believe, rely on Him, and wait, you will see and experience the Lord giving you wisdom and understanding before you know it and enabling you to do the work entrusted to you. Dear fellow believers, that is how it is.

It means that God has healed you and me. It means that He has healed your diseases and mine, healed our powerlessness,

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removed your sins and mine, removed the curse, and given us blessings. So after believing in the Lord, there are people who say, "I am someone who could never do this, but it works." Our brothers and sisters say so because God has healed them. God has changed us. We are not who we used to be. Dear fellow believers, I hope that you will believe. It is truly amazing.

The things Jesus did when He came to this earth are things He did for you and me. His healing the sick, His giving the remission of sins, His making us children of God, His making us workers, His giving us blessings—all of these are blessings He has bestowed on each one of our saints and on our coworkers throughout the world, that is, on all of us. How thankful we are! That is why I do not worry much.

In the world there are also people who serve their own gods and never accept the gospel. Just as the Lord said, *"Nor cast your pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6)*, those whose hearts are not prepared do not receive the gospel. But people who have suffered failure and been broken can be changed. People who live ordinary lives are not easily changed. So in a sense, suffering disasters and difficulties while living in the world may be an opportunity to receive blessings. It can be an opportunity.

So now many people in many countries of the world are hearing the gospel and receiving the remission of sins, and even in places near us such people are appearing here and there. I cannot tell you how amazing this is.

We give thanks to the Lord, who has given us blessings. We give thanks to the Lord, who has changed our destiny and healed our being maimed, our being blind, our being lame, and our weakness. Let us follow the Lord well with faith in the Lord. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Devote all your passion to the work of spreading the gospel

< Matthew 15:32–39 >

"Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, 'I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.' Then His disciples said to Him, 'Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?' Jesus said to them, 'How many loaves do you have?' And they said, 'Seven, and a few little fish.' So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala."

Earlier we saw the word about the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, and here too there is a similar word. At that time, five thousand were fed and what was left over was twelve

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baskets, and here four thousand ate and the fragments left over were seven large baskets. The two miracles happened at different times, but the heart of the Lord, who has compassion on the hungry multitude, is the same.

The Lord sympathizes with our weaknesses

The Lord knows all the weaknesses of human beings. Because He is the One who knew all the weaknesses of human beings and sympathized with them, we can know that He is the God who answers us when we pray. The Lord said as follows: *"They have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way" (Matthew 15:32)*.

This means that since the multitude had been with the Lord for as many as three days, each of them now had to go back, but He was concerned that on the way back they would be so hungry that they would collapse on the road. So when the Lord was about to give them something to eat, to the disciples it was something that made no sense: where in this wilderness could they get enough bread to fill so many people? Then the Lord asked, *"How many loaves do you have?" (Matthew 15:34)* and the disciples answered that they had seven loaves and a few little fish.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were all written by Jesus' disciples and by people who heard the gospel from them. The four Gospels all preach Jesus alike, but they differ in the angle from which they looked at Him. Just as, even though the sun shines alike, seeing it from the east is different from seeing it from the north or the south, so, while they preach the same works

of Jesus, what each of them felt is different. That is why there are four Gospels, and that is beneficial.

Someone may ask whether they are not wrong, since this one says it this way and that one says it that way, but if you gather them all and compare them, they are all the same. It is just that the angle from which they looked and recorded is different. The people who recorded the four Gospels in this way are truly remarkable and worthy of respect.

Jesus' disciples worried about where they could get enough bread to fill so many people. When Jesus asked how many loaves they had, they said they had seven loaves and a few little fish. As for the loaves, there were seven small ones, about the size that would go into a lunch box, and there were two salted fish as a side dish. It was about enough for eating one loaf and nibbling a little of the salty fish. The Gospel of John says that when He fed the five thousand, a child put the five barley loaves and two fish that he had before Jesus.

Jesus is our God, our Savior, and the Creator, yet He sympathized with the weaknesses of us human beings. Because the Lord also had a human body, He knew that the human body is weak, and saying that He could not send them away hungry, He performed a miracle in this way. The Lord is truly the almighty God. So we can know that when there is a problem, He exercises His power with a heart that feels sorry for human beings and solves it.

"And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left" (Matthew 15:36–37). As I read this word, what I wondered about most was this: since it says that, besides women and children, four thousand men alone ate, then counting the women and

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children too, He would have had to feed far more people, so how much must have been piled up for Him to feed so many people? There would have had to be enough bread to fill a large room. Did it multiply all at once and pile up the moment He gave thanks? So I look at this word closely.

The word says that He broke them and gave them to the disciples. It means that He gave thanks for the packed lunch, and however much it had multiplied, He broke it and gave it. It means that it did indeed multiply. So it means that as He broke it and gave it here, it kept on multiplying. It means that He broke it from among a great amount and gave it, and broke it again and gave it.

The thing to be most thankful for is that because the Lord also lived on this earth with a body of flesh, He knows our weaknesses. That He sympathized means that because the Lord also had a body of flesh, He felt hunger and felt hardship, and as He lived for thirty-three years on this earth, He felt that the body is weak. That is why He gave thanks for the seven loaves and two fish, worked a miracle, fed them, and sent them back.

Come to the Lord with your weaknesses and pray

As we live on this earth, there are times when we are weak in body and times when we are weak in heart. At such times our hearts are so dark and so discouraged that there are times when we think that our lives must now be ending with this.

But even though we are weak and lacking, because the Lord is the One who knows our weaknesses, we can know that if we come before the Lord with our weaknesses and ask for help, He hears our prayers and answers them. The Lord is living even now and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. And He said

to His disciples as follows: *"Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24)*. He was saying that until then they had asked the LORD God for help, but from then on, whatever they asked in His name, He would answer.

That is why, when we pray before a meal or lead in prayer on behalf of others, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ at the end. It is because He said that from now on, if we pray in His name, He will answer. So if we come to Him with our problems and pray, we can know that He is the Lord who answers in one way or another—whether He hears us in this way or helps us in that way, or, if not answering the prayer is what helps us, even by doing that.

Through this word, we know that the Lord is the One who sympathized with our weaknesses. When we are hungry, it is really hard. The Lord fasted for forty days, but we human beings soon faint if we cannot eat. Our hearts are put at ease by the fact that the Lord is the God who sympathized with the weaknesses of us human beings. That is why we can pray, and we believe that the Lord, who knows our weaknesses, will hear our prayers and answer them.

Before God the Father sent Jesus Christ to this earth and completed the work of saving us from sin, He Himself heard prayers and answered them. But after Jesus came, removed our sins, rose again from death, and ascended into heaven, when we pray in the name of Jesus, Jesus also hears our prayers and answers them. That is why we feel great closeness and gratitude for the fact that He is our God and our Savior, and that He personally went through the weaknesses of human beings and sympathized with them.

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The reason the Lord sent the multitude away in different directions

Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And Jesus sent the multitude away dispersed, got into the boat, and went to the region of Magdala. Why did Jesus not send those who had eaten the bread to one place but send them away dispersed? What did they do after they went back?

They would have preached this: when they were hungry, Jesus blessed one packed lunch, made it multiply greatly, and distributed it all, and what was left after eating was seven large baskets. It means that they preached this: Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of mankind, and our shepherd; our Savior has come to this earth, and Jesus is the very Messiah. To put it simply, they preached the gospel.

That He sent them away dispersed means that the Lord does not want us to preach the gospel in only one place, but sends us all out, dispersing us. The literature ministry we do is also directed at the whole world. It is not that only the people in one place get the opportunity to obtain salvation; rather, all people in the whole world hear the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit through e-books and printed books right where they are and receive salvation.

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you"

Let us look at the word of Acts. *"Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put*

in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth'" (Acts 1:6–8).

When the Lord died, rose again, and appeared to His disciples before ascending into heaven, the disciples asked whether now was the time He would restore the kingdom of Israel. In the eyes of the disciples, Jesus was One entirely different from us human beings: He raised the dead, healed the sick, and when a multitude of thousands had nothing to eat, He gave thanks and immediately gave them food. He was the One who, when there was nothing to eat, solved that problem by His own power. They had seen that, and they had even seen Jesus die and rise again, so what the disciples now hoped for came down to this: had the time come for the nation of Israel to become independent, and would the Lord do that work? You and I would have been the same. For at that time Israel was under the rule of Rome.

Now that the Lord had died and come back to life, He was One who would come back to life again even if someone killed Him, so who would dare to stand against the Lord? So they asked whether it was now the time to set the nation of Israel free from the bondage of Rome and from a life of slavery. We must understand this word in that way.

Anyone who was an Israelite would have wanted independence. Being bound to another nation is the same as having become slaves. The disciples' wish was also to be set free from Rome, and they asked this question thinking that for the Lord it was entirely possible, but the Lord said something entirely different.

He means that neither the restoring of the nation nor the Lord's coming again is for them to know. He means that all of

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that is the work the Father does. So He means that, rather, when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, they are to receive power, go to the end of the earth, and be His witnesses.

The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon Jesus' disciples. When we receive the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts. But according to the word of Acts, it was on the day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus' disciples together.

It means that when the Holy Spirit comes into the heart, a person receives power and can go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the earth and become a witness. First is Jerusalem. Who is in Jerusalem? There are many Pharisees and scribes. They tried to seize those who believed in Jesus, lock them up, and kill them. Even so, it means that when the power of the Holy Spirit comes, a person can become a witness.

It is enough just to preach the gospel

When we preach the gospel to someone, if we think of our own ability, wondering what we should do since we are not good with words, we have no confidence. Dear fellow believers, it is not because we speak well that the other person receives the remission of sins. We just need to preach that gospel: Jesus came to this earth, had the sin of mankind transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, rose again, and became our Savior.

Even if we preach it stammering, as long as we just preach it, the one who hears understands, saying, "Ah, so that is how it was," believes, and receives the remission of sins. But when we preach the gospel, we do not think that way; instead, we agonize

over what words we should start with when we are not even good with words.

That is why I gave a title to each chapter, one by one, in the book titled "Have You Truly Been Born Again of Water and the Spirit?" and put the sermons in it in order. First I talked about the sins of man, then about denominations, and about how those like the Pharisees and scribes cannot give us salvation; third, about the law; then about John the Baptist; and then about how Jesus had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. I laid them out step by step as sermon titles.

Dear fellow believers, I did not write that book as I pleased. When people read that book, they come to realize, "Ah, I cannot speak as well as this pastor, but if I just summarize this content as much as possible and preach it, the other person believes and receives salvation." This is the spread of the gospel. The Lord said to be His witnesses. Peter, a disciple of Jesus, was also an uneducated man. Would Jesus' disciples such as John, Andrew, and Philip have received the highest learning at the feet of Gamaliel, as the apostle Paul did? Yet they became the Lord's witnesses, and the gospel they preached was contained in the New Testament, which was written in Greek.

Dear fellow believers, the gospel is spread to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the earth. First, it started from Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the place that persecuted Jesus the most. When Jesus went up to Jerusalem at the Passover, people were whispering among themselves, had set a trap, and were waiting.

Their plan was that when Jesus came up, they would surely arrest Him, hand Him over to the Roman soldiers, and have Him crucified. The charge was that He had called Himself a king. The king of Rome was Caesar, yet in a nation belonging to Rome He called Himself a king, so it was treason, and Jesus would be its ringleader.

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If one is accused on such a charge, it means death. For anyone who challenged Rome was put to death. So they made such a plan, drove Him into a corner, and in the end accomplished what they wanted. They caused Jesus to be crucified. How the nations of the world are run is not for us to know. We just need to preach the gospel while doing work like the flower-calyx that holds up the gospel, that is, the work that supports the work of the gospel. We just need to preach the gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the earth.

We preach the gospel to the whole world through literature

Let us look at the word of Acts. *"And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.' Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:40–42).*

When they received the Holy Spirit and began to preach the gospel, the number of disciples increased by as many as three thousand. The gospel was preached once and three thousand people were added—isn't that remarkable? How many people do we preach the gospel to in a day? We cannot know the exact number, but the gospel is being spread to the whole world in various forms. However, those who receive salvation will probably not be that many. It is because false people have sown many seeds of falsehood.

What we must do is devote all our strength to the work of spreading the gospel. Why do we do the flower-calyx work? It

is not to pile up riches and live in grand style. We prepare this and that in order to use it for the gospel, to supply basic food and necessary things so that the people who live for the gospel will lack nothing. What is the purpose? It is to preach the gospel. It is the literature ministry that makes the flower of the gospel bloom.

When we help others, too, we think it is good to distribute bread for the flesh, but that alone is of no eternal use. What did Hebrews say? It said, *"It is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods" (Hebrews 13:9)*. It means that it is right for our hearts to be enriched by the grace of God, by the gift that comes through the word of God, by accepting that word by faith and receiving many of God's gifts, and that it should not be done with material things. Material things are nothing. Dear fellow believers, if you give material things and then stop giving, you are complained about instead. That is why the Church of God cannot give life to people merely by distributing meals or clothes to them. The Church of God seeks to make booklets containing the gospel and distribute them. That is why the Lord says, *"Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life" (John 6:27)*.

The more you do the literature ministry, the better it is. When I preach a sermon once, not many people hear it directly. But if that sermon is made into a book and translated into the languages of many countries, this person and that person read it, hear it, feel it, and receive the remission of sins, and they also go out and preach the gospel. The work keeps taking place without ceasing. How thankful that is!

When I diligently preach the gospel by mouth, in order to preach it properly to one person, I have to talk for at least three hours, even if I do it quickly. One might wonder how the listener could listen for three hours, but the listener says that it feels as

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if he has listened for only five minutes, and already three hours have passed. In the old days there were many people who asked whether this much time had really passed when it seemed like only thirty minutes. The one who preaches the word and the one who hears it alike are completely captivated, and the remission of sins is received.

But as I preached only by mouth, it was hard for my body to cope, and I wondered whether I could become such a witness by doing it this way, when the Lord had said to go to the end of the earth and be witnesses of the gospel. So I thought that I must preach this gospel through literature. I had all my sermons recorded, had them typed, refined them into written form, and preached the gospel. It happened that way because God gave wisdom; it is not that just anyone can do the literature ministry.

There was no need to do the literature ministry in a difficult way. Since the Holy Spirit is in me, when I look at the Bible I come to understand it, and when I preach the word, I speak through the Holy Spirit, not only with the human head. When the sermons are typed, what should be put in is put in and what should be taken out, such as jokes, is taken out, and written material is made, then a work takes place in which people read one book, receive the remission of sins, and become workers of God. I am thankful.

Jesus, who is God, fed four thousand men, besides women and children, with seven loaves and a few little fish. Now our numbers are small, but since we offer ourselves to the Lord in doing the flower-calyx work for the spread of the gospel, this word tells us that the Lord blesses this work we do so that all people in the whole world eat the food of life and receive salvation, with still more left over. How remarkable that is!

Do the work entrusted to you thoroughly and serve as a witness

Even those who have received salvation grow only when they eat spiritual food. Just as a child does not grow by itself simply because it has been born from its mother's womb, so it is spiritually as well. Those who have been saved must learn how to be united with the church, enter into its order, and offer themselves to the flower-calyx work of the gospel. When we do so, the Holy Spirit is pleased, and God fills what we need and works, so that the will of God is accomplished.

When those who have gone ahead preach about these things and put them out in written form, those who come behind come to realize, "Ah, it is not by our doing something, but God does it this way. If we too, like the Church of God that went ahead of us, go out with the literature, distribute it, and preach the gospel, God establishes churches and works." So even though no one told them to, in many countries too, they are doing exactly what the church ahead of them did.

You are busy too, aren't you? Since I met the Lord, I too have never been as busy as this. Even so, I am living with the mind that I must do the work entrusted to me thoroughly.

Let us do the work entrusted to us. Let us do the work of preaching the gospel to the whole world. It means to be witnesses of the gospel to Jerusalem, Samaria, and the end of the earth. We must serve as witnesses. Through the flower-calyx work and the literature ministry, we must serve as witnesses that the Lord has saved us in this way through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. So how thankful we are! You and I must do it thoroughly.

God wants to do this work through me and through you. It means: how the world goes is not for you to know, so devote

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yourselves to preaching the gospel; devote yourselves to preaching the gospel through literature. That is, even if we cannot do everything well, let us at least preach this gospel well. And I wish for God to bless us so that we lack nothing in doing this work, and I believe that He will do so. ✉

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CHAPTER

16

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Remember the Lord, who fed us

< Matthew 16:5–12 >

“Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘It is because we have taken no bread.’ But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, ‘O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’ Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

The forgotten bread and the warning that was heard

There are times when, even after hearing the same word, we take its meaning wrongly depending on what we are worried about at the moment. For when the problem weighing on our

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hearts is great, every other word, too, sounds as if it were about that problem. In today's passage the disciples heard Jesus' warning but were gripped by the thought that they had forgotten something to eat, and Jesus revealed their thoughts and made them remember what He had already bestowed.

The passage begins with *"Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread" (Matthew 16:5)*. There was something the disciples who were going to the other side had actually failed to prepare, namely bread. Because the passage tells us this fact first, we can know where the disciples' discussion that comes later began, and we see that a small omission in daily life affected even the hearts with which they heard the word.

At that time Jesus said, *"Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6)*. The Lord's concern was with what teaching the disciples would accept. The people who had earlier tested Jesus by demanding a sign appear again in this warning, so the disciples, who had left them, also had to be on guard against their teaching.

Jesus and the disciples were together, but what He was saying and what the disciples were thinking were different from each other. Jesus spoke of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, but the disciples thought of bread to eat; so this is a scene in which we must first learn to hear correctly what the word is about. The more familiar a word sounds, the more we must receive it by following the Lord's explanation.

At the beginning of the warning are the words *"Take heed."* Jesus made the disciples pay attention to their hearing and accepting. Just because one goes about with the Lord does not mean that one automatically discerns all teachings; those who hear the word, too, have the responsibility to examine and be careful.

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Dear fellow believers, the passage teaches us, too, how to be ready to hear. When we have worries in life, even while we lay those worries before the Lord, we need to hear the meaning of the word itself. Distinguish between what is urgent for you today and what Jesus is telling you now. For it is easy to draw a conclusion that fits a familiar problem before we have heard all of the Lord's teaching.

The discussion that continued amid anxiety

Let us look at the disciples' response. *"And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'It is because we have taken no bread'" (Matthew 16:7).* They talked among themselves, but they could not work out what Jesus had warned them about. On hearing about leaven, they recalled that they had forgotten bread.

When several people speak of the same worry, that thought can feel all the more right. But what is needed to understand the word is not adding to one another's guesses, but confirming the meaning intended by the One who spoke. Jesus explains later where the disciples' thinking went astray, so we need only follow the flow of the passage until that explanation comes.

The disciples' words *"It is because we have taken no bread"* are words in which they put the blame for having forgotten to prepare on themselves. But thinking about what they had done wrong and understanding Jesus' warning were two different matters, so although they admitted that they had forgotten the bread, they did not yet grasp the meaning of the word about leaven.

Jesus knew of that discussion. Verse 8 begins with *"But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them,"* so even the words the disciples exchanged among themselves came within the Lord's

teaching. The Lord revealed and corrected the thoughts they were holding in their hearts.

So when we read this scene, we come to turn our eyes to Jesus, who teaches them again, rather than to the disciples, who misunderstand. The Lord did not end with a single word of warning; He responded to their discussion, asked them about what they should remember, and made clear again the meaning of the word.

When we discuss things with one another, we too must confirm our understanding of the word together. If a conversation ends with speaking of our own experiences and difficulties, it is easy to return to the worries we first held, so we need conversations in which we examine together what Jesus did and what He said. When, in the place where we share our circumstances, we also hear the Lord's teaching together, our thoughts are set right.

The question directed to those of little faith

Jesus asked, *"O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?" (Matthew 16:8)*. He pointed out the disciples' discussion, which was bound up in the lack of bread. Before the disciples was the One who had already fed many people, yet, because they were thinking only of what they now lacked, they did not trust Jesus, who was with them.

Then He asks, "*Do you not yet understand?" (Matthew 16:9)*. The disciples were not people who were meeting Jesus for the first time; they were people who had received the bread that came from His hands and distributed it to the multitude. So they had to connect what they had experienced with their faith now.

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In the same scene in the Gospel of Mark, there is the question *"Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?" (Mark 8:18)*. What we have seen and heard must lead to remembrance and understanding; the mere fact that we have gone through an event does not make the discernment of faith grow. Only when we keep in our hearts what kind of One Jesus' deeds revealed can we hear today's word rightly, too. Jesus' question lets the disciples know that there was still something left for them to remember. The Lord did not leave them standing empty-handed and tell them to come up with an answer on their own; rather, He made them think again about what they had experienced together.

In Mark, Jesus also says, *"Do you not yet perceive nor understand?" (Mark 8:17)*. It is a word that reveals their present state, in which they still needed to keep being taught, so the disciples who heard that rebuke had to admit that their thinking had fallen short. Correcting our own judgment before the word of the Lord is the beginning of learning.

Dear fellow believers, even when you hear the rebuke that your faith is little, keep listening to the word. If you admit the shortcomings the Lord points out, you can see the grounds He teaches you. A heart that always insists it has understood correctly loses its place to learn, so even the word that lets us know our thinking has gone astray is the grace of the Lord, who cares for the saints.

The memory of the day when five thousand ate

Jesus first asks about *"the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up" (Matthew 16:9)*. He made them recall together the number of people who were fed and the

baskets of leftover bread. Remembering only the lack of that time keeps one bound by lack now as well, but remembering how Jesus dealt with that lack changes one's thinking.

On that day the disciples said, *"We have here only five loaves and two fish" (Matthew 14:17)*. They laid before Jesus the fact that what they had was little. So the disciples who, in today's passage, are discussing the fact that they forgot bread had stood before a shortage of food then as well, and in that very situation they saw Jesus' power.

Jesus said, *"Bring them here to Me" (Matthew 14:18)*, and had the disciples bring the little they had to the Lord. Then He made the multitude sit down, broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples; so the disciples took part in the place where that work was accomplished, distributing to the people what the Lord gave.

The result was clear. *"So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained" (Matthew 14:20)*. We must remember together the beginning, when there was little to eat, and the result, when they ate their fill. Jesus' work was not a rumor they had heard from afar but something they themselves had received, distributed, and gathered up.

In Mark, when asked how many baskets were left over, the disciples answer, *"Twelve" (Mark 8:19)*. They remembered the result, so what Jesus was now asking of them was to accept by faith the fact that they knew. Going further than answering the exact number with their mouths, they had to trust the One who had done that work.

We too can leave the facts we have learned from the Lord as a story that has nothing to do with today's worries. Even while knowing and explaining the events of the Bible, when lack arises in our lives, it is easy to forget those facts. Jesus' feeding of the multitude shows His power and care, so saints who remember

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that word can hear the Lord's teaching even in circumstances of immediate lack.

The four thousand and the seven large baskets

Jesus also asks about what happened on another day. *"Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?" (Matthew 16:10)*. He spoke of feeding five thousand with five loaves and feeding four thousand with seven loaves as distinct events. What the disciples had to remember was not a single astonishing moment, for the Lord had once again cared for the needs of the multitude.

Before feeding the four thousand, Jesus said, *"I have compassion on the multitude" (Matthew 15:32)*. It was Jesus who took notice of their hunger, so the disciples, who were thinking only of the lack of bread, also had to remember the heart of the Lord, who had already known people's hunger and cared for them.

At that time, too, the disciples asked where they could get enough food in the wilderness to feed so many people, and after Jesus asked them how much bread they had, He had the loaves they possessed broken and distributed. When the two events are remembered together, what Jesus did between little food and a great multitude becomes vivid, so there was no reason for them to misunderstand His word with the thought that they now had no bread.

The record of that day says, *"So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left" (Matthew 15:37)*. Even after everyone had eaten, there was some left over, so the large baskets Jesus asked about

were meant to make them think again about the care they themselves had experienced.

In Mark, when asked how much was taken up after feeding the four thousand, the disciples answer, *"Seven" (Mark 8:20)*. They clearly knew of the twelve baskets in the earlier event and the seven large baskets in this event. As they speak before the Lord the facts that remained in their memory, they come to look back on the discussion they themselves had been having.

In preparing bread there was a responsibility that the disciples were to fulfill. However, Jesus pointed out that the disciples, who had experienced His care, did not understand the word because of bread. We too need both the responsibility to look after our lives and the faith that trusts the Lord, so when anxiety occupies your thoughts, recall, according to the word, the grace He has already bestowed.

The word that made clear the meaning of the leaven

Now Jesus Himself makes clear the meaning of the warning. *"How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?" (Matthew 16:11)*. The purpose of having them look back on His feeding them with bread lay here. The disciples had to get free from their worry about food to eat and hear again the word Jesus had first spoken.

Jesus again tells them *"to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:11)*. They hear the same warning again, but this time it comes after the error of their earlier discussion has been pointed out, so they learn what they must be careful of, and whose.

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Later on, the passage makes clear that the meaning of the leaven is doctrine. So our discernment today, too, must reach as far as examining what teaching we accept into our hearts. The attitude of the people who had earlier tested Jesus could seep into the disciples through their teaching, so what matters in that discernment is how we know and believe in the Lord, who is with us.

We discern teachings by the salvation of Christ that the Bible testifies of. In the Old Testament sacrifices, God commanded, *"You shall also have the bull brought before the tabernacle of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the bull" (Exodus 29:10)*. The word that had them lay their hands on the head of the offering makes us think of the meaning of salvation, in which the offering that has had the sin passed on to it is offered up. Knowing and believing in Jesus, who fulfilled this meaning, is the basis of our faith.

Jesus, the very One who fed the multitude and whom the disciples had to remember, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. And as the price of those sins that had been passed on to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross in our place, and rose again from death. We receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the gift God gives to those who believe this.

Those who believe in the salvation of Christ learn from the Bible what they must believe. Even if people's words are familiar or are recognized by many, they do not accept them as they are, but examine whether those words make clear the work of salvation Jesus accomplished and whether they lead one to rely on Him. The word that teaches the hearts of the saints must have a clear basis for believing in Christ.

This discernment is different from the pleasure of finding faults in other people; it is examining first the teachings that come into our own hearts. Before the word to beware of other people's leaven, the disciples first had their own little faith pointed out. Therefore we too examine ourselves as people who receive Jesus' teaching, and keep the attitude of learning by following the word.

The discernment that is wary of the doctrine

Finally the passage records, *"Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:12)*. The leaven Jesus spoke of was the doctrine of those people. When we hold on to this meaning that the passage itself makes clear, the part the disciples misunderstood at first and the part they came to understand later become clear.

In particular, it says they understood *that He told them to beware "of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees."* Understanding the warning leads to an attitude of being careful about what teachings to accept from now on, so a life that is on guard against the influence of wrong teachings must follow.

In the preceding scene, the Pharisees and Sadducees *"testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven."* Rather than accepting what He had already done, they told Him to show a sign as they demanded, and such an attitude is different from that of disciples who learn from Jesus. That is why the disciples had to examine their doctrine with the Lord's word as the standard.

If, even after hearing Jesus' word, we keep our own demands as the final standard, what we can learn from the Bible decreases.

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For it is easy to accept only the parts we like and to pass over the word that tells us to correct our thinking. The attitude the disciples needed was to listen to the Lord's explanation instead of insisting on what they had first understood, and we too must stand before the word in that way.

In Mark, Jesus asks, *"How is it you do not understand?" (Mark 8:21)*. The Lord wanted the disciples actually to understand, so both the questions that revived their memory and the warning He gave again were directed toward that understanding. The power to discern teachings, too, grows in this way, in the place where we hear the Lord's word and learn its meaning.

When we share the word in church, too, we need help that leads one another to the Bible. Rather than hiding difficulties and drawing conclusions alone, we should examine our faith together and receive teaching, but the content of our discussion must always be directed toward the meaning of what Jesus said. It must be fellowship in which we hear the Lord's teaching together, not conversation that only repeats people's convictions.

The rebuke that led to understanding

The last verse of today's passage begins with *"Then they understood."* It means that the meaning was not clear to the disciples from the beginning, but that they understood it only after hearing Jesus' questions and explanation.

At first Jesus said, *"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6)*. The word they had to keep even after they understood remained the same; what changed was the understanding of those who heard it. So rather than

changing the word to fit our worries, we must learn so that our understanding follows the meaning of the word.

The disciples began their discussion from the fact that they had forgotten bread, but Jesus made them remember His feeding of the multitude and brought them as far as the point that they must beware of the doctrine. This change took place because they listened to the Lord's teaching to the end; their learning did not end just because they misunderstood at first, and even after they were rebuked, the way to understanding was open.

When life is hard, we too need two things together: laying our immediate needs before the Lord, and keeping a heart that seeks to hear the Bible rightly even in that situation. If, because we have worries, we narrow every word down to only an answer to the problems of life, it is easy to miss its meaning, so the Lord, while knowing our needs, also teaches us faith and discernment.

What we must remember today is the Lord's question, *"Do you not remember?"* Place again in your hearts the things the Bible testifies of. When we remember the grace of Christ, our thinking about our present lack also changes, so we come to look back on whether we are sharing only new worries while having forgotten the word He has already given.

Dear fellow believers, when you realize that you have misunderstood, you need only correct that thought. Humble yourselves as you hear the Lord's rebuke, and accept the meaning that the word clearly makes known. Saints are not people who always prove that they were right, but people who learn from Christ.

To remember the feeding Jesus did, to examine the doctrine He warned against, and to hear the meaning of the word rightly—these are what remain for us. Just as the disciples, who were bound by their circumstances and guessing among themselves, came to understand after hearing the Lord's

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explanation, we too can learn before the word. Even in the midst of our immediate worries, let us hear the Lord's will and keep setting our thoughts right. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees

< Matthew 16:1–12 >

“Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, ‘When it is evening you say, “It will be fair weather, for the sky is red”; and in the morning, “It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.” Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.’ And He left them and departed. Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘It is because we have taken no bread.’ But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, ‘O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you

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concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.' Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

God establishes churches everywhere that testify of the word, raises up servants of God through those churches, and saves those who fear Him. He has the gospel preached to the poor, and reveals the justice, love, and truth of God. When God fulfills His will, He surely fulfills it through the Church of God. Therefore, if we keep the word of God in the church and live by faith in the word, God works. Because there is this clear truth, we can serve the Lord in joy without being discouraged, regardless of our circumstances. People are swayed a great deal by numbers and circumstances, but people of faith, people who follow the truth, are not shaken by such things. This is the difference between those who have the truth and those who do not. Today I would like to have fellowship together through the word of God.

Those who asked for a sign from heaven

"Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven" (Matthew 16:1). The Pharisees and Sadducees appear in today's word. They tested Jesus and asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. It was truly the demand of stubborn people. Even so, I believe that what Jesus told them was for our sake. At that time there were the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and there was also a group called the Essenes.

It was at such a time that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem. Our Lord came to this earth after having made all the historical background and circumstances of that time. And through that historical background, He spoke at that time the words He wanted to speak to all mankind in the future, that is, to the Pharisees and Sadducees of every age. Even now there are Pharisees and Sadducees, and even now there are those who come before Jesus, test Him, and seek a sign from heaven. The truth of the Bible does not change. The Bible cannot change just because the times have changed a little. Even though the times change, it is still exactly the same.

By examining what the Pharisees claimed and what the Sadducees claimed, what they did when they came before Jesus, and what Jesus said to them, I would like to see what the Lord is truly saying. What the Bible says is the most important thing.

The Pharisees were religious people who pursued a life of holiness

Dear fellow believers, the Pharisees appear often in the Bible. The Pharisees were keepers of the law. They kept Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, that is, the Five Books of Moses, and in particular they pursued the Levites' life of holiness that appears in Leviticus. Just as a group arises that follows a certain theological idea, the Pharisees were a group that went on pursuing the life of holiness that appears in Leviticus. That is the characteristic of the Pharisees. The Pharisees also regarded the words of the prophets very highly, that is, the Major Prophets such as the books of Isaiah and Ezekiel and the Minor Prophets such as the book of Hosea. At the center of these is the idea of serving God alone and not

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serving idols. Serving God and living the life of holiness that God spoke of—that is what a Pharisee is.

But the Pharisees had one more thing. They kept the tradition of men, that is, the tradition of the elders. Washing one's hands and feet after coming back from outside was a tradition of the elders. Moreover, it was not a matter of washing roughly; they had to wash thoroughly according to a set method. We wash roughly, shake off the water, and eat, but they considered that they had to do as their forefathers had done. If they went out and came back in, they had to wash even ten times a day, and when they ate food, they had to wash before eating.

The Pharisees kept the tradition that the elders had handed down by word of mouth. Those who pursued a life of holiness by keeping the Five Books of Moses, the books of the prophets, and the law of offering sacrifices were the Pharisees. But there was one thing they lacked. It was that they did not believe in Jesus. The core of what the Bible says is Jesus Christ, yet they did not believe in Jesus. While not believing in Jesus, they went on pursuing the idea of serving the LORD God and the clean life that God had spoken of.

If we look at these Pharisees in the light of today, it is as follows. Even though Jesus had come and was right before their eyes, they did not believe in Jesus. Regardless of whether the Son of God came or not, a Pharisee is one for whom keeping the law well becomes his own righteousness and his boast, and who carries a whole bundle of that boast before God and says, "This is how I have lived." This is precisely religion.

Even now there are truly many people like the Pharisees among Christians. They do not truly believe in Jesus Christ; rather, they believe in Jesus only superficially and regard that as the foundation, and what they really strive for is to pursue a life of holiness completely, that is, sanctification. How Jesus Christ

removed our sins, and how He loved and saved us, are outside their interest. They think that believing in Jesus is only the foundation, a light thing that can be believed in one minute.

After believing in that way, what they toil and strive for throughout their lifetime is a life of holiness. How they can become holy and live a holy life, how they can live a clean life before God as genuine saints—those who press on, making that wholly their aim, are precisely religious people. The characteristics of the Pharisees are following the Five Books of Moses, pursuing the Levites' life of holiness, believing in the one and only God according to the teachings of the books of the prophets, offering clean sacrifices, and following tradition. What is missing here? Believing in Jesus Christ and believing in what God has done are missing. That is why they are religious people.

The Sadducees said that there is no resurrection, no angel, and no spirit

Then what kind of people were the Sadducees? The Sadducees were very conservative, so they acknowledged only the law of Moses, that is, the Five Books of Moses recorded in writing, and did not acknowledge the rest. That is why they did not believe in the life to come. The Bible says, *"Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit" (Acts 23:8)*. The word "conservative" means keeping what is old, and the Sadducees, who believed only the Five Books of Moses recorded in writing and regarded the rest as not being the word of God, had precisely such a conservative faith.

The Sadducees became religious leaders. The high priests were precisely Sadducees. The Pharisees were not of the high priestly class but were pietists, that is, a group that pursued a life

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of holiness. But the Sadducees led the politics of Israel at that time and seized the position of high priest. That is why, when Jesus stood in Pilate's court, the high priests took the lead in demanding that Jesus be crucified. They did so because there was no faith within them. If they had truly known that the Messiah was coming, how could they have done that?

They called themselves conservatives, kept what was old, and said that they believed according to the word of God, but they believed only in the deeds that were outwardly visible, and did not believe in Jesus Christ, who was to come as the Lord of salvation, revealed in the Five Books of Moses. Leaving Jesus out, they insisted only on the outer shell and said that they believed literally. In this way the Sadducees became religious leaders and engaged in politics, and the Pharisees led the people of Israel in godly living. But what these two groups had in common is that they handed Jesus over to be crucified. They did not believe in Jesus and did not believe in God.

Dear fellow believers, when we look at the Sadducees and the Pharisees, I cannot tell you how exactly the same they are as people today. Even now there are conservatives who say that they believe the word of God just as it is, without a single letter wrong. If they hear this word, they will come to know their own identity: "Ah, so that is what our faith was. We did not truly believe in Jesus Christ; we have been pursuing a godly life on our own." In the same way, many people today who say they believe also regard believing in Jesus as secondary and believe only in order to go to heaven, while placing their final goal in living a life of holiness.

That becomes their purpose and goal, so for the sake of a life of holiness they pray and repent today and tomorrow, living a life of pressing on day by day. It is exactly the same even now. But if we know the Bible, we can know its true identity, that is,

how the devil works. Satan the devil leaves Jesus out, degrades faith in Jesus into a religion, and makes people use it for building up a godly human appearance. It is leaving out the core of the Bible, that we become children of God by faith.

"Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees"

Let us read it together. *"Then Jesus said to them, 'Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'It is because we have taken no bread.' But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, 'O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.' Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6–12).* Jesus said to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, to be careful of their teaching. Leaven refers to their thoughts, that is, what they are teaching.

The leaven of the Sadducees and the Pharisees refers to the thoughts of men. Then what is the leaven of each of the two groups? The Sadducees engaged in the politics of this present world. With religion as their backing, they pursued prospering and being blessed in this world. Even now there is a trend that puts worldly politics and social movements ahead of the spread of the gospel. They say that we must help the poor, rescue those

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who are politically oppressed, and become the light and salt of the world to change the world.

Dear fellow believers, we must beware of this. It is not our task as Christians to roll up our sleeves and step forward so that worldly politics may be done well. If we are true Christians, we must preach the word that saves people's souls and preach what faith is. It is when faith enters people's hearts that people change and the world changes; Christians putting worldly movements ahead of the spread of the gospel is something we must beware of.

Let me tell you about one more leaven of the Sadducees. We must beware of trying to become religious leaders or seizing high positions to rule over others. These days, church offices are becoming a great problem within the church. There are also cases where offices are given and received without deeply considering their meaning, or where offices are decided by worldly power or wealth. We must be careful of such things and reject them.

Guides of the word have great authority. That authority should be used for serving, but there is the temptation to try to use that authority to rule over people with the power of organization. What the Sadducees did was all of that kind. We must beware of clericalism and authoritarianism. A guide must preach accurately what the Bible says, and no matter what anyone says, must keep on teaching with the word. And he must not raise people to offices carelessly. We must be careful of the leaven of the Sadducees.

Just as the Sadducees seized the politics of that time, took power, set up people on their own side, and moved the people of Israel, even now there are cases where the great size of a church's influence is regarded as if it were evidence of the truth. Just as the Sadducees seized politics and suppressed the

Pharisees by their dominance, even now there are those who expand their church influence all over the world and act as if they themselves believe in God well. We must preach what the Bible says. Only then can people escape from darkness.

Satan the devil is working in that way even now. Since Jesus told us to beware of the leaven of the Sadducees and the Pharisees, we too can beware of it only if we know how it is appearing in this age. If we do not know it, we cannot beware of it. The Sadducees expanded their power and made people regard it as the truth, but they did not believe in Jesus.

The leaven of the Pharisees, who make a godly life their goal

Next, He told us to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. What the Pharisees aimed at most was a godly life. If even a little muddy water splashed on them as they walked along the road, they said they were unclean. A Pharisee is one who makes this his goal: “How can I live a holy life?” He is telling us to beware of it because that is leaven, that is, their thinking. Aiming even now at living a life of sanctification after believing in Jesus is exactly the same as the Pharisees aiming at the Levites’ life of holiness. I do not know why they have degraded the faith that believes in Jesus Christ into a religion. This leaven has spread widely, and many people are under its influence.

What Jesus told us to beware of was not a word spoken only about that age. We must beware until the day Jesus Christ comes again. Even now, many denominations insist on a life of holiness even after believing in Jesus Christ, and say that Jesus took away our past sins, but that present sins are removed only when we repent, and that we reach a life of holiness by repenting every

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day. They say that there is no righteous person. This is adding to and taking away from the Bible, not believing it, and insisting on the tradition of men. No matter how much the denominations say so and those above teach so, why is there no righteous person? In the Bible, Abel is a righteous person, and Noah is a righteous person. The apostle Paul, Peter, and the apostle John are also righteous people and people without sin.

But the Pharisees regarded tradition as important. They leaned toward outward appearance, such as washing their hands and feet, their manner of walking, making the tassels of their garments large, and not looking at unclean things. Does the heart become clean just because one does not look at unclean things? People regard tradition as important, so when they hear that a famous theologian said that there is not even one righteous person, and that people are only regarded as righteous but that it does not mean they have no sin, they follow it just as it is. They regard that tradition more highly, saying that senior pastors said so, their ancestors said so, and famous people of many countries said so.

The reason Jesus told us to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees is that they did not believe what the Bible says or what God has spoken, but regarded the tradition they had learned from men more highly. This is leaven, and it is destruction. Just as He said that anyone who eats leavened bread during the Feast of Unleavened Bread shall be cut off from Israel, Christians all over the world, those who truly believe in Jesus, must beware of this. However people of old believed, faith is personal. However our fathers believed, and however our children believe, faith is something each person believes before God.

Faith is seeing what the word of God says and believing that word ourselves; it is utterly wrong to say that it is right for us to believe a certain way because our ancestors believed that way.

That is doctrine, and that is denomination. That is Pharisaic and Sadducean. How could that please God? People are swept along a great deal by the majority. Among Christians today there are many who have received Pharisaic teaching from those above, and who, though sin still remains in their hearts because they have not personally received the remission of sins before God, think, "Since those who went before me believed that way, if I believe that way too, I will go to heaven, I suppose." That is accepting the leaven of the Pharisees. We must truly beware of it.

"No sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah"

What did the Lord say? Let us read it together. *"He answered and said to them, 'When it is evening you say, "It will be fair weather, for the sky is red"; and in the morning, "It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening." Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.' And He left them and departed" (Matthew 16:2–4)*. In the New Testament, Jesus often spoke of the sign of Jonah. Jesus actually went through the same thing as Jonah. Jesus showed a great sign to the Pharisees and Sadducees, and to us now. It means that there is nothing more to show except the sign of Jonah, that there is nothing greater than this.

God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach the word of God. But Jonah boarded a ship going to Tarshish and fled. On the way, a storm arose against that ship. When the sea became rough and

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the ship tossed about, the people on board said that this was the curse of some god, and that someone among them had done wrong before a god, and they cast lots. Then the lot fell on Jonah. Jonah said, "That is right. Because I boarded this ship, the storm has arisen. If you pick me up and throw me into the sea, the sea will become calm." The people tried hard to save Jonah, but the storm was so severe that in the end they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea.

"So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging" (Jonah 1:15). All the people of the world must be judged before God, and must be cursed and destroyed. But Jesus Christ bore all the sins of all people and went down into the water. Just as Jonah was thrown into the sea to save the people on the ship, Jesus, in order to save the people of the whole world, had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John and died on the Cross. And He received the judgment in their place. Because Jesus Christ received the judgment, the judgment of God has not come upon this earth.

Just as Jonah was thrown into the sea, remained in the belly of a great fish for three days and three nights, and came out again, Jesus died on the Cross for our sins and rose again on the third day. Jesus presented Jonah's experience as a sign pointing to His own death and resurrection. There can be no wonder greater than the baptism Jesus Christ received and His death on the Cross, greater than this love God has bestowed on man. Jesus, who is God, became a man, put on flesh, and came to this earth; He received baptism from John in place of man; He became the sacrificial offering for man; He had the sins of all people transferred to Him and received all the judgment; and He rose again and even now guarantees the faith of those who believe—there is no wonder greater than this.

The Sadducees and the Pharisees sought a sign. They were saying that if He was the Son of God, He should make fire come down from heaven, make the earth split open, and make all the water of the sea dry up. Drying up the water of the sea is nothing at all for Jesus. Could the One who made the universe not do such a trifling thing? But Jesus said that He had nothing to show except the sign of Jonah, which was like Jonah going into the belly of the fish and living again. It means that among the things He has done for them, there is nothing greater than this. People seek things such as fire coming down from heaven or the healing of diseases, but Jesus Christ says that He has nothing more to give than the sign of Jonah, that is, this gospel.

There is nothing greater than this gospel

The greatest of the things God has given us is the gospel. Just as Jonah fell into the water and saved all the people on the ship, Jesus received baptism from John and died on the Cross in our place, and just as Jonah came out of the belly of the fish after three days, He rose again three days after He died. And even now He lives, acknowledges as right those who believe in Him, makes them righteous, pours the Holy Spirit into their hearts, and makes them children of God so that they may go to the kingdom of heaven. There is nothing greater than this. There is nothing greater than the sign of Jonah, than this gospel.

The Bible says that when the storm struck, the ship was about to capsize, and everyone had no choice but to die, the people picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea, and the moment Jonah fell, the sea became calm. We too truly had no choice but to die. All the people of this world could not help but perish because of sin, and could not help but go to hell and receive the

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judgment of God. But just as the storm became calm through the sacrifice of one man, Jonah, when Jesus Christ gave His own body for us, had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, and died on the Cross in our place, Jesus Christ saved us from all sins and all curses. When Jonah was thrown in, did the sea become only half calm? The Bible records that the whole sea became calm. That is why, whenever Jesus spoke of signs, He spoke of the sign of Jonah, as He also spoke of the sign of Jonah in the Gospel of Luke.

Dear fellow believers, did Jesus take away only original sin? The Bible records that He took away all the sins of the world. The Old Testament says that when the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement was offered once a year, all the sins of a year were passed on, and the New Testament says that He had all sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, and that He died vicariously on the Cross for the sin of the world. Yet do people say that we must become sanctified? Has Jesus not saved you and me from all sins? Is Jesus Christ's death on the Cross void? Is His rising again from death void? Is His coming to this earth void? Is the baptism He received from John for us void? Did He have only half of the sins transferred to Him through that baptism? There is nothing greater than the love of God, than this gospel, than the sign of Jonah. Yet whose word is it that there is no righteous person? How is that different from inheriting the tradition of the Pharisees?

The sin in the heart is not removed by prayers of repentance

Jesus said that what goes into the mouth does not defile a man, but what comes out of the mouth defiles a man. No matter

how much one washes his hands and feet, will his heart become clean? No matter how well one offers prayers of repentance, is the sin in the heart removed? It is not removed. The hands and feet may become clean and the words may be smooth, but no matter how well one offers prayers of repentance, sin is not removed. What does the Bible say about repentance? It says, *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19)*. People begging every day, saying that they have done wrong, is religion. "This is what I am. I am a being born with filthy sin, who cannot help but commit such sins before God. God, please save me. How did You save me?" When we look to the Cross of Jesus Christ in this way and look to the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, we come to know, "Ah, so that is how He removed my sin. He had my sin transferred to Him." We go to heaven by knowing and believing the fact that Jesus Christ had our sins transferred onto His own flesh and received the judgment in our place on the Cross so that we would not be judged. That is how we become righteous people.

Then who dares to say that there is no righteous person? Jesus Christ came to this earth to save us sinners and make us righteous, and because He knew that no matter how hard we tried we could not do it, He had all sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. It is written, *"Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" (John 13:1)*. He has saved us perfectly. Yet there is no righteous person? When those who say there is no righteous person are asked how one becomes righteous, they say that one must become sanctified, and when asked how one becomes sanctified, they say that one must repent every day. Does repenting every day do it? Those who offer many prayers of repentance eventually become hypocritical Pharisees.

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Outwardly they pretend to be holy and treat one another well, but inside they are full of sin. If they are touched even a little, the sin that was inside is revealed just as it is. Then they go to the church building and say, “Lord, I have done wrong,” and wipe up and patch up what has flowed out, but will sin be removed by that? Is it not sin just because it has not been revealed? It means that we must beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, that is, the teaching that there is no righteous person. If a sinner is still a sinner even after believing in Jesus, why would he believe?

It is the pride of man to try to keep the word of God well and boast before God. Romans says, *“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:3)*. No matter how great a person may be, no matter how much he tries to live a life of sanctification, how well can he really live it? If something does not please him, his face turns red right away. Religious people, if someone is not of the same denomination as themselves, look askance, wondering whether that person has fallen into a wrong place. “If you have fallen into a wrong place, I must rescue you. I have not fallen into a wrong place as you have, and I live a good life of faith in such a holy denomination; how did you end up that way?” Dear fellow believers, please keep in mind that if you receive the tradition of men, you become a Pharisee, and if you accept the ideas and teachings of men, you become a Sadducee.

There are many who have become so. Such people must check once again before the word of Jesus Christ and escape from there. If they remain there, they will go to hell. Who says that Jesus Christ did not remove all sins? Do famous evangelists in the world say so? True evangelists testify that Jesus Christ took away the sin of the world entirely. But the famous

denominations of the world say that He took away original sin and also took away actual sins, but that one must repent every day, achieve a life of sanctification, and live a holy life in order to enter heaven. The denominations say so, but those who believe in God, the servants of God, do not say so. What does the Bible say?

The Lord has made us righteous

The Bible says that Abel was a righteous person and that Noah was also a righteous person. Does it call them righteous because their deeds were perfect? Noah drank wine, lay naked in his tent, and showed a shameful sight to his son. The deeds of the man were lacking, but God said, *"Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:9)*. Who made us righteous? Jesus Christ made us righteous and saved us through the sign of Jonah. Jesus lives now and guarantees us and testifies of us. Even if we live a somewhat lacking life and our deeds are lacking, our Lord gave His own body for us, received the judgment in our place, died, rose again in three days, lives now, and helps the faith of those who believe in Him.

God leads us onward. The greatest thing in the Bible is love. *"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13)*. What is that love? It is that Jesus Christ saved us through the sign of Jonah. It is that He loved us and delivered us from destruction. We give praise to the Lord, who delivered us from the leaven of the Sadducees and the Pharisees. What about you? Did you truly know the leaven of the Sadducees and the Pharisees? Did you know how fearful a thing this is? Were there such people only in that age? Please

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keep in mind that there are even more in this age. Those who have not received the remission of sins have all, without exception, fallen into the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. If they do not get out of it, they will surely be destroyed.

Will you believe the tradition of men, or will you believe the word of God? Will you believe Jesus Christ's sign of Jonah, or will you believe in fire coming down from heaven, diseases being healed, mighty works being performed, and becoming rich, and follow a denomination? We must choose one of the two. I believe that we must clearly know and believe the fact that Jesus Christ has saved us, and get out of the leaven of the Sadducees and the Pharisees. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord saves us from sin

< Matthew 16:13–19 >

"When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'"

Hello. I give thanks that God has bestowed grace on us so that we have come to share the word of God together. We have received grace from God that cannot be fully expressed in words. How could we fully express in words or in thoughts the grace and love that God has given us in this way? It was not I who loved God; rather, God loved me and also loved you. Rather than our loving God, God loved us with a great love that cannot be fully expressed in words. That is why we believe in the Lord. The only way for us to repay the love and grace of God is to believe in God. Because we cannot repay the love of God and

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that great blessing of God, we repay it with faith that believes in God. I do not know whether I will be able to express it all, but I intend to talk about that faith in God. I also intend to talk about the love of God, who loved us, and about that salvation by which He saved us.

The disciple Peter made his confession of faith to the Lord: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*. These words of Peter were a confession of faith responding to the love of God.

When our Lord came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples who people said that He was. The disciples reported to the Lord that, concerning Jesus, some people said He was John the Baptist, some Jeremiah, some Elijah, and some one of the Old Testament prophets. In other words, people were speaking of Jesus as a servant of God, merely one of the prophets.

Our Lord asked the disciples, *"Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15)*. Then, among the twelve disciples, Simon Peter answered first. Peter confessed his own faith that the Lord was his God, his Savior, and the Son of the living God the Father. Peter had devoted himself a great deal for Jesus, and he had left everything and followed the Lord. If he had wanted to boast in human terms, he had much to boast of. But when the Lord asked who they believed He was, Peter did not boast of his own excellence but confessed his faith in the Lord. He confessed that the Lord was his God and his Savior. So, just as Peter made his confession of faith, we too will examine our own faith.

Let us think about it for a moment. Why is it that, while we believe in the Lord, what we have boasted of before the Lord, the service we have rendered, and the many things we have done for the Lord come to mind together with the love of the Lord? When we think of the Lord, it is not the Lord alone who comes

to mind; rather, the labor we have done for the Lord and the things we have done well before the Lord come to mind all jumbled together with the love of the Lord. But Peter's answer was simple. It was that the Lord was his God and his Savior. The reason Peter could make such a confession of faith was that the grace of the Lord was greater than his own excellence.

We must think about ourselves for a moment. If we say that we believe in the Lord, love the Lord, and live for the Lord, we must think about what kind of people we ourselves are. Do we truly think only of God? Do we love only God? Do we exalt only that great love of God? Do we have faith that believes only in God? Peter's faith is a great faith. Among the twelve disciples Peter answered first, and that answer of Peter's is so amazing.

We have nothing to say about ourselves. What could we say before God? Before God, we have nothing we can do but make a confession like Peter's. Could we speak of our own excellence? Having received ten thousand kinds of grace and ten thousand kinds of love from God, could we boast of the one or two times we happened to do well? Could we boast of what we have done well until now? Could we boast again of what we will do well as we go on living in the future? Even if we have many excellent qualities and have done many things well, before God they are nothing. We only boast of this one thing, just as in Peter's confession of faith: that the Lord is our God and our Savior.

We must know what kind of One our Lord is. What kind of One is our Lord to us? Is He just one of the prophets? Is He just one god among many gods? Or is He an idol that we have made, though He does not even really exist? Are we believing in a religion? There are people who believe recklessly and blindly, without knowing the Lord well and without even knowing the truth.

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But we must know the Lord and believe. If we know salvation and believe, we can make the same confession as Peter before the Lord. Peter confessed the Lord to be the Christ, and that is truly so. Before the Lord we ourselves are nothing. Because the Lord is God in His very being, our existence is nothing before such a God. There is only the work that God has done. I preach the word with the hope that the confession of faith Peter made will become your confession.

The God of whom Hebrews speaks

Let us all look at the word of God. *"But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.' And: 'You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail'" (Hebrews 1:8–12).*

Here, when it says *"You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth" (Hebrews 1:10)*, the *"LORD"* refers to the Son of God, of whom it spoke earlier. The Bible records Jesus as God. Dear fellow believers, who made this world? It is Jesus Christ Himself. Who was God? It was God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who determined to save us from sin. Jesus was our Savior. *"You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; And they will all*

grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail" (Hebrews 1:10–12). Who is the One recorded here as *"LORD"*? It is Jesus Christ Himself, the Creator of all things. In the future the heavens and the earth of this world will also disappear. This word says that all these things will disappear, but the Lord remains the same and His years have no end. This means that God alone is the One whose life has no end and who lives forever. Jesus Christ is God, who lives forever, and He is the Son of God the Father. Jesus Christ is our God.

"You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands" (Hebrews 1:10). The One who worked here is none other than Jesus Christ. Jesus is the true Prophet of us human beings, and He is God the Savior, who, according to His word of prophecy, came to this earth to save us from the sin of the world, received baptism from John, shed His blood on the Cross, and rose again. God has saved us from all the sins of the world through the power of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jesus is our God

Long ago, a certain man's nephew believed in Jesus, and because that nephew kept asking him so persistently to go to church, the uncle finally said, "All right, let's go," and went to church and sat down. But what do you know—as soon as they sat down, the nephew began to pray, saying, "Father God, …" Then the uncle thought, "If He is that boy's father, then He and I are brothers; it would hardly do to call Him my younger brother, so I had better call Him my elder brother," and he greeted Him, saying, "Hello, Elder Brother God."

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If, having received the remission of sins through Jesus, we do not know and do not believe that Jesus is God, how could we pray to Him? Of course, God the Father sent His Son and saved us from the sin of the world through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but it is certain that Jesus, that Son, is our Creator and Savior. The One who made us in the beginning and delivered us from sin is Jesus Christ Himself. If you ask who made the heavens, the earth, and us human beings, it is Jesus Himself, the Son of God. Jesus is our Savior and God. Although we have received salvation from Jesus, we worry that, since there is the Father, who is higher than Jesus, it might be wrong to pray calling on the Son. We wonder what would happen if we used the title God for the Son and it turned out to be wrong. But we do not need to worry like that. It is right to call Jesus God. This is because Jesus Christ is God to me and to you.

When we face difficulties, we pray, "Jesus, give us blessings. Please solve this problem," and that is by no means a wrong prayer. When we pray, we may have the question of which of the two—God the Father or the Son Jesus Christ—we should pray to. You may pray to either of the two. This is because God the Father and the Son Jesus Christ are equally God to us.

The baptism He received because He loved us

Our Lord came to this earth clothed in human flesh. The Lord came in order to save from sin the sinners He Himself had made. *"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)*. The Lord saved us not only from sin but also from the judgment for sin. We believe that Jesus received baptism from John for us. Jesus' coming to this earth clothed in flesh, and that

work of His receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River, are a great work and a great love. The Lord came in order to save us, and He received baptism from John in order to have our sins transferred to Him. How great a work it is that the Lord received baptism in the Jordan River!

The Jordan River is the river of death. It was the boundary line through which the people of Israel, having come out of Egypt, entered the land of Canaan. For the people of Israel to enter the land of Canaan, they had to cross the Jordan River. Without crossing the Jordan River, they could never enter the land of Canaan. In the Bible the land of Canaan points to the kingdom of heaven, and Egypt points to this world. To go to the kingdom of heaven after living in this world, one must cross this Jordan River. The Jordan River means the river of death. In hymns, too, there are songs about crossing the Jordan River and entering the kingdom of heaven. Anyone who has been born once into this world dies once. And after crossing the river of death, he comes to stand before God. We cannot escape death. In the face of death, the emperor, the rich, and the poor are all the same.

The work of Jesus' receiving baptism in the Jordan River for us is the greatest work in the whole universe and in this world. That the Lord received baptism in the river of death means precisely that He removed my sins and yours. Jesus received baptism from John in the Jordan River in order to have all our sins transferred to Him and remove them, so that, when we cross the Jordan River, the river of death, and stand before God, He might make us people without sin. This is because we all have sin, so we cannot stand before God in a state of having sin, and if anyone stands before God in a state of having sin, he enters the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

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Jesus received baptism in order to make us stand before God as people without sin. The only way for the Lord to remove our sins was that way of receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River. This is because our Lord loves us, so He had to remove our sins and He had to bear our sins. Therefore, the work the Lord did when He came to this earth was by no means a small work. It was not a work He did lightly, as a matter of doctrine.

The work the Lord did when He came to this earth can be divided into several parts. First, the Lord came to this earth. Second, the Lord received baptism from John in the Jordan River. Third, the Lord died on the Cross. Fourth, the Lord rose again from death. It can be divided into four in this way. What we believe is all contained within these four. The work the Lord did when He came to this earth can be divided into four in this way, but, dear fellow believers, we must have faith that believes these four things with certainty. We must not neglect even one of them. Here we are talking about the truth of the second fact, that the Lord came and received baptism.

Do you know that the Lord received baptism in order to remove your sins, the sins of all of you? Some people say that the Lord received baptism simply because He was humble. They say that He received baptism in order to show us an example of humility. But the Lord is not a teacher of morals, nor is He a teacher of etiquette. The Lord is the Savior, who saves me and you from all sins and punishment. We must know and believe that the Lord received baptism from John in the Jordan River in order to make me and you sinless.

Since the Lord loves us, how could He leave us as we are, with sin? Since Jesus loves you, how could He just leave your sins alone? Since the Lord loves you, will He not solve your problem? Because Jesus truly loves us, He could not leave the problem of our sins as it was. The Lord received baptism

because He loves us. Because, if those He loves have sin, they go to hell, and because they must not have sin, the Lord received baptism from John and solved the problem of the sin of those He loves.

The work of Jesus' receiving baptism is very simple, so in one second we can know, "Ah, Jesus received baptism in the Jordan River." But we cannot feel in one second the meaning of the Lord's receiving baptism. Because our Lord's receiving baptism for us is such a great love, we do not feel it right away. Therefore we must think again about Jesus' receiving baptism for us and ruminate on its meaning.

We must think again about why Jesus received baptism, and we must think about how great a love it is and how perfect a love it is. We must believe that it is a love He showed in action, not a love with which He loved only in thought or only in words.

The difference between knowing and not knowing the baptism Jesus received

For the first several years after I believed in Jesus, I, too, did not know that the work of Jesus' receiving baptism was such a great work. I knew of Jesus' receiving baptism only too simply. I believed in Jesus without even knowing the reason He received baptism. I thought that it was enough if I just believed in Jesus. "The Lord must know my heart. He must know everything about me and that I believe in Jesus." But that was a delusion. It was an act of rejecting the love of the Lord. I believed without knowing the love of the Lord, but on the Lord's part, He wanted me truly to know and believe the will with which the Lord received baptism in the Jordan River for me. He wanted me to believe with that knowledge. On the Lord's part, too, He rather

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had an earnest heart, wishing that we would know more about the reason the Lord received baptism and believe.

For many years I believed in the Lord without knowing that heart of the Lord, that love. When I praised the Lord, the Lord did not hear my praise and rejoice. To praise means to commend the Lord, but because I sang praises in a loud voice without knowing the love of the Lord—the meaning of His receiving baptism in the Jordan River for me—the Lord could not accept the praise of a sinner. Because I believed without knowing the love of the Lord and the fact that the Lord took away all my sins in the Jordan River, the Lord could not answer my prayers. The prayers the Lord answers must be the prayers of the righteous. Among the prayers of sinners, He can answer only the prayer, "Lord, save me." That is because there is the Lord's law.

The Lord could not answer that prayer of mine, "God, bless me." Even if He had wanted to answer it, there was sin in my heart. Because I believed without knowing the will with which the Lord received baptism from John in the Jordan River and had all my sins transferred to Him, He could not answer my prayers. I came to know that fact only later. I came to know it many years after I believed in Jesus. Even after believing in Jesus, I did not receive blessings. Even after believing in Jesus, I had many sins in my heart, and I thought that was faith. But that was not faith like Peter's. Later on I believed the truth that the Lord received baptism in the Jordan River and took away all my sins. I believed that the Lord took away not only my sins but also all of your sins. The Lord took away all the sins of all people. The Lord received baptism in order to remove all our sins, in order to take them away. I am telling you that the baptism Jesus received is the salvation by which He bore all the sins of all the people of the whole world.

But even now many people do not know this truth and are grieving the heart of our Lord. Among pastors, too, there are people who believe without knowing it, and among missionaries, too, there are those who believe without knowing this. Even now the Lord is aching at heart because of such people. He is grieved, asking whether they believe like that without knowing that He has taken away all their sins. "Do you think I will be pleased just because you do something for Me and say that you believe in Me unconditionally? Do not believe like that, but I want you to know and believe that, by the baptism I received from John in the Jordan River, I had all your sins of the world transferred to Me and have removed them." This is exactly the heart of the Lord. It means that He wants us, even now, to know and believe that the Lord has removed all our sins in the Jordan River. I am preaching to you the will of the Lord spoken in the Bible.

We must know the meaning of Jesus' saying to Peter, *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:19)*. Jesus gave Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And He said that He would build the church on Peter's confession of faith. Peter was one who believed that Jesus' receiving baptism in the Jordan River for him was in order to take away all of Peter's own sins. Peter wrote, *"There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21)*. Because Peter had that faith that believes in the baptism Jesus received, Jesus could build the Church of God on this earth through Peter.

Our sins, once and for all

Peter wrote, *"There is also an antitype which now saves us—*

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baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ," and I testify to you of this word. Peter testified in this way because he believed that the water, that is, the baptism Jesus received in the Jordan River, was the work by which He bore the sins not only of Peter himself but of all of us people. I tell you that your sins have been removed because Jesus received baptism. Because Jesus came to this world and received baptism, the baptism Jesus received became the evidence of salvation that saves us from sin. That baptism Jesus received was the sign of a miracle showing that He removed all our sins, that He took them all away.

I tell you that if Jesus had not received baptism in the Jordan River—if He had not had all our sins transferred to Him when He received baptism—we could not have been saved from sin even if we believed in Jesus. Therefore, so that our faith might not be in vain, Jesus received baptism in the Jordan River for us. Jesus received baptism in order to become the true Savior of those who believe, and by receiving baptism He took away all your sins. I testify by faith that the reason Jesus received baptism in the Jordan River was to wash away all my sins and yours.

In this world, too, without water, dirty things are not washed away. What can wash away the sins of our souls, and what can wash away dirty things, is water. In the Bible, water points to the baptism Jesus received from John. God sends rain on this earth and washes all filth clean. That is why you and I can live in this world.

If God did not give showers—if it had not rained in this world for just a few years—we would already have been buried in the filth of this world and died. Can what you leave in a flush toilet be washed down without water? Without water for even a single day, it is so dirty and smelly that you cannot live in that

house. If there is no water for a year, you will be buried in that filth and die. That is why God often sends rain on this world. Sometimes He also sends snow, and that snow is water too. In this way He washes away the dirty things of this world with water and lets us live. God has sent rain from the creation of the world until now and washed away dirty things, and He will do so in the future too. I believe that.

But the Lord washed away the sins of our souls once and for all. Jesus came to this world and lived for thirty-three years. The Lord came to this earth and received baptism. When He received baptism, He was thirty years old, and He died when He was thirty-three. When did the Lord have my sins and yours transferred to Him? He had those sins transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John when He was thirty. Unlike the rainwater that washes away the filth of this world, the Lord washed away the sins of the souls of all people once and for all, perfectly. This was possible because the Lord was truly God.

The Lord is God, who lives from the beginning to the end of this world. That is why the Lord said that He is the Alpha, the first letter of Greek, and the Omega, the last letter. It means the First and the Last. The Lord existed before this world existed, and He still exists even after this world disappears. While living for thirty-three years after coming to this world, the Lord, by receiving baptism from John when He was thirty, had the sin of mankind transferred to Him and washed it away forever, once and for all; and bearing that sin, He died on the Cross and rose again. What washed away all the sins of this world was the baptism Jesus received. Jesus received baptism only once in this world.

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"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness"

Jesus received baptism from John. John, who gave Jesus baptism, was the representative of mankind. *"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11)*. Therefore John could give Jesus baptism and transfer all the sin of mankind to Jesus. It was not because John had power, but because Jesus commanded him to pass on all our sins. The Lord commanded, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*.

I tell you that when Jesus received baptism from John, He fulfilled all the righteousness of God. All the righteousness of God is the work in which Jesus, by receiving baptism from John, had all the sins of this world transferred to Him. In this universe there are two kinds of "*righteousness,*" that is, "right deeds." First, there are the right deeds of man, and second, there are the right deeds of God. The right deed of God was the work in which Jesus received baptism from John and removed all the sins of human beings. The rightness of God was His removing all the sins of all people. Jesus did not receive baptism twice; in order to remove all the sins of the people of this world, He received baptism from John once, died on the Cross, and rose again, and thus once and for all washed all the people of the whole world clean of all sins, and completely delivered from judgment us who believe in the baptism Jesus received and the blood He shed.

If you believe without knowing this fact, Jesus says that your faith is in vain. It is as if He were saying, "You have believed in Me in vain. If you believe in Me, you must believe that I received baptism and removed all your sins once and for all. Should you not know and believe that I removed all your sins—the work I

did?" Dear fellow believers, isn't that so? Should we not know and believe in the baptism Jesus received and the Holy Spirit?

Many people have believed until now without knowing the water and the Spirit. How do I know that, you ask? I can know it because I believe the word of God. Those who believe without knowing the work of the water and the Spirit show it in their faith. Those who believe without knowing the word of baptism become rigid and lean toward formality. Those who know and believe the work of the water and the Spirit of Jesus are truly at peace. This is because they know that the Lord has already completely saved them from all sins by receiving baptism from John, shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rising again. Because they know and believe the truth that the Lord saved them, they can praise God for saving them. They can give thanks. Their hearts are glad. In their hearts there is no anxiety about sin.

Those who believe in the baptism know that the Lord, by receiving baptism from John, has already taken away all their sins. Because they know and believe the word of the truth of salvation that records the work of the water and the Spirit that Jesus did, they do not try to be recognized before God by serving and making efforts themselves. Rather, because they believe that the Lord saved them, they always give thanks, always rejoice, and pray without ceasing in all things. Because they know that the Lord already saved them two thousand years ago, there is nothing in their hearts but thanksgiving. It is so because they believe. Rather, they give thanks.

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Those who believe in the baptism Jesus received always give thanks

The apostle Paul said, *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18)*, but if we do not believe that the Lord took away all our sins through baptism, how can we always rejoice? How can we be glad when there is sin in our hearts? Will our hearts be glad because we eat beef? Will our hearts be glad because we listen to opera music? If there is sin in the heart, we are sorrowful. You must see whether the faith of the apostle Paul and your faith are the same or different.

The apostle Paul, too, had weak flesh, yet he always rejoiced, and he tells us to rejoice. Because Jesus received baptism from John and took away all of Paul's sins, and because Paul believed it, his heart could always be glad. I tell you that it was a faith that rejoiced because, even if he had shortcomings, and even if he might commit sin, Jesus had taken away those sins too.

True faith is faith that believes the fact that the Lord took away all our sins two thousand years ago. It is a heart that believes that He took away even our future sins and also all the sins we commit now because we are lacking. It is a heart that believes that Jesus took away the sins we committed before, the sins we will commit in the future, and even the sins we will commit until we die. This faith is true faith. This faith is the faith that Jesus wants. The faith that believes this word of truth with the heart is the faith that pleases Jesus. We believe the Bible as the word of God.

When Jesus 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."* Here, all righteousness refers to the righteousness of God. And the words *"thus it is fitting for us to*

fulfill all righteousness" mean "in this way to bear the sins of all people." Jesus removed all the sin of mankind by the way of receiving baptism. The way to make the sins of all people be gone was only this way of Jesus' receiving baptism from John. Jesus' receiving baptism from John was the salvation of redemption, in which He bore in our place all the sins of the world with His own body. I tell you that the Lord, bearing those sins, died on the Cross and rose again.

You have probably read the word that Jesus received baptism dozens of times or more in the Bible. You may also have heard sermons on it dozens of times. But did you know and believe the fact that when Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist two thousand years ago, He had all your sins transferred to Him?

Just as that word says, Jesus already had all the sins of the world transferred to Him two thousand years ago, died on the Cross for us, and rose again. He accomplished all the work of salvation, had His disciples record it, and is now speaking to us. If we believe without knowing the truth of salvation—the baptism Jesus received and that Jesus is God—we are not saved before God. This truth has been kept as a secret for a long time. Jesus came two thousand years ago and did this work for us, but those who knew and believed that fact were only a very few among Jesus' disciples and the church fathers who followed them. After that, for more than a thousand years, this truth was hidden. Even people who had the Bible did not know this. You did not know it either. Because this is the secret of the Bible, people did not understand it even while seeing it with their eyes. There were many such things in the works God did.

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The will of God, who allows suffering

God wanted many people in this world to know this gospel of truth. But many nations and many people of this world did not believe the work God had done, because their own strength was great. This was because human beings did not know their own lack and were not in difficulty or hardship. So God gave difficulties to the nations of this world. Although God's true heart is not so, He allowed suffering such as illness, poverty, and pain. This is because human beings lend an ear to the salvation of God only when they are in hardship and difficulty.

Even now all the nations of the whole world are going through difficulties and suffering pain. This is because, when they are suffering pain, if one preaches to them the word of the salvation and love of God, they accept it. People do not set their hearts on the kingdom of heaven unless they are in pain. Only when a person's heart is in pain because of sin does he lend an ear to and believe the salvation in which Jesus received baptism from John and had that person's sins transferred to Him. Therefore God has allowed you to suffer pain over sin spiritually and physically.

Your suffering pain because of sin is also because of your weakness. People do many wrong things even though they know that they must not do wrong. Human weakness is sin to God. Because people are weak, they commit sin. So they come to take an interest in believing in Jesus and accepting salvation. Such a sinner hears the good news that Jesus received baptism from John and had all his sins transferred to Him, and he believes and accepts that fact.

To go to the kingdom of heaven, we absolutely need Jesus. Sinners need Jesus. Because Jesus removed the sins of sinners, sinners need Jesus. Those who have sin in their hearts need the

salvation of the baptism Jesus received. And they accept the fact that Jesus received baptism from John and took away all their sins, and that after receiving the judgment on the Cross He rose again. They believe it in their hearts and are saved.

Salvation is received by believing that Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist two thousand years ago and took away all our sins. Those who believe in the baptism by which Jesus, having come to this earth, saved mankind from sin, and who believe that Jesus is God, receive the salvation of truth. That truth of salvation was the faith that believes that Jesus not only came to this earth in the form of a man, as a man, but also received baptism from John and took away all our sins, and shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again. That is why Jesus saved those who know Jesus as God and believe in the baptism Jesus received and the blood He shed.

I am telling you that people, by believing with their hearts in the baptism Jesus received and the blood He shed, and that Jesus is the Son of God and is also God, reach salvation according to the word *"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10)*. Only when people believe in their hearts in the baptism Jesus received and the blood He shed, and that Jesus is God, can they confess with their mouths the faith by which they have received true salvation.

The baptism Jesus received is the key that washes away our sins

You do not have to know every verse of the Bible. This is because you are not doctors of the Bible or pastors. But I tell you that if you believe that Jesus received baptism from John and

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took away all your sins, and received the punishment of sin on the Cross and then rose again, you are saved from sin. This is because the true life of faith begins after one receives the remission of sins and becomes righteous. From then on, by hearing the written word of the truth of God through the sermons of a born-again shepherd, faith grows and one becomes a worker of God. All of this is the power of Jesus.

It is because people do not know the truth of the four works Jesus did—that is, His coming, His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection—and because they do not believe the written word, that they remain sinners in their hearts. Also, they cannot know Jesus rightly. If one reads the Bible without having received the remission of sins, the black is just letters and the white is just paper. One cannot understand anything. Even if he sees the letters and the words, if he does not know their meaning, that person does not know how to read. Just because one has eyes and can see the letters, he cannot be said to know how to read.

God the Father sent His only Son Jesus to this earth and, by having Him receive baptism from John, caused Him to have all the sins of the people of the world transferred to Him and to wash them away. Only when we believe with our hearts in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood He shed on the Cross are our spiritual eyes opened. Jesus' coming, His receiving baptism, His dying on the Cross, and His rising again were the complete work of salvation to deliver you from all the sins of the world and from judgment. Believing this is salvation.

Dear fellow believers, can you enter a locked room without a key? If you just insert the key into the keyhole, it takes no effort at all. Dear fellow believers, is it hard to receive the remission of sins? It is easy to believe that Jesus came to this earth to save us, received baptism from John in order to remove our sins—in order to take them all away and wash them away—and received

the judgment on the Cross for us and rose again. If you believe in the salvation of Jesus, who lives now—the water and the blood—you obtain salvation.

I tell you the truth that Jesus is God, that the baptism Jesus received washed away all the sins of you who believe, and that by the blood Jesus shed on the Cross the punishment for all sins has ended. Believe it with your heart. And so receive Jesus into your heart as your Savior. Then, I tell you with confidence, Jesus will abide in your heart and you, too, will abide in Jesus.

The cunning fraud of the false gospel

Suppose that somewhere you heard someone say, "The gospel of the water and the Spirit is just the basics. It is nothing." If the gospel of the water and the Spirit is nothing, by believing what gospel would you receive the remission of sins and become a child of God? Then would you not end up following another gospel? The moment we hear the words, "The gospel of the water and the Spirit is nothing," we rather come to know clearly that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the real thing. If you do not have faith that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, you will come to pursue tongues or miracles. Then, looking at whether the minister has a spiritual aura and whether his appearance and speech are impressive, you will judge by appearance, and you will become busy adorning yourself with outward appearance too. If the gospel of the water and the Spirit is nothing, your faith has been shipwrecked. If the goal of our faith is not to become children of God but something else, we will drift toward destruction.

In fact, since we have already received the remission of sins by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we can know

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the word of truth more surely and grow. From the standpoint of believing the truth, the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot be called the basics; it can be called everything. But those who commit fraud with a false gospel commit fraud with similar Christian doctrines. They cunningly commit fraud with the doctrinal faith of Christianity. Swindlers commit fraud by puffing up people's hearts and getting them excited. When they hear news that someone made quite a handsome amount of money with a certain business, they use it and begin to commit fraud, saying, "If you invest in something like this, you will strike it rich." Because they talk while giving plausible grounds, it does not sound like an absurd story. That is, they commit fraud by saying that, since there was a case last time of someone striking it rich in this way, you too will succeed if you invest in this business. Then usually many people fall for those words. Those who fall for them are completely defrauded. Even those who are defrauded are not originally deceived by absurd talk. But if something seems even a little reasonable, they go along with it and their hearts are gradually drawn in. That is how it is. Satan the devil, even when he says very few words, says them so cunningly that he makes everyone be influenced and fall in.

The baptism and the blood of the Cross are the formula of salvation

Even if you do not know all the deep meanings of the Bible, if you believe these two together—the baptism Jesus received and the salvation of the blood of the Cross—it is salvation. Jesus could die on the Cross because He had received baptism. The reason the right answer for your being saved can come out is that there is a formula. Within every right answer there is a formula.

Likewise, the truth, too, is confirmed as the true truth by a formula.

In this universe there is no right answer without a formula. Because Jesus received baptism, He could die on the Cross. Because Jesus had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, He could receive the judgment on the Cross for us. Jesus' being nailed to the Cross and shedding His blood for us was in order to give us new life. The blood of Jesus became the life that gives us new life. This is because the word says, *"The life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11)*. Jesus rose again and saved me and you. Jesus is the Savior of all of us. Jesus saved us from all sins and gave us new life.

We believe the truth. I believe that if all the people of this world open their hearts and listen, they will believe the word of truth that Jesus is God and that Jesus received baptism from John and had all your sins transferred to Him, namely, the word *"thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. This is because the truth of Jesus is more accurate than science.

In Jesus' remitting the sins of all of us, who were sinners, there was the formula of receiving baptism and shedding blood. Jesus' receiving baptism and shedding His blood on the Cross is the formula of salvation and at the same time the truth. Because Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him through baptism and took it away, we have no sin. Only when what is actually on this side is taken over to that side is it gone. If it was not even taken away, how could one say that there is no sin? That is why Jesus came to this world, received baptism from John, and shed His blood on the Cross, and so became our Savior. And He rose again in three days. Jesus gave us new life. Jesus became the God of salvation for me and for you. We who truly

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believe in Jesus as our own Savior make the very same confession of faith as Peter.

I hope you know the fact that the promise of the Bible is for me and for you. Our Lord saved us. The Lord saved those who believe in the baptism and the blood. This is the love of the Lord and the salvation of the Lord. We too can confess, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*. We too can receive such a promise by believing in the baptism Jesus received and the blood He shed, and that Jesus is God. It is as if the Lord were asking all of us, "Do you believe that I received baptism for your sins and died on the Cross?" and saying, "I give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." All who believe have received the promise of this word in the very same way. By faith we have already come to have the very same faith as Peter and the very same faith as Paul. By faith we have become servants just like God's servants who appear in the Old and New Testaments.

By faith we have received new life from God and have become new workers. We give thanks to God. We believe the truth that the baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross have saved us, who believe, from the sin of the world. Within our souls there is the Lord alone. We give thanks to the Lord alone. We give glory to the Lord alone. We believe with our hearts in the salvation the Lord has given. Dear fellow believers, do you surely believe this word? Then we are those who have obtained glory from God. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

On the way of a disciple of Jesus Christ

< Matthew 16:13–27 >

“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’ Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. (And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee –ASV). But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’ Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to

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come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.'"

When the Lord performed the miracle of the five loaves and two fish and gave them plenty to eat, many people followed Him around. But a short while before, when He said, *"Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life" (John 6:27)*, they disliked it. What they wanted was something to eat on this earth, so many people left, asking why He was suddenly telling them to labor for food that does not perish.

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"

At that time Jesus asked His disciples a question. *"When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (Matthew 16:13–16)*. When Peter confessed his faith in this way, Jesus rejoiced greatly and said, *"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to*

you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven'" (Matthew 16:17–19).

Because of Peter's confession of faith, Jesus said that He would build His church on faith like Peter's. So He said that even Satan the devil cannot prevail against the church, and He said that He would give the keys of the kingdom of heaven. The Church of God has tremendous authority. He said that whatever is bound on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever is loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven, and this is the power God has given to the church. People simply do not know it, but it is something tremendous.

What does it mean that Peter confessed the Lord to be the Christ? The word "Christ" carries the meaning of having been anointed. There are three offices that receive anointing, namely, the king, the prophet, and the priest. When they appointed a king, when they appointed a prophet, and when they appointed the high priest, they poured oil on his head to appoint him.

Oil signifies the Holy Spirit. It carries the meaning that God pours out the Holy Spirit and works. Peter's confessing the Lord to be the Christ was a confession that the Lord is God the Creator and the Son of God, that He is the King who is above all things in the universe, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, and that He is also the Prophet and the High Priest.

He confessed that the Lord is the Savior, who holds all three of these offices and has saved mankind from sin. In this confession of faith, our confession of faith is also wholly contained. The word "Christ" also carries the meaning of the High Priest. The High Priest of heaven came to this earth,

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received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, and had the sin of mankind transferred onto His own body; He was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood, and offered Himself to God the Father as the sacrificial offering; and He rose again and saved His people from sin.

Not only that, but He is the Son of God and at the same time God, who made all things in the universe. And a prophet is one who teaches us the will and the word of God. Peter confessed that the Lord is the One who came holding all three offices, saves us, becomes our King, teaches us the truth, and leads us.

He builds the church on faith like Peter's

Because Peter's faith was tremendous faith, He said that He would build the church on that rock. The church is the gathering of people who have been rescued from the world, people who have believed in the Lord and been saved. This place where born-again people gather and worship is the Church of God. He is saying that the gathering of people whom He has called out of the world and who have been saved by believing in the Lord is the Church of God, and that it is the kingdom of God.

He said that the power of Hades will not prevail against this church. Can Satan the devil prevail against the kingdom of God? He cannot. He said that He would build the church on faith like Peter's and give the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Some people cite this word to claim that one person has authority equal to the Bible, but this word means that He would build the church not through Peter alone, but through people who have faith like Peter's. And to the people entrusted with the work of God He gave the authority that whatever they bind on earth will be bound

in heaven, and whatever they loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

This means that God's ministers have such authority. But people misunderstand this a great deal. Ministers do have such authority, but in practice they must humble their hearts, lower themselves somewhat as Jesus did with His disciples, and understand people. We too are ministers before God, but we do not lord it over people; rather, we play the role of leading them to the word of God. It is leading them rightly, teaching them what they do not know, and building up in faith what must be built up.

Yet it is true that such authority exists. If people on this earth oppose the teaching of those who have faith like Peter's and do not believe it, they end up turning their backs, and then they are ruined. Therefore we, who have faith like Peter's, must be careful not to make enemies of people. For opposing the church that preaches the gospel ultimately amounts to opposing the word of God.

So, in order not to make enemies, we deliberately avoid clashing hard and are careful. Because the other person does not know the world of faith, we go easy on them and lower our attitude. The word the Lord spoke is exactly as He spoke it. We are the Church of God, and if people believe the word that the Church of God preaches just as it is, they receive the remission of sins. If they do not know, they can simply ask. When people become enemies of the church, they end up growing distant from God as well, so we must be careful in certain areas.

Authority is not in people. It is in the faith with which Peter believed in Jesus, that is, in the confession of faith that says, "You are God, the King of kings, the High Priest, and the Prophet. You are the Savior, who has fulfilled those roles and

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saved us from sin." The One who made this known is not flesh and blood but the Father in heaven.

"Get behind Me, Satan"

And from this time on, Jesus speaks words of great intensity. Before this, because the disciples could not understand, He understood them and waited for them; but because He would be nailed to the Cross a little while after speaking these words, He was speaking the words He must surely tell His disciples before He left this earth. Next come the words He speaks to those who have become His disciples. *"From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee. But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.' Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it'" (Matthew 16:21–25)*. He is speaking about the way of a disciple.

The Lord knew fully that He would leave this earth. Since He had already had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, what He had to do now was to be nailed on the Cross, shed His blood and die, and rise again. So from this time He taught that He must suffer from the elders and chief priests and scribes in Jerusalem, be killed, and rise again in three days. But Peter, who a little earlier had

made a very fine confession of faith, now says words like the devil's. Humanly speaking, where is there anyone as loyal as Peter? But Peter said that he would never let such things happen to the Lord.

While the other disciples kept still, Peter stepped forward, saying that such things must never happen to the Lord, and took it upon himself to act as a bodyguard. Then Jesus rebuked him: *"Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (Matthew 16:23)*.

Deny yourself and follow the Lord

Salvation can be received by faith, but a life of faith is not easy. Concerning the way of a disciple, the Lord said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24)*. Following the Lord, that is, a life of faith, requires denying oneself. The remission of sins is received by faith, but a life of faith that follows the Lord requires denying oneself.

Dear fellow believers, denying one's own thoughts, heart, and actions is extremely difficult. Have you ever given up for the Lord what you thought was right? There are times when you think, "If I do it this way, it will be fine for me and fine for God too," but God tells you not to do so and to do the exact opposite. Being saved is truly good, but following the Lord is extremely difficult.

This means that if you deny yourself, you become the Lord's disciple, and if you do not deny yourself, you cannot become the Lord's disciple. It is an extremely difficult thing. The reason I cannot readily speak after reading the word of God is that this

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word must actually be fulfilled in my own life. If I only knew it in my head and only preached it, I too could boldly and bravely shout, "You must deny yourself."

But because I myself am included in this word, I must first look at myself. It is extremely difficult, because I have to consider God's benefit and my own benefit. When I received the remission of sins, I was staying within a familiar religious environment. But after I met the Lord through the word, I came to stand at a crossroads: whether it was right to stay there and do the work of God, or whether I should leave there and preach this gospel to people who did not know me at all. Preaching is easy. One can speak without hesitation about things that have nothing to do with oneself, but one cannot do so about things that have to do with oneself. So, after agonizing and agonizing again, I came to the conclusion that, rather than staying at home and doing the work of God, I had to leave my country, my relatives, and my father's house, as Abraham did.

Then was there a place that would welcome me? There was not. Did I have money? I did not. There was no one to provide me a place to sleep, no one waiting with a meal prepared for me, no church, and no place to preach. Yet the Lord says, *"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14)*.

So I had only two choices: whether to oppose the word of God, or to say "Yes" and obey as the word says, that is, to pack my bundle, leave home, and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to people who did not know me at all. I did not obey as soon as I was born again. I agonized and prayed, and then I made the decision. After that, whether I ate or starved to death, I had to turn my back on everyone who had known me until then, the people with whom I had lived a life of faith and built relationships. It was in order to follow the will of God. Because

they did not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in order to follow the will of God I had to turn my back on them and also leave the side of my family. It was a hard decision, but I made it.

The result of that decision was suffering. I had brought nothing with me and had no money, so I did not have a proper place to stay either, and I had to preach the gospel while finding a way to support myself. I had to do so in order to follow the command of God. It was very hard.

This word, to deny oneself and take up one's own cross, can be preached boldly, but the Lord tells me to put it into practice first. Even at that time, was there anyone who preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit? When Abraham left home, he had his family and his nephew Lot, and he also had sheep and cattle. As it turns out, Abraham was rich. I had nothing. I left with only a few small bags. That is what happened.

Seek not your own benefit but God's benefit

What is it to deny oneself? The Lord told His disciples that when He went up to Jerusalem, He would be hated by the elders and scribes and chief priests and be killed, and rise again in three days. As soon as Peter heard those words, he said that such a thing would never happen and that he himself would stop it. But Jesus, calling Peter Satan, told him to get behind Him. Pointing squarely at Peter, He said that he was Satan, and that he should not stand in front of Him but get behind Him. These are tremendous words. Peter stepped forward on his own so that Jesus, whom he believed in and respected, would not suffer in the flesh, but Jesus, quite the opposite, rebuked him.

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Therefore, if we are to follow the Lord, we must know what the Lord's will is. And whether or not it is of benefit to us, even if it is not of benefit, we must accept the Lord's will and obey it.

We are serving the Church of God. Here I can preach two kinds of sermons. One is to preach the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit properly, and the other is a worldly religious sermon. If I mix the two and preach, I can avoid losing either of the two groups of people. But if I preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in great detail in a way that pleases God, and preach that everything that is not this gospel is false, not many people will come and stay here. Then, as a pastor, my loss is great. But that is the talk of worldly people. If I preach both the gospel properly and the will of God properly according to the word of God, the people who remain here will not be many.

Then will that be of fleshly help to me? Even if it is of no help, I preach the word in this way, gather people who believe in this way, and, just as He told Peter that He would build His church on his faith, build the church, build the kingdom of God, and do the work of preaching this gospel to the whole world. How much suffering do we receive, and how many things happen, in doing so? There are also a great many things in which we suffer loss.

Even so, will you seek God's benefit, or will you seek the benefit of your own flesh? Only when you seek God's benefit do you truly become Jesus' disciple. Those who follow Jesus must seek Jesus' benefit. If they do not seek Jesus' benefit, they immediately come to stand on Satan's side and come to be on the devil's side.

The same is true of the work we do to serve the gospel. Because we do not chase only after money but must make it bring benefit both in the sight of God and in the sight of people, there are many things in which we suffer loss. It is because we

deny ourselves in order to follow the Lord. Following the Lord means following Him in a way that pleases Him. If we live a life of faith for our own will and our own purposes, apart from the Lord, that is not following the Lord but following the will of Satan.

Of course, we cannot do it all one hundred percent. I am speaking on that premise. As we live, when we realize, "Ah, I have done wrong. The Lord is not pleased," we turn back and set it right, and when we do wrong again, we turn back again and keep following; this is the life of being the Lord's disciple.

How completely opposite these are! Peter received great praise for confessing the Lord to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. He said that the One who made this known is not flesh and blood but the Father in heaven, and that He would build the church on that faith and even the power of Hades would not prevail against it. And then He said that if anyone would follow Him, he must deny himself, take up his own cross, and follow Him. This word does not end with one time; it is something we run into every day in our lives. Whether we seek our own benefit or seek God's benefit—this is extremely important.

We must deny even our personality and our stubbornness

Dear fellow believers, each person has a character formed according to the environment in which he grew up as a child, and each has his own unique personality. The Lord tells us that even what we experienced as children and learned from the people of the world, if it hinders the kingdom of God and the will of God, we must deny it and follow as the Lord desires.

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This is extremely difficult. Some people have such a difficult personality that they never listen to others. To listen well to others and accept what they say if it benefits the will of God, and not accept it if it does not, is doing well. But He says that we must not take the personality we were born with before God as it is and live just as it is. If we live a life of faith according to our own personalities, the church cannot be the church.

Even our personality must be changed if it is not of benefit to the Lord's work. Of course, we cannot change it one hundred percent, but we must deny it. Even if we are quick-tempered, at times we must wait long and be patient, and even a hot temper must be restrained. We must think of the Lord's word, swallow our anger, and deny ourselves, and live as people the Lord is pleased with, with the obedience the Lord is pleased with.

When we look at the people who follow the Lord, the Lord shapes those people. Their basic nature does not change, but because they try to live in a way that pleases the Lord, they come to deny themselves, obey, and follow. Losing one thing and gaining another, they come to take care of the will of God. It is an extremely difficult thing.

What we must clearly know is that, although being saved is easy, the life lived in line with the will that pleases the Lord after being saved is difficult. It is difficult, but we must live that way and follow. We do not have the choice of following or not following. We must live as the Lord desires.

When we do anything, we must first consider the will of God: whether this is of benefit to God, and what God will be pleased with through this. It is knowing the will of God and following in line with that will, not insisting on our own thoughts. If, in the midst of this, we put forward our stubbornness or our personality, we cannot follow God.

So the people who have followed the Lord for a long time are remarkable people. How many times must they have clashed during that time? Every time they did anything, they had to weigh whether or not it was what the Lord desired.

Since we must focus in this way on whether everything is what the Lord desires, I cannot tell you how hard it is. The Bible, in conclusion, tells us to live a life of faith in which we deny ourselves, but to live that way, how many things must we deny, even our own personality, purposes, will, and thoughts?

As I met the Lord and followed Him, denying my will again and again, not just once or twice, and living in line with the Lord's will, I eventually became a person who says, "Lord, do whatever You will. What is so important about my thoughts and purposes? If You desire it, I will do it." But at first, when the Lord demanded something different from what I thought was right, I could not even swallow my food. Denying one's own thoughts and one's own sense of being right is so hard that one cannot even swallow one's food.

You cannot swallow your food, you are exhausted, and there is no joy at all in living. But if it is clear that this is the will of God, a person who has lived a life of faith for a long time simply says, "All right, I will subdue my stubbornness. I will give up all my own insistence." When it becomes clear that God is pleased with this, since this is the purpose, such a person lives for it and lives setting the standard of everything by it. Then it is simple.

A life of faith is very easy if you deny yourself, and nothing is as hard as it if you do not deny yourself. Even so, how many things has God made you and me subdue during this time and brought us this far? Then will we stop here? Every time we do anything, God surely asks whether this is for your benefit or for God's benefit.

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When He asks whether this is something you are doing for yourself or for God, we come to think about it. If it is for our own benefit, we must give it up, and if it is for God's benefit, we must actively live in line with that will. That is why I truly respect those who have gone before us. The men and women among God's people who have followed well by faith are honorable people. Receiving the remission of sins is easy. If someone preaches the word properly, the one who hears only has to believe with his heart. But from then on, acting it out in deeds and becoming a disciple is the problem.

Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God

We do not become that way overnight. But because there are those who have gone before us, we know that this is the will of God. Our believing in the gospel, gathering, and worshiping like this is the will of God. Then we must live a life of faith, preach sermons, and serve the gospel in keeping with this order. The purpose is this: *"Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31)*. Everything is contained in this word that the apostle Paul spoke to the saints in Corinth.

Through this word, the Lord tells us that faith like Peter's is the faith that God acknowledges, and He also tells us one more thing in conclusion: even so, if we are to follow the Lord, we must know the purpose of God, deny ourselves in whatever differs from that purpose, and live in line with the purpose of God.

Then what kind of people must you and I become? Of course, we must become people who live in line with the purpose of God. How much have you tried to do so? It is continual. Every

moment God demands it. Today too, when we get up, God asks us whether we will live for our own benefit or live for the glory of God. And He shows us clearly what the purpose of God is. It is the will of God to preach the gospel to the whole world.

The more chaotic the world becomes, the more quickly we must preach the gospel while praying. If many people want the gospel, we must preach it as quickly and as abundantly as we can while we have the opportunity. For if we lose the opportunity, we cannot do it. Every time such things happen, we must quickly recognize what God desires, quickly decide according to that will, and move with our bodies. That is the life of disciples.

If the church exists for its own benefit, what would it be a church for? When we read the word of God, we know it all. If I preach like this, that is all it takes. The point is that it does not end with only preaching, but that you and I must live according to this word. That is why a life of faith is both joyful and hard. For a person who lives in line with the will of God, a life of faith is joyful and pleasant. When the gospel is spread and someone sends a testimony, hope and joy arise in the heart. But a person who lives in line with his own purposes asks how long he has to live this way.

"I served the Lord in the past, I am serving Him now, and I must keep serving Him in the future; how long do I have to do this?" When one thinks that way, it feels like a living hell and is utterly stifling. Then what will we do? After being saved, like the man who received one talent, will we bury it in the ground and then, when the Lord comes again, dig it up and say, "Here is one talent. Take the salvation You gave me. And since You have saved me, You must take me to heaven"? Then the Lord will rebuke us severely, saying, *"You wicked and lazy servant" (Matthew 25:26)*. How fearful a thing that is!

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After being saved, we must not insist on living only according to our own purposes and our own will. We must also offer this body we have to the Lord and use it as the Lord desires, and we must use our thoughts, our wisdom, and our faith all for the Lord while we live on this earth. This is our destiny.

As we live that way, when the Lord's work goes well, we are joyful because of it, and when it does not, we are pained and troubled. If the Lord's work were ruined after we had given our youth to serve this gospel, would that be our joy? It would not. Therefore, living in line with the Lord's will is what the Lord desires. That is why we must deny our own thoughts, subdue our stubbornness, and follow the Lord by faith. Then we become faithful servants of God in the Lord's sight. This is the conclusion of this word. Let us all deny ourselves and follow the Lord by faith. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Be mindful of the things of God

< Matthew 16:21–28 >

“From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. (And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee –ASV). But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’ Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.’”

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Jesus, who taught suffering and resurrection together

Peter heard of the suffering Jesus would undergo and tried to block that way. But Jesus was speaking even of the resurrection after death, and if we read following this difference, we can see what today's passage teaches a disciple. To the disciple who thought only of the suffering before his eyes, Jesus showed both the way to obtain life and the glory to come.

The passage begins with *"From that time Jesus" (Matthew 16:21)*. This was after Peter had confessed Jesus to be the Christ, but even a disciple who had confessed rightly had to keep learning the work that Christ would do. So Jesus began to teach His disciples clearly what He would undergo in Jerusalem.

Its content is the word *"suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed" (Matthew 16:21)*. Since Jesus knew of His suffering and death beforehand, He did not speak like one swept along by events that came upon Him unexpectedly, but made known to His disciples the way He would go.

Yet His prediction did not end with death, but He taught that He must *"be raised the third day."* Only when we hear of suffering, death, and resurrection together can we rightly understand the work that Christ would do, so Jesus told His disciples of the Lord's victory that would come after it, together with the sorrow they would go through.

In the Gospel of Luke as well, Jesus says that *"the Son of Man must suffer many things" (Luke 9:22)* and be killed and be raised, and this is the way of salvation that He would surely accomplish. So a disciple who follows Jesus must hear all of His words rather than picking among them to suit his own

expectations. The words about suffering and the promise about life were given together.

Dear fellow believers, even when something hard to understand comes up in the word, listen to the end. Because of a part that troubles your heart now, you may miss the promise that follows. What the disciples needed, instead of rushing to a conclusion because they had heard the words of suffering, was faith that accepts the whole of the way that Christ teaches.

Peter, who took hold of Jesus and tried to dissuade Him

Peter reacted strongly to those words. The passage records, *"Peter took him, and began to rebuke him" (Matthew 16:22)*. The disciple who had heard of the way Jesus would go now tried to block that way. Peter's words were *"Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee" (Matthew 16:22)*. Jesus taught what must happen, but Peter regarded it as something that must not happen, so a clear difference appears between the words of the two.

To human thinking, words that try to prevent suffering sound right. This is because it is hard simply to accept that death is coming upon the One we follow. But the way Jesus would go for salvation cannot be blocked by a disciple's judgment, so Peter needed faith that puts the Lord's will before his own judgment.

This scene makes us think more deeply about the confession Peter made to Jesus. If we believe that He is the Christ, we must also accept the work that Christ will do according to the word. Having a heart of respect does not mean that we can decide Jesus'

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way according to our own thinking; a disciple who believes in the Lord is one who learns from the Lord.

Peter used the decisive word *"never."* But speaking with conviction does not always make a judgment right, and a conviction that differs from the word of God must be corrected. So we, too, must examine our judgment in the light of the word, all the more when that judgment is strong. Faith examines, together with the strength of a conviction, what that conviction is following.

Dear fellow believers, even when you speak out of love and concern, examine the Lord's will first. The thought of removing the difficulty before someone's eyes is not always in agreement with the way of the word. Even when you help a fellow believer, you must help him so that he can stand by following the word, and if you regard only helping him avoid suffering as the whole of help, you may lose the faith that follows the Lord.

The rebuke to get behind Him

Jesus turned and said to Peter, *"Get behind Me, Satan!" (Matthew 16:23)*. It is a stern rebuke. He revealed what role Peter's words, which were blocking the work the Lord would accomplish, were playing; Jesus answered clearly the words that obstructed His own work of salvation.

He went on to say, *"You are an offense to Me" (Matthew 16:23)*. Peter tried to keep suffering from coming upon the Lord, but in reality he was blocking the way the Lord had to go. The disciple had tried to stand in the place of leading his Teacher, so he had to return to the place of hearing and following Jesus' words.

The reason Jesus made clear is the word *"you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (Matthew 16:23)*. The standard of the error is clear: he put what looked good to people at the moment ahead of the will of God. Jesus did not change the work of God that He would accomplish to fit the wishes of His disciple.

In the Old Testament, God had the following work of sacrifice carried out: *"And he brought the bull for the sin offering. Then Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bull for the sin offering" (Leviticus 8:14)*. This meaning of laying hands on the head of the offering and offering the sacrifice points to the Savior, who would have sin passed on to Him. The reason Jesus went the way of suffering and death was also to have our sins passed on to Him and accomplish salvation.

This was the way that Peter tried to block when he said *"this shall never be unto thee."* Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. And as the price of those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place, and on the third day He rose again from death and saved us completely. We receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to those who believe.

Jesus went that way to the end in order to give us life. We who hear this word today know the salvation the Lord has accomplished, so we must cast away the attitude of trying to correct His words by our own judgment. Christ, who accomplished salvation, teaches His disciples, and the disciples learn His will and follow it.

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The disciple who takes up his own cross

After rebuking Peter, Jesus said to the disciples, *"If anyone desires to come after Me" (Matthew 16:24)*. He did not stop at pointing out the error of one person but taught all who follow Him, so now the disciples had to learn together what it means to follow the Lord.

The command is *"let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24)*. Peter tried to remove Jesus' suffering, but Jesus told His disciples, too, each to take up his own cross. It means that they should lay down the thinking that put only the avoidance of suffering first, and endure the difficulties that come with following the Lord.

Denying oneself means laying down the attitude that always made one's own judgment the final standard, and following the Lord's word when Jesus' word and one's own thinking differ. In today's passage, the self-denial Peter needed first was to withdraw his own judgment that tried to prevent suffering, and to accept the way of salvation Jesus would go.

In the same teaching in the Gospel of Luke, it says, *"Take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23)*. This obedience must continue in a disciple's life, and having once made a great resolution cannot take the place of today's choice. Day by day, in the place where we are, we must deny ourselves according to the Lord's word and fulfill the work entrusted to us. When Jesus called His disciples to come after Him, He did not mean that they should create suffering on their own and boast of it, but that they should not forsake Him in the face of the difficulties they go through because they follow the Lord.

The book of 1 Peter says, *"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21)*. This testimony, written later by Peter, who had tried

to prevent suffering, now leads us to follow Christ, who suffered. A disciple learns the Lord's word and follows the way He showed.

So examine your choices, too, in the light of this word. Look back to see whether you are putting off what you should obey in the word merely because there are difficulties, and if there is a responsibility you must carry out as you serve the Lord, take on that responsibility while asking for help. Faith that looks to the way Christ went before us leads today's obedience.

Losing and finding

Jesus says, *"Whoever desires to save his life will lose it" (Matthew 16:25)*. If we leave the Lord in order to keep our own life, we lose true life; it is a warning that even if it seems that we have avoided loss for the moment, in the end it becomes a life of losing. So a disciple must consider, together with what remains before his eyes, on whom his life depends.

The promise that follows is the word *"whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 16:25)*. What is important here is the phrase *"for My sake"*; in a life that is lost because of Jesus there is the life He gives. A disciple's choice depends not so much on whether he can keep everything of his own as on whether he belongs to the Lord, who gives life.

Mark records this word as *"whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mark 8:35)*. It is a life of enduring for the sake of Christ and the gospel. So rather than counting his own losses and making them his merit, a saint makes clear whom he believes in and follows, and because he believes in the Lord, who bestowed salvation, he entrusts his life to Him.

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This promise gives hope to those who follow in the midst of suffering. Even if what one has taken on for the Lord is not greatly recognized in the world, the One who gives life knows it, so even if the results visible now are small, the path walked by faith is not in vain. Because the Lord promised that he *"will find it,"* the disciple can keep walking that path.

The apostle Paul wrote, *"Those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:15)*. The life of a person who has been saved is directed toward Christ, who died in his place and rose again, so the grace of having obtained life teaches him for whom he must live.

What we need is not the self-confidence that we can solve every difficulty alone, but the faith that we can entrust our lives to the Lord. We can carry out the work entrusted to us while acknowledging that our own ability is lacking and also receiving help from the saints, so on the way of living for Christ, we need faith that relies on Him rather than the boast of holding out alone.

Peter tried to prevent Jesus' death, but Jesus gave life through His own death and resurrection and promised life also to those who follow Him. The disciple who had looked only at avoiding death must now look to the Lord, who overcomes death, and then the standard for judging what is lost and what is gained also changes.

A life that cannot be exchanged even for the whole world

Jesus adds a question: *"What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26)*. While speaking of the greatest thing that can be gained, He asked

what profit there is if one loses one's life. So a disciple must think about the matter of his own life beyond the profit before his eyes.

This question already carries the condition of having gained the whole world. Before we look for more to gain, He makes us think of the outcome of gaining everything and yet losing one's life, which means that possessions cannot take the place of life. What we often count is what we will gain or lose now, but Jesus makes us see life, which is more precious than possessions.

Again He asks, *"What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26)*. It is a question of whether a man can provide a price to regain a lost life, and when we hear this word, we come to look back on the heart that relied on what we have. Knowing and believing in the Lord, who gives life, is more important to us than anything else.

Jesus did not say that riches or honor make a person live forever; rather, He made it clear that one can lose one's life even after gaining the whole world. Therefore, if you put protecting your possessions ahead of following Christ, you miss the true profit, so examine what you are protecting, and also whom you are leaving.

In the Psalms, too, there is a word that makes this limit clear. *"None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him—" (Psalm 49:7)*. This is a word that makes clear the fact that people cannot redeem life by their own strength. In today's passage, too, the question of what one would exchange for one's life reveals our limits, and the saints who know those limits give thanks to the Lord, who has given them life, and treasure His word.

Dear fellow believers, you cannot evaluate the path of faith only by how much your circumstances today have improved. What matters is whether you keep faith in Christ and live in the

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life He has given. Even if you lose the things you possess only temporarily, the life that belongs to the Lord is eternal, and when you have this discernment, you can make the choices needed to follow the Lord.

The Son of Man, who will come in glory

Jesus now speaks of what is to come. *"The Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels" (Matthew 16:27)*. It means that the Son of Man, who would suffer and be killed, will come in glory, and the One whom the disciples must follow today is that very One. So that they would not judge by looking only at the appearance of suffering, Jesus told them of the glory to come.

He said that at that time *"He will reward each according to his works,"* so the One who knows our lives and will judge them is the Lord. Therefore a disciple cannot live only by the evaluations that people see, but must faithfully carry out the work entrusted to him now, with the heart that he is doing it before Christ.

The Psalms say, *"Also to You, O Lord, belongs mercy; For You render to each one according to his work" (Psalm 62:12)*. The merciful Lord rewards each person according to what he has done. The fact that the Lord sees the work the saints do makes them realize their responsibility to obey, and at the same time it becomes a comfort to those who serve for the Lord in places where no one recognizes them.

The command to take up one's own cross and follow is connected with this promise. Even if there is suffering on the disciple's way, the final judgment depends not on present circumstances but on the Lord, who will come in glory, so the

saints carry out today's work by placing their lives before the Lord rather than entrusting them to the praise of people.

Paul wrote, *"The things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18)*. The suffering seen now cannot tell the whole of life, so we must also look to the future the Lord has promised. Those who believe that promise rely on Christ, who has given them eternal life, even in the midst of present circumstances.

A disciple who has heard the word that Jesus will reward does not take lightly what he must do. Whether anyone sees or not, he fulfills the responsibility entrusted to him, and if there is any part where he has gone against the word because of his own will, he corrects it. The heart that waits for the Lord's coming makes today's obedience earnest.

The disciples, who heard the promise of royal authority

Finally, Jesus says, *"Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (Matthew 16:28)*. He said that among those standing here there were some who would see the royal authority of the Son of Man before they died, so He promised the royal authority of the Son of Man, who would suffer.

The expression "*there are some standing here"* in this word refers to the people who were listening to Jesus' words. In verse 27 He spoke of coming in glory and rewarding each person, and in this verse He promised that there were some among them who would see His royal authority, so we must accept each word just as it is expressed.

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In chapter 17, which follows, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John and goes up on a mountain. There it is recorded, *"He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light" (Matthew 17:2)*. So, of the disciples who had heard the words of suffering, these three come to see Jesus' glory. The passage testifies of the Lord's glory together with the prediction of His suffering.

In 2 Peter there is the testimony that the apostles *"were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16)*. This is the apostle who preaches the power and coming of Christ speaking of the Lord's majesty that he himself saw, so the Jesus whom the disciples followed suffered, but He is the Lord of glory. That testimony leads us, too, to believe in the Lord's promise now and follow Him.

The teaching that began where Peter took hold of Jesus and tried to dissuade Him continues on to the promise of life and glory. A disciple must lay down his own thought of keeping the Lord from suffering, and follow Him, who overcomes death and has royal authority. We, too, must walk today's path by following the whole of the Lord's word, rather than drawing conclusions only from the difficulties before our eyes.

Dear fellow believers, Christ went the way of suffering to save us, and He rose again from death. Now His disciple comes down from the place where he put his own judgment first, and follows the Lord. To bear one's own cross while looking to Christ, who gives life and will come in glory—that is the way of the disciple that He has taught us. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, who raised up the disciples who had fallen down in fear

< Matthew 17:1–8 >

“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, ‘Arise, and do not be afraid.’ When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.”

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Jesus, who was beside the disciples even in the midst of glory

When Jesus' face shone like the sun on the high mountain, the disciples saw a glory different from the appearance they usually saw. Yet the One who took them up and the One who came to them in their fear were the same Jesus. While this passage shows the glory of Jesus, it also conveys how the disciples who stood before that glory came to rise up again, so if we remember only the shining sight, we can easily miss Jesus' touch and word that come at the end.

Verse 1 records that Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother and went up on a high mountain by themselves. The words *"after six days"* tell us that this happened after Jesus had taught about suffering and resurrection just before. The disciples did not seek out a high mountain on their own and obtain glory; rather, Jesus led them and revealed His own glory before them. So what we must see first in this event is not any special ability the disciples had but the grace of Jesus, who makes Himself known, and here it is revealed from whom the knowing of God begins.

Verse 2 records that His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light. It was revealed that Jesus, who had walked the road with them every day, is the beloved Son of God the Father, the Son who possesses a glory the disciples had not yet understood; He was not One who could be confined within the disciples' expectations. So those who follow Jesus move away from the attitude of trying to explain Him fully by their own judgment of what they already know, and accept the word by which He reveals Himself.

Then Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus, appeared to the disciples. Since Moses and Elijah appeared, what unfolded

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before the disciples was not a spectacle far removed from the word of God, but a place where the will God had already spoken and the work of the Son were revealed together. Yet what the disciples would do when faced with that scene is not decided by their admiration; rather, the word of God that is heard next guides their response.

Even a good heart must hear the word of the Son

In verse 4, Peter, saying that it was good for them to be there, told Jesus that he would make three tabernacles. It was a proposal to make one for the Lord, one for Moses, and one for Elijah, and to do so if the Lord wished. These were words that held a heart wanting to do something for Jesus, but the voice from heaven that was heard next makes clear what he had to do first.

We easily think that once we have good intentions we are ready to act right away, but the heart that wants to do something for Jesus and knowing His will are not the same thing. Notice that verse 5 begins with *"While he was still speaking."* While Peter was still making his proposal, God commanded them to hear, so what the disciple had to do was not so much to explain to the end the good plan he himself had thought of, as to listen carefully to learn whom God was pointing to as He spoke.

When we set Peter's words and God's command side by side, the order of service becomes even clearer. Peter said that he would make tabernacles, and God commanded them to hear the Son, so the attention moves from a man's proposal to God's command. Follow this order when you serve as well. If we put zeal alone forward while passing over the hearing of the word, it becomes unclear whose will our service is meant to fulfill.

Therefore, a heart that loves Jesus is shown concretely in hearing His word. Do not stop at offering what looks good in your own eyes, but learn what Jesus teaches and along what path He leads. Those who know that Jesus' will is more precious than the plans they have made are not ashamed even to change those plans.

The word the Father commanded to be heard

Let us read verse 5 again. "*While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'" (Matthew 17:5)*. God first makes clear who Jesus is, saying that He is His beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased, and then commands them to hear that Son. Since the command to hear is grounded in who He is, what the disciples received was not a suggestion to choose one among many opinions but a command to give ear to the word of the Son in whom God is well pleased.

For those who follow this command, the glory seen before their eyes and the word Jesus taught are joined as one. Earlier, Jesus had taught His disciples that He would suffer many things in Jerusalem, be killed, and rise again, and when Peter heard that word, he took hold of Jesus and tried to stop Him. Just because a word was hard to understand does not mean that one may forget that word after seeing a shining glory. Since the Son whom the Father loves had Himself spoken of that way, the disciples had to hear even the word that differed from their own expectations.

If we, too, pick out and keep only the words we want to hear, we cannot rightly know Jesus' will. Receive the words of rebuke

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with the same heart that rejoices in the words of comfort, and obey even the teaching that tells you to lay down your own thoughts with the same heart that relies on the promises. The authority of the Son does not rise and fall with our moods, so the faith that hears the word brings the confession that Jesus is right even into our actual judgments and choices.

The way that the Son, whom the Father told them to hear, said He would go was the very way for our sins. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and among them are also the sins that you and I commit throughout our lifetime. To pay the price of the sins thus passed on to Him, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place, and just as He had said beforehand, He rose again from death. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit have all their sins washed away, receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, and become children of God.

Peter tried to block that way, but the Son went that way to the end, just as He had said. That is why we can rely on His word. Those who have accepted even the words that are hard to hear believe with thanksgiving in the salvation fulfilled just as that word said, and serve the Lord in that thankfulness.

The touch that came near into the midst of fear

In verse 6, when the disciples heard that voice, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. Before the glory the Son of God possessed and the voice from heaven, people could not remain standing as they were, so the fact that they had seen Jesus' glory did not immediately make them bold people. The text records that fear without hiding it, and then goes on to convey what Jesus did in the very midst of that fear.

Let us read verse 7. *"But Jesus came and touched them and said, 'Arise, and do not be afraid'" (Matthew 17:7)*. The One who moved first was Jesus. He came to the disciples who had fallen face down, touched them, and told them to rise; so the Son who had just revealed His glory now personally cared for the frightened disciples. It was not that the disciples received help only after they had overcome their fear by themselves and approached Jesus; rather, Jesus came to them and gave them the word by which they could rise up again.

So the word telling them not to be afraid did not remain for the disciples a vague demand to make their hearts strong. Jesus did not merely speak from afar, but came beside the disciples who had fallen face down and spoke as He touched them. That touch made clear whom they must hold on to more than the sight that had caused their fear, so the disciples could rise up according to the word of the Son of God, who did not abandon them.

When we are discouraged because of our own weakness, what matters is what the basis for rising up again is. Assurance does not last long when it comes from examining our own hearts to find even a slightly improved appearance, but the remission of sins accomplished through the gospel of the water and the Spirit is certain, so we come before the Lord's word on that basis. Do not hide the shortcomings that show up after you have received the remission of sins, but acknowledge and correct them; yet do not go so far as to shake the very basis of the salvation the Lord has given.

The word Jesus spoke to the disciples who had fallen face down was to rise, so grace does not leave us lying face down. Those who believe in the Lord's care do not, even after acknowledging their own wrongs, stop and look only at themselves, but walk again according to the word they have

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heard. To take what the Lord has said more weightily than the fact that fear still remains—this is the walk of faith.

The One who remained when they lifted up their eyes

In verse 8, when the disciples got up and lifted up their eyes, Jesus, who had just touched them and told them to rise, was before them, and they saw no one but Him. In this way, God's command to hear the Son and the final scene in which only Jesus was before the disciples are connected with each other.

This ending shows what the disciples must hold on to. The face that had shone like the sun and the clothes that had been as white as the light returned to their usual appearance, but Jesus, who had revealed who He is through that sight, was still beside them, and the word they had to hear also remained. So it is not that one can follow Jesus only if special sights continue. Faith does not cling to recreating past scenes but follows Jesus, who speaks now.

In our faith too, if we hold on only to the memory of a time when we were once deeply moved, today's obedience easily becomes blurred. Treasure that memory, but examine, before the word God has already given, what you are to accept and what you are to correct today. As we saw in Peter's proposal, putting even our good intentions under the word, and, like the disciples who had been afraid, rising up according to that word when the Lord raises us up—this is the path we are to walk today.

The glory on the mountain did not remain merely as a light that made the disciples fall face down. This is because the Son of that glory Himself came near, touched them, and raised them up. Jesus, who knows our weakness, upholds us by grace today

as well. So even when you are lying face down in fear, hear the word of Jesus, who touches you and says *"Arise, and do not be afraid,"* and rise up again. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

We, too, are changed like the Lord

< Matthew 17:1–8 >

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!' And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, 'Arise, and do not be afraid.' When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only."

"It is good for us to be here"

Imagine that you went up that high mountain that day with Peter, James, and John. After following Jesus up for a long while, you are catching your breath, and right before your eyes the appearance of Jesus begins to change. The Bible records that moment as follows: *"And He was transfigured before them. His*

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face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light" (Matthew 17:2).

He was the One who until yesterday had walked the road with the disciples and eaten meals with them. He was the One who had been beside them in a human body just like the disciples' own. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes shone whiter than anything white in the world. Only then did the disciples see with their own eyes what kind of One He was whom they had been following. Although He was clothed in human form, He was the Son of God, who came from heaven, and He was God.

But that was not all. Moses and Elijah of Old Testament times appeared and talked with Jesus. The disciples were people who had grown up hearing the stories of Moses and Elijah from their childhood. Those two men were now talking with Jesus right before their eyes. Peter's heart swelled. He did not want to leave this sight behind. So he said, *"Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Matthew 17:4).*

Three tabernacles

The reason Peter said he would make three tabernacles was that the sight before his eyes was so utterly enrapturing. He wanted to make one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah, and he and the others wanted to live beside them, beholding this glory. But Peter did not say this after calmly thinking it over. The Gospel of Mark, which records the same event, conveys the hearts of the disciples at that time as follows: *"Because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid" (Mark 9:6)*. Peter was enraptured and yet afraid. Not knowing what he should say, he said whatever came out of his mouth.

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Moses was the man who received the law from God. He received the Ten Commandments, and he received the way to build the tabernacle and the way to offer sacrifices and conveyed them to the people. Elijah was the prophet who turned the people of Israel, who had been serving idols, back to the LORD God. So Moses and Elijah represent the law and the prophets of the Old Testament. Although Moses and Elijah appeared together with Jesus, the law and the prophets could not do in His place the work that Jesus was about to do.

Jesus did not answer a single word to this remark of Peter. Since it was something said out of excitement and fear at the glorious sight, it was not something worth answering. Jesus had not gone up this mountain to stay and live here with the disciples. Jesus, who had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, had to go down from the mountain and go to Jerusalem, and there He had to be crucified on the Cross and die, and come back to life in three days. For Jesus came to this earth to accomplish the work that the law and the prophets cannot do.

The sinner standing before the law

What is the work that the law cannot do? It is the work of removing sin. The law teaches us what sin is. When we stand before the words, "You shall not lie," "You shall not covet," and "Honor your parents," we come to know what kind of people we are. That is why the Bible says, *"By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20)*.

The law is like a mirror. A mirror shows the stains on our face, but it cannot wipe those stains away. The longer we stand before the law, the more ashamed we only become. Moses led

the people through the wilderness for forty years, but he went up Mount Nebo and only looked out over the land of Canaan, and he could not enter it. The law is the same. The law only brings us as far as realizing that we are sinners and that we must go to Jesus Christ; it cannot deliver us from sin.

Yet many people strive to keep the law. They strive to pray more fervently, to repent more, and to live a better life. But by doing so, has the sin in their hearts disappeared? The sin they repented of yesterday comes to mind again today, and the sin they repent of today weighs heavily on their hearts again tomorrow. What about you? You say that it has been ten or twenty years since you came to believe in Jesus, but do you have sin in your heart now, or not? Many people cannot readily answer when faced with this question. Even while saying that they believe in Jesus, they live all their lives calling themselves sinners.

No matter how diligently we keep the law and repent every day, not a single one of the sins recorded in our hearts is erased. By human strength we cannot go a single step further from here. Then where is the way to remove sin? God Himself gave us that answer on the mountain of transfiguration.

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"

While Peter was still speaking, the voice of God was heard from heaven. The Bible records that moment as follows: *"While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'" (Matthew 17:5).*

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Here is the very center of today's word. This voice was not a voice heard for the first time. When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, this voice had first been heard from heaven. If we know what happened that day at the Jordan River, we come to know what the voice on the mountain of transfiguration means. For through that baptism He received from John, Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him once and for all, bore that sin and shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again in three days.

When Jesus turned thirty, He went to the Jordan River to find John. John tried to stop Jesus. To John, who had been giving baptism to sinners, it was utterly incomprehensible that the One who had no sin was bowing His head before him. Then Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*.

John allowed it, and Jesus received baptism from John. Then heaven was opened. *"When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:16–17)*.

What was it about the Son that God the Father was pleased with? He was pleased that the Son obeyed the will of the Father and had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. And He spoke of the Son, who would bear that sin of the world, go to the Cross, shed His blood and die, and rise again in three days, as the One *"in whom I am well pleased."* The voice heard on the mountain of transfiguration let the voice of the Jordan River be heard once again. It means that since this Son is doing the work that neither

Moses nor Elijah could do, they should hear the words of this Son.

The laying on of hands: the hands through which sin is passed on

How could the sin of the world be passed on to Jesus through the baptism at the Jordan River? The answer is already contained in the law that Moses received. God also gave Moses the way to remove sin. That is the law of sacrifice.

Imagine that a person in Old Testament times had committed a sin. That person brings an unblemished lamb or goat to the door of the tabernacle. Then he places both his hands on the head of that animal. God had laid this down: *"Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:4)*. The moment he places his hands on it, that person's sin is transferred to the animal. The animal that has had the sin transferred to it has its throat cut and sheds its blood in that person's place. The priest sprinkles that blood all around on the altar. In this way that person receives the remission of sins and returns home.

But people commit sin every day. Knowing that they could not bring an animal every day, God established the tenth day of the seventh month as the Day of Atonement, once a year. On that day the high priest laid his hands on the head of a goat on behalf of all the people. It is written, *"Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man" (Leviticus 16:21)*.

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Imagine the people standing outside the tabernacle on that day. The sacrifices offered inside the tabernacle were hidden by the veil and could not be seen by the people. After the high priest had finished all the atonement inside the tabernacle, he brought a live goat out before the people. Then, while the people looked on, he placed both his hands on the head of that scapegoat and confessed all the iniquities and sins that the children of Israel had committed during the year. Only when they saw this did the people realize, "All our sins piled up over the year have been passed on!" Through the two hands of the one high priest, a whole year's worth of the sins of all Israel was transferred to the goat. The goat to which the sins had been passed on left for the wilderness, led by the hand of the man appointed beforehand. The Bible records, *"The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:22)*. The people watched for a long time the goat that bore their sins and went farther and farther away. That goat, abandoned in the wilderness where no one could live, eventually died there. For the wages of sin is death. The goat that bore the sins of the people of Israel died in their place. Regarding that day, God promised, *"For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD" (Leviticus 16:30)*. It is the promise that they would be made clean from all their sins. But this sacrifice had to be repeated year after year. For with the blood of animals, only the sins of one year could be washed away. The true offering that would wash away the sin of the whole world once and for all had to come.

Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John

God gave this law of sacrifice of the Old Testament as a shadow. When the time came, God the Father sent Jesus, the true sacrificial offering, to this earth. And the one who played the role of the high priest in the New Testament is John the Baptist. John was born of Elizabeth, a descendant of Aaron, and Jesus said of John, *"Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11)*. John was the representative of mankind. That John placed his hands on Jesus' head at the Jordan River and gave Him baptism. The laying on of hands of the Old Testament was fulfilled in the New Testament as baptism.

That is why Jesus said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. The word *"thus"* is houtos (οὕτως) in the original language. It means 'in the most fitting way' and 'in the only way, apart from which it could not be done.' All righteousness is the right work of God that makes all people sinless. Jesus had to have the sin of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, that is, by this very way. Apart from this way, the sin of the world could not have been passed on to Jesus.

Afterward, when John, who had given the baptism, saw Jesus coming toward him, he cried out as follows: *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. John knew what he had done. At the Jordan River, the sin of the world was passed on to Jesus once and for all. That is why John cried out that Jesus was the Lamb who goes bearing the sin of the world.

Jesus, who had thus borne the sin of the world, walked for three years and at last was hung on the Cross on the hill of

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Golgotha. The Cross is not the place where sin was passed on to Jesus. It is the place where He received the judgment for the sin that had already been passed on at the Jordan River. Nails were driven into both His hands and both His feet, and He poured out all the blood of His body. As He breathed His last, Jesus said, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*. And in three days He rose again from death.

Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross while bearing that sin, and rose again from death in three days, and so He saved us. This is the obedience of the Son that pleased God the Father. Here lies the reason it was said twice from heaven that He was the One *"in whom I am well pleased."*

Our sins, too, were all passed on to Him at that time

Now let me ask you. Were your sins also contained in the sin of the world that Jesus had transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River? Yes, they were. The sins you have committed from the time you were born until now, and even the sins you will commit in the future, were all contained in it. For what Jesus had transferred to Him that day was the sin of the world, that is, all the sins that all the people of the world commit from the time they are born until they die.

Were the sins you committed yesterday passed on? Yes, they were. Were the sins you committed in your heart this morning passed on? Yes, they were. What about the shameful sins you have kept to yourself all your life without being able to tell anyone? Those sins, too, were passed on. The sins of your

children and the sins of your parents were all passed on as well. Jesus bore all those sins and received the judgment on the Cross.

Therefore, there is no sin in the hearts of those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is not because they feel that way emotionally. It is because sin was actually passed on to Jesus, and Jesus paid the price of that sin in full on the Cross. That same Peter who was on the mountain of transfiguration later wrote of this as follows: *"There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21)*. Those who believe in the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection come before God the Father with a good conscience.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, we still do wrong in the flesh. But that, too, is included in the sin of the world. These sins, too, were already contained in the sin of the world that Jesus had transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. This is also what Peter meant when he said that this baptism is not the removal of the filth of the flesh. The flesh is still weak, but there is no sin in the good conscience obtained by faith. Is there sin in your heart, or not? There is not. These are by no means easy words. Try saying before people, "I have no sin in my heart." They will all be startled. Even so, the reason we can say this is not that we are anything great, but that Jesus has taken care of all those sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

"Hear Him!"

From within the cloud, God the Father commanded the

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disciples, *"Hear Him!"* He told them to hear the words of the Son, not the words of Moses nor the words of Elijah. What did the Son say? At the Jordan River He said that He would fulfill all righteousness in this way, and on the Cross He said that it was finished. To hear the words of the Son means to believe in this work that the Son has accomplished, just as it is.

In the church today there are many words. There is the claim that one must live a good life to keep one's salvation, the claim that sins are washed away only if one repents every day, and the claim that if one strives all one's life to become holy, one will someday become a person without sin. All of these are doctrines made by men. God the Father did not tell us to hear such words. He told us to hear the words of the Son. The Son has already said on the Cross that it was finished. What more can man add to the work that He has already finished? What we have to do is only to believe the words of the Son—that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit—just as they are.

"They saw no one but Jesus only"

The disciples who heard the voice from heaven fell on the ground and were greatly afraid. The Bible records what happened at that time as follows: *"But Jesus came and touched them and said, 'Arise, and do not be afraid.' When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only" (Matthew 17:7–8)*.

Moses had disappeared, and Elijah had disappeared. In the place where Peter had meant to make the tabernacles, only Jesus was there. The law and the prophets had finished their work of pointing to Jesus and had withdrawn. Now beside the disciples

there was only Jesus, who would bear their sins and go to the Cross.

The mountain of transfiguration engraved on the hearts of the disciples

As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged the disciples, *"Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead" (Matthew 17:9)*. Why did Jesus show this sight to these three among the twelve disciples, Peter, James, and John? God first shows His servants what He is doing, and then He works. Six days earlier, Peter had confessed to Jesus, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*. The disciples who had made that confession saw the original form of Jesus on the mountain with their own two eyes, and heard with their own two ears the voice of the Father coming from heaven. "This One is God, who has come clothed in a human body!" This sight was deeply engraved on the hearts of the three disciples.

At that time, even the disciples did not fully understand the meaning of this sight. But after Jesus died on the Cross and rose again, and after they received the Holy Spirit along with the remission of sins, they realized what it was that they had seen and heard on the mountain. The One they had followed was God, who came in a human body, and He was the Savior who saved all mankind from sin. After that, countless persecutions came upon them. They were thrown into prison, beaten, and even lost their lives. Even so, they kept their faith, and testified to the end that Jesus Christ is God, who came in a human body, and that He is the Savior. That sight engraved on their hearts on the

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mountain and the Holy Spirit who had come upon their hearts were the strength by which they overcame persecution.

We who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, too, are washed white as snow and changed

What happened on the mountain of transfiguration does not end as a story that Jesus alone was transfigured. It is an event that showed that we who believe in Jesus are also changed in the same way. Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit have their sins washed away white as snow and become children of God. Just as Jesus' clothes became as white as the light on the mountain, the hearts of those who believe in this gospel have also become white, without sin.

How are we changed in that way? We are changed by knowing and believing what Moses and Elijah, who appeared together on the mountain of transfiguration, and Jesus did. The law that Moses received made us realize that we are sinners. The Elijah who was to come, to whom Elijah on the mountain of transfiguration points, that is, John the Baptist, transferred the sin of the world to Jesus through baptism as the representative of mankind. Jesus, while bearing that sin of the world, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again from death in three days, and so He saved us. Those who know and believe this fact are the people who have been washed white as snow and changed.

And in the future our bodies, too, will be changed. Concerning the day when the Lord comes again, the Bible says as follows: *"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead*

will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:51–53). The appearance of Jesus that the three disciples saw on the mountain of transfiguration showed beforehand the appearance that we will put on that day. On that day, the saints who have received the remission of sins will be changed into a body that does not decay and does not feel pain, a spiritual body, and will live forever with the Lord.

Because Peter wanted to remain in that glory, he said that it was good to be here. But at that time he could not stay there. For Jesus had to go down from the mountain and go to the Cross. Because Jesus went that way to the end and accomplished our salvation, we who believe in this gospel will live forever with the Lord in that glory in the future. That glory that Peter beheld for a moment on the mountain is the place where we who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit will enter and live.

Even among you there may be some who have believed in Jesus for a long time but still have sin in their hearts and live calling themselves sinners. There may be some for whom the sins they repented of yesterday weigh heavily on their hearts again today. Now hear not the words made by men, but the words of the Son, whom God the Father told us from within the cloud to hear. Jesus had all your sins transferred to Him when He received baptism from John at the Jordan River, bore those sins and received the judgment on the Cross in your place, and rose again from death in three days. If you believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, there is no sin in your heart either. You are washed white as snow.

And I hope that you will live preaching this grace of having been washed white as snow to your neighbors who do not yet know this gospel. Just as the disciples testified all their lives of

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what they had seen and heard on the mountain of transfiguration, let us also live preaching this gospel of the water and the Spirit, which we have heard and believed. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The Elijah who was to come is none other than John the Baptist

< Matthew 17:9–13 >

"Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.' And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist."

What the disciples asked on the way down from the mountain

The three disciples, who had seen Jesus' glorious appearance on the mountain of transfiguration, came down from the mountain with Jesus. On the way down, Jesus gave the disciples a charge: *"Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead'" (Matthew 17:9)*. It was a charge

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not to tell anyone what they had seen on the mountain until Jesus had died on the Cross and risen again.

In the hearts of the disciples coming down from the mountain, Elijah, whom they had just seen, kept coming to mind. Since Moses was the man who had received the law, every Israelite knew him well, but it was unexpected that Elijah appeared together with that Moses. Then they recalled what they had been hearing from the scribes. So the disciples asked Jesus: *"And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?'" (Matthew 17:10).*

The scribes were teachers of the law, who explained and taught the law. On the basis of the Old Testament, they taught that Elijah must come first before the Christ came. So the disciples' question meant this: "If You are truly the Christ, Lord, should not Elijah have come first? When is that Elijah coming?"

"I will send you Elijah the prophet"

The teaching of the scribes had a basis. In the very last chapter of the Old Testament, God made a promise as follows: *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5–6).*

Israel in the time of Malachi had gone far away from God. Even the priests did not offer the offerings God had established, but brought blemished ones and offered sacrifices with them. Through the prophet Malachi, God sternly rebuked them. Yet God promised that before that great and dreadful day came, He

would first send one man. And with this promise the Old Testament comes to its close.

As God closed the Old Testament in this way, right before the promise to send Elijah He said, *"Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments" (Malachi 4:4)*. Moses is the representative of the law, who received the law and the law of sacrifice from God and delivered them to the people. Elijah is the prophet who turned the hearts of the people who had left God back to God. On the mountain of transfiguration, God the Father set these two men before the disciples together with Jesus, and so showed that our salvation is inseparably related to these two men.

What kind of man was Elijah? The name Elijah means 'My God is the LORD.' Elijah is the prophet who, at the time when the people of Israel were serving Baal and Asherah, showed on Mount Carmel that the LORD is the true God, and so turned the hearts of the people back to God. At that time Elijah prayed as follows: *"Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again" (1 Kings 18:37)*.

The Elijah whom God said He would send does the work of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers. It is the work of turning the heart of God to man and the heart of man to God, and so reconciling them to each other. There had to be someone who would stand between God and man and do this work. In the Old Testament, the one entrusted with this work was the high priest. The high priest offered the sacrifices God had established so that the people would receive the remission of sins, and he did the work of turning the heart of God, who was wrathful because of sin, into a heart that has compassion on the people. God promised

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that before the Savior came, He would first send Elijah, who would do this work.

"Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things"

Jesus answered the disciples' question: *"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things'" (Matthew 17:11)*. What is it that Elijah comes first and restores? It is reconciling again God and man, who had become enemies because of sin. Because of sin, man became an enemy of God. Because God is One who cannot simply leave sin alone, sinners had no choice but to be under the wrath of God. The work of joining again that broken relationship—this is everything that Elijah would come and restore.

Then who is that Elijah? Jesus spoke clearly concerning John the Baptist: *"And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14)*. It is not that Elijah came back to life just as he had been. The one who came with the mission of Elijah is John the Baptist. Before John the Baptist was born, the angel spoke to his father Zacharias as follows: *"He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17)*. This means that the very one who would do the work Malachi had promised was John the Baptist.

The Bible says, *"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17)*. The law of the Old Testament came through Moses, and grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Then who is the one who connects the age of Moses and the age of Jesus Christ? It is none

other than Elijah, that is, John the Baptist. It is also for this reason that Jesus said, *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:13)*. As the last prophet and the last high priest of the Old Testament, John the Baptist was the one who stood between the Old Testament and the New Testament and connected the two ages.

John the Baptist was born of the priest Zacharias and Elizabeth, a descendant of Aaron. He is one who inherited the bloodline of Aaron, the high priest. And he came to this earth six months before Jesus. Before God sent the Savior, He first sent the high priest of mankind, who would pass the sin of mankind on to that Savior.

The restoration that John the Baptist accomplished

In the wilderness of Judea, John the Baptist cried out, *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2)*. He cried out to them not to boast that they were the descendants of Abraham, but to forsake evil and return to God. He began the work of turning the hearts of people who had left God back to God, the work that Elijah was to do.

And John the Baptist did the most important work. When Jesus came to the Jordan River, he baptized Jesus. When John tried to prevent Him, Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. When John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, laid his hands on Jesus' head and baptized Him, the sins of all the people of the world were passed on to Jesus. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to

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Him. And bearing that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, rose again in three days, and saved us.

After that, John the Baptist testified of Jesus, pointing to Him, as follows: *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. This is testimony that Jesus now bears away the sin of the world, which John himself had passed on through baptism. In this way John the Baptist passed the sin of mankind on to Jesus and testified that Jesus is the Savior.

This is everything that Elijah came and restored. Because John the Baptist passed the sin of mankind on to Jesus and Jesus received the judgment for that sin on the Cross, we, who had been enemies because of sin, have been reconciled to God the Father. The Bible says, *"When we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10)*. Now we are no longer enemies of God but have become children of God and one family. In the New Testament age, this work of saving mankind from sin was accomplished by John the Baptist, as the representative of mankind, passing the sin of the world on to Jesus through baptism, and by Jesus bearing that sin and receiving the judgment.

"Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished"

But Jesus went on to say, *"I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished" (Matthew 17:12)*. This means that the Elijah whom God had promised had already come, but people did not recognize who he was and treated him as they pleased.

John the Baptist was put in prison for pointing out the sin of King Herod, who had taken his brother's wife, and in the end he

was beheaded in prison. The religious leaders did not believe him either. Concerning them, Jesus rebuked them as follows: *"For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him" (Matthew 21:32)*. John the Baptist came to lead people into the way of righteousness, that is, the way to the kingdom of heaven, but people did not accept him.

It is no different today. Many people regard John the Baptist as a failure, who was beheaded by Herod. But John the Baptist is not a failure. He is one who fully accomplished the work God had entrusted to him and then departed. John the Baptist himself said, *"He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30)*. After he finished the work of passing the sin of mankind on to Jesus and testifying of Jesus, he himself stepped back. Jesus also said, *"Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11)*. If John the Baptist had failed, it would mean that the work of God, who sent him, had also failed.

If we do not know the work John the Baptist did, we cannot know how Jesus removed our sins. Today many people know that Jesus shed His blood on the Cross, but they do not know that Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit. So even while they say they believe in Jesus, sin remains in their hearts as it is. Since the sins they commit every day pile up in their hearts, they always call themselves sinners and grieve. Disregarding the work John the Baptist did is the same as disregarding the work Jesus did.

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"Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands"

Following this word, Jesus said, *"Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands" (Matthew 17:12)*. This means that just as John the Baptist was rejected by people, Jesus also would be rejected by people and suffer. John the Baptist was martyred after he had passed the sin of the world on to Jesus, and Jesus, who bore the sin of the world, also went to the Cross.

Jesus hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and said, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*. And He rose again from death in three days. In this way, by having the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, receiving all the judgment for that sin on the Cross, and rising again, Jesus fulfilled the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Now whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and is reconciled to God.

We too must come to understand what the disciples understood

The disciples who heard Jesus' words came to know it only then: *"Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist" (Matthew 17:13)*. The Elijah whom Malachi had promised, the one who had come first to restore all things, was none other than John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus at the Jordan River.

We too must come to understand what the disciples understood. Before the great and dreadful day comes, God the Father first sent Elijah, and through John the Baptist, who is that Elijah, He passed the sin of mankind on to Jesus. And Jesus bore

that sin and received the judgment. Those who know and believe this fact escape the wrath of God and become children of God, reconciled to God. But for those who do not know this fact and do not believe it, the day of wrath awaits, just as Malachi warned.

Everyone, do you truly want to receive the remission of sins? Then acknowledge and believe that the work John the Baptist did is the right work God established. And I hope that you will believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit: that Jesus had your sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment on the Cross in your place, and rose again in three days. In the hearts of those who believe in this gospel, sin is washed away white as snow, and the relationship with God, with whom they had been enemies, is restored.

And we, who have believed in this gospel first, must live preaching this word to those who do not yet know this gospel, just as John the Baptist turned the hearts of people back to God. Just as John the Baptist said, "*He must increase, but I must decrease,*" we too must do this work without putting ourselves forward, revealing only the Lord. Whether those who hear understand right away or not, we must clearly preach, with the word of the Bible, the work John the Baptist did and the work Jesus did. I hope that all of us will be preciously used in the work of preaching this gospel, which reconciles God and man. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Bring the matters you could not resolve to the Lord

< Matthew 17:14–20 >

“And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, ‘Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.’ Then Jesus answered and said, ‘O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.’ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’ So Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.’”

After the fact that they could not cure him

The boy’s father knelt down before Jesus and pleaded with Him to have mercy on his son. The boy suffered severely from

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epilepsy and often fell into the fire and often into the water, and along with that suffering, the father told one more fact: that he had brought him to the disciples, but they could not cure him. The father, who had not obtained a resolution in the place where he had sought help, now came to Jesus.

The father's words reveal the disciples' failure, but the boy's case did not stop at that failure; it moved on to come before Jesus. He asked Jesus to have mercy on the boy, and the fact that the disciples could not do it and what Jesus could do were not the same. So this scene shows to whom we must go after we have run up against human limits.

We, too, go through matters in which we tried to give help but could not resolve them. At such times, because acknowledging our own failure is painful, it is easy to cover up the problem or to stop at blaming only the person who failed. But this passage makes us look at what Jesus does after that; so if you have confirmed that your own ability is lacking, come to Jesus just as you are in that lacking state.

Even while He rebukes, He calls for the boy

Let us read verse 17. *"Then Jesus answered and said, 'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me'" (Matthew 17:17)*. Jesus rebuked the faithless and perverse generation. Not believing before Jesus, who was with them, taught them, and bore with them, was no light matter; so the matter that the disciples could not resolve could not simply be passed off as a chance occurrence on a day when things did not go well. In that matter, Jesus dealt with their faith.

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But at the end of that rebuke there is the command to bring him here. While pointing out the reality of faithlessness, Jesus did not turn away from the suffering boy. The rebuke did not hinder His care, nor did His care cover up the problem of faith; while healing the boy, Jesus also taught at the same time what the disciples had to learn.

So when you are rebuked through the word, too, accept these two things together. Acknowledging your wrong is necessary, but there is no reason to stop coming to Jesus because of that acknowledgment. The Lord's rebuke corrects us so that we rely on the Lord more, so those who do not hide their own condition but seek help receive that teaching.

In verse 18, when Jesus rebuked the demon, it came out, and the boy was cured from that time. Jesus did what the disciples had not been able to resolve; so the outcome of this event lies not in the disciples' proving their own ability, but in the suffering boy's being cured through Jesus. Those of you who serve, too, set your hearts on the person who needs to receive help and on the work of Jesus rather than on how you yourselves are evaluated.

The disciples who ask the reason for their failure

After the boy was cured, the disciples came to Jesus privately and asked why they had not been able to cast out the demon. Because, after experiencing failure, they did not pass by as though nothing had happened but came to Jesus and asked the reason, that failure became an occasion for receiving teaching.

Their question was *"Why could we not cast it out?"* Thus they asked Jesus about what *"we"* had not been able to do. Those who want to learn faith do not stop at finding the faults of other

people, but ask what they themselves must correct before the word.

Jesus answered that it was because their faith was little; it was the specific answer He gave to the disciples' question. They were people who were beside Jesus, but they needed faith that relied on Him, and having seen many things up close did not mean that that experience could take the place of believing in and relying on Jesus now.

You, too, do not try to let the fact that you have lived a life of faith for a long time take the place of your present faith. It is beneficial to remember the work you were entrusted with before and the help you received before, but actually believing in and relying on God and His word in what confronts you today is necessary apart from that. So those who learn faith do not put their past record forward to avoid rebuke, but listen to the word the Lord is speaking now.

The One on whom faith as a mustard seed relies

Let us read verse 20. *"So Jesus said to them, 'Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you'" (Matthew 17:20)*. Jesus said that the reason the disciples could not cast it out was *"because of your unbelief,"* and He said that if they had faith only as much as a mustard seed, even if they commanded this mountain to move from here to there, it would move, and nothing would be impossible for them. What they could not do when only the disciples' ability was reckoned was possible for Jesus, on whom they relied. So this word makes us

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look clearly at the One on whom faith relies, rather than greatly inflating human self-confidence.

Do not change the word that tells us to have faith into a meaning that you should strongly imagine the result you want. The disciples were at that time learning from Jesus, and the object of faith is Jesus and the word He spoke. The stubbornness that pushes one's own will through to the end and the faith that relies on Jesus' will are different from each other.

In the face of great difficulty, the reasons why you cannot do something come into view first. Your own knowledge and experience are lacking, and the memory of failing before also remains; so acknowledge those limits, but do not measure even the power of God by them. When you undertake the work the Lord has commanded, you need only seek help and faithfully do what you can according to the word. Faith is not an attitude that does not look at the problem, but an attitude that brings that matter to Jesus, who is greater than the problem.

The help the boy's father sought and the teaching the disciples received are linked in this way within one event. The father entrusted his suffering boy to Jesus, and the disciples asked Jesus about their own failure. Both those who receive help and those who serve need the Lord, so those who serve cannot consider, on the grounds that they serve, that they can stand without the Lord's help.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, we rely on the word

The disciples gave no resolution at all to the father who had brought the boy. But the most fundamental problem, which human ability can never ultimately resolve, is sin, and Jesus

came as the Savior who would remove that sin and had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Jesus, who had even the sins that you and I commit throughout our lifetime passed on to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross in our place as the price of those sins, and rose again from death. When we believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we have all our sins washed away, receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, and become children of God.

Those who have received this salvation are already living by the grace of Jesus, so there is no reason for them to rely only on their own strength in serving the Lord after being saved either. Just as you place the basis of your salvation in Jesus, ask Jesus also for the help you need while you live. The fact that we have received the remission of sins does not mean that our fleshly ability has become perfect; it is grace that makes clear to whom we, who are weak, belong.

When you have failed, acknowledge that fact honestly. You need only examine what you did wrong, correct any attitude that goes against the word, and seek help again. The moment when faith is needed is not only when everything goes well and you are confident; even when the fact that you cannot do something is revealed, coming to Jesus is faith.

The father in this passage came bringing his son's suffering, and the disciples came bringing their own failure. Jesus cured the boy and taught the disciples. So do not hide alone the matters you could not resolve, but even in the face of failure, learn the word and seek the Lord's help. Take that matter just as it is to Jesus, who said *"Bring him here to Me,"* and tell it to Him. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, who promised the resurrection

< Matthew 17:22–23 >

“Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, ‘The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.’ And they were exceedingly sorrowful.”

Jesus’ word, which does not stop in the face of death

To the disciples gathered in Galilee, Jesus spoke of how He would be betrayed into the hands of men and be killed, and would rise again on the third day, and the disciples who heard that word were exceedingly sorrowful. In the short text of two verses, what Jesus made known and the response the disciples showed are placed side by side; Jesus spoke even of what lay beyond death, but the disciples’ hearts grew heavy before that word.

Since it was a word that Jesus, whom they were following, would be killed, the disciples’ sorrow was not something to be taken lightly. Yet within the same word there was also the promise that He would rise again. So we who read this text will stand beside the sorrowing disciples and try to follow along and listen to the word they received, to its very last phrase.

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The One who spoke beforehand of what would happen is Jesus Himself. As the words *"about to"* in the text indicate, being betrayed into the hands of men was something that had not yet come, and Jesus, making that known to the disciples in advance, spoke even of the resurrection. So even in the disciples' sorrow, a ground to hold on to had already been given, and Jesus' word became a guide for understanding what would happen.

The Son of Man, who was to be betrayed into the hands of men

The words *"betrayed into the hands of men"* in verse 22 reveal that the suffering that was to befall Jesus would be brought about through the hands of actual people, and the words *"they will kill Him"* in verse 23, which follow, make clear how heavy that suffering is. Jesus did not speak of a hardship He would go through briefly and pass by; rather, He made His own death known to the disciples.

Then why did Jesus, who came as the Savior, have to go this way? It was because the wages of sin is death, and so the One who had our sins passed on to Him had to be killed in our place. Jesus did not merely look on suffering people from afar and comfort them with words alone; rather, He gave Himself for sinners. So when we know that reason, this word He gave to the disciples does not remain merely as news announcing a tragedy.

Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all; so the way on which He would go, betrayed into the hands of men, was the way of paying the price for the sins that had been passed on to Him. At the end of that way, Jesus shed His blood on the Cross and was killed in our place, and on the third day He rose again

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from death. So in the hearts of those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, all sins are washed away, and God gives them the Holy Spirit as a gift and makes them His children.

When Peter first heard of this in chapter 16, he took hold of Jesus and tried to stop Him, saying, *"Be it far from thee –ASV" (Matthew 16:22).* This time, the text records that the disciples were exceedingly sorrowful, with no record of anyone trying to stop Him. Even in front of the sorrowing disciples, Jesus did not take back the fact that He would be killed, and at the very end of that word He also placed the promise that He would rise again on the third day.

The faithfulness of the One who spoke of the third day

Let us read verse 23 again. *"And they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up. And they were exceedingly sorrowful" (Matthew 17:23)*. Jesus clearly said that after being killed He would rise again. The resurrection was not an expectation that the disciples made up for themselves in order to forget their sorrow; rather, it was a promise given personally by Jesus, who was to be killed. So however great the sorrow the disciples felt, whether that word is true depends on Jesus, who spoke it.

While this promise does not take away the weight of death, it leaves no room to say that death is the end. Jesus placed being killed and rising again within a single word; and so we remember the suffering of the Cross and give thanks for that love, and believing in Jesus, who rose again from death, we gain the assurance of salvation. Do not separate, because of your sorrow, the death and resurrection that Jesus joined together.

Faith does not mean that our hearts are always bright without wavering; rather, it is placing in the word the ground for discerning what is true even when our hearts are heavy. In the text, the disciples' sorrow is recorded, and the promise of the resurrection is also recorded. So do not shrink back before the word just because you are sorrowful; rather, in the very midst of that sorrow, listen again to the promise that was given, and believe it.

A heart that values the Lord's will above one's own judgment

The disciples were sorrowful, but Jesus went the way He had spoken of. To learn that way, we must lay down the assumption that our thoughts are always right. Because we are in a hurry to avoid visible loss, we easily regard a comfortable way, when it opens before us, as the best way. But on the way by which Jesus saved sinners, there was a death in which He gave Himself; so once we know that love, the standard by which we judge what is good also changes.

Even those who have been saved sometimes have to endure toil as they follow the work that pleases the Lord. At such times, do not judge that work to be in vain merely because serving is hard; first examine whether that work is fitting according to the word. Because we know the salvation that Jesus accomplished for us, we can give thanks for the grace we have received and follow the Lord's will.

If we keep this order, toil does not turn into a price paid to obtain salvation. Jesus accomplished salvation, and we received the remission of sins by believing in that gospel; so those who know that grace and serve give thanks to the Lord, who has

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enabled them to serve, rather than boasting of their own toil. So even when our own thoughts and the Lord's will differ, we trust the One who leads us by grace and learn the word.

The promise that remains longer than sorrow

The disciples were exceedingly sorrowful, but Jesus' word did not disappear along with their sorrow. The death and resurrection that Jesus made known were not something decided by the disciples' feelings but something Jesus would accomplish, and He accomplished salvation just as He had said. The One we rely on today is that very Jesus.

When your heart is heavy, rather than continuing to examine only the state of your own heart, think again about the word the Lord has already spoken. Learn within that word on what ground you can hope, and hold fast by faith to the fact of the salvation you have received. What Jesus has accomplished does not change even in the moments when our hearts waver.

Jesus, who placed the promise that He would rise again beside the word that made known that He would be killed, has accomplished the salvation that gives us life, just as He said. So I hope that even on days when sorrow sweeps over you, you will live holding the Lord's word *"the third day He will be raised up"* in your heart to the very end. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Give it to them for Me and you

< Matthew 17:24–27 >

“When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, ‘Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?’ He said, ‘Yes.’ And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, ‘What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?’ Peter said to Him, ‘From strangers.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Then the sons are free. Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.’”

The parable of the son, which He gave in answer to the question about the half shekel

In Capernaum, those who collected the half shekel came to Peter and asked whether his Teacher also paid the half shekel, and Peter answered that He did and then went into the house. Then Jesus first asked Peter a question. The people had asked whether He paid it, but Jesus asked from whom the kings of the world take taxes; so to the question of whether He would pay the money, Jesus answered with the parable of the king and the son.

Jesus asked whether the kings of the world take taxes from their own sons or from others, and when Peter said that they take them from others, He said that the sons are free from the tax.

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Within the comparison that Jesus used, the status of a son comes before the obligation to pay; a son does not become a son by paying the tax, but is free because he is a son.

So this teaching keeps us from seeing Jesus merely as a person who moves as He is required. With the word that the sons are free from the tax, Jesus makes that freedom clear. The task He then commanded Peter to do is also understood rightly only when we first know this freedom and then look at it; if we do not know the freedom and look only at the payment, we miss the meaning that Jesus taught first in this passage.

The consideration chosen by the One who knows the freedom

Let us read verses 26 and 27. *"Peter said to Him, 'From strangers.' Jesus said to him, 'Then the sons are free. Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you'" (Matthew 17:26–27).* Jesus did not take back the word that the sons are free from the tax. Leaving that word as it was, He told Peter—"*lest we offend them*"—to take the one shekel that would be obtained from the mouth of the fish and "*give it to them for Me and you.*" The One who knew that He had no obligation decided how He Himself would act out of consideration for other people; so the word that the sons are free from the tax and the consideration for other people are found together within this one conversation.

Jesus also stated the reason for it directly: it was so as not to offend them, that is, so that people would not misunderstand. Therefore, we cannot understand this action as His taking back

the word that the sons are free from the tax. That word remains as it is, and with that freedom Jesus looks after people. A person who knows freedom also knows how, at times, to lay down his own rights and think of other people first.

We too learn, along with knowing what is right, how to use that knowledge. If we put forward only the claim that we can do something because it has been permitted to us, it is easy to miss what the people who see that action will come to understand. So a person who follows Jesus' attitude looks at the circumstances of other people along with his own rights, and examines his own conduct so that no unnecessary stumbling block arises for those people in accepting the truth.

This consideration does not go so far as to change the content of the truth. Just as Jesus first clearly taught the freedom of the son, we too must not hide the gospel of the water and the Spirit or change it into something different, but must believe it and preach it just as it is. At the same time, in matters where you can yield, such as your own convenience and boasting, look after other people. Guarding the truth and pushing one's own feelings through to the very end are different things.

He taught specifically what Peter was to do

Jesus told Peter to go to the sea, cast in a hook, obtain one shekel from the mouth of the fish that was caught first, and then bring it and give it. He did not merely leave behind a word telling him to get money, but spoke one by one of the things Peter was to do; so before Peter, who had heard the word that the sons are free from the tax, there now lay the task of acting according to the command of the One who had spoken that word.

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Seeing that He said in advance even that Peter would obtain the money from the mouth of the fish that was caught first, we know that Jesus was not someone who submitted against His will because He had no way to meet the need. Jesus knew what He would do and led Peter; so what Peter is to learn from this event is not curiosity about a strange way of obtaining money, but rather the faith that follows the word of Jesus, who knew this matter beforehand and spoke of it.

The action entrusted to Peter also involved ordinary labor. He had to go to the sea, cast in a hook, take the fish that was caught first, and open its mouth. So believing in Jesus' power does not mean that there is no longer anything for us to do before His command; rather, it means doing what He has spoken while relying on the help the Lord provides. When we move according to the word we have heard without putting our own ways first, faith appears as obedience in daily life.

Also, Jesus told him to give that money for Himself and Peter. Peter was not only a person who heard Jesus' teaching but also one who received His care; so while Jesus entrusted Peter with a task, He also took into account the needs that concerned him. Therefore, a disciple who serves is not someone who bears every responsibility alone.

The service of a person who knows grace

Jesus' care, which took even Peter's share into account, is revealed most deeply in the remission of sins. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and the sins that you and I commit throughout our whole lives are also included in them. Having had those sins passed on to Him, Jesus shed His

blood and died on the Cross in our place to pay the price of sin, and rose again from death. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit have all their sins washed away, receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, and become children of God.

We, who have become children of God, have been saved by grace. We did not obtain it by striving to have greater rights recognized than other people. Since that grace is clear, the reason to strive to show ourselves every time we serve in order to have our own worth confirmed disappears, and we come to labor and yield where it is needed, giving thanks for the grace we have received.

The heart of Jesus, who did not want to cause them to misunderstand, also appears in our lives. It means going one step further than asking whether something is advantageous to us, and examining what effect this action has on other people. To reduce unnecessary misunderstanding, explain what needs to be explained, and willingly bear the labor that you are able to bear. Serving in this way is not losing the grace we have received but living according to the will of the Lord.

We learn the heart that He placed above rights

In the conversation about the half shekel, Jesus taught the freedom of the son, and then with that freedom He looked after other people. In this conversation Peter heard, along with the word that the sons are free from the tax, the heart of Jesus, who thinks of other people first. So the knowledge of Jesus leads to a life that follows His attitude.

For you too, there will be moments when you can claim your own rights. At such times, do not stop at merely confirming that you have the right; rather, thinking of the grace you have

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received from the Lord, examine what way there is to help other people while guarding the truth. Because we believe in Jesus, who cares for us, we too can look after other people with a heart at ease. It is blessed service to learn in our daily lives the heart of the Lord, who said that the sons are free from the tax and yet said, *"Give it to them for Me and you."* ✉

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CHAPTER

18

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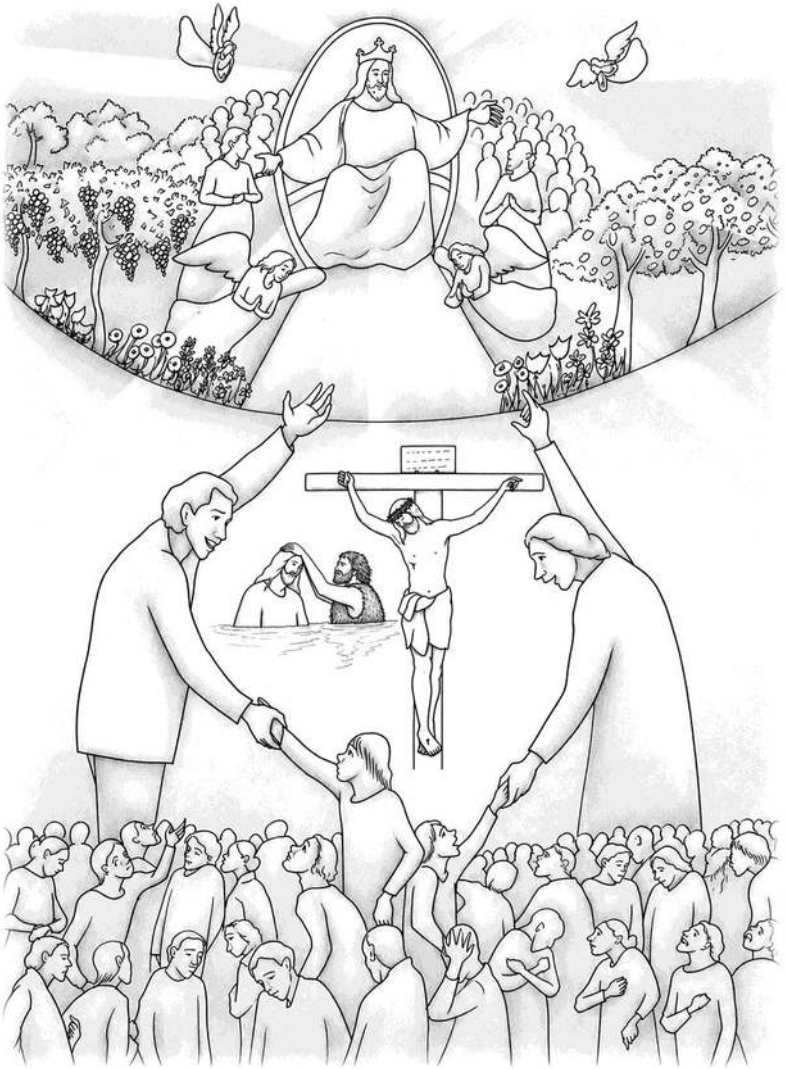

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Those who believe in the gospel with a heart like that of a little child are precious

< Matthew 18:1–10, 12–14 >

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to

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be cast into hell fire. Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.'"

I would like to speak about the fact that the Lord has removed all our sins, even our actual sins. The disciples came to Jesus and asked, *"Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Matthew 18:1)*. To answer the disciples' question, the Lord called a little child, set him in their midst, and said, *"Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3–4)*. Who is the great one in the kingdom of heaven? Who is the great one in the heavenly kingdom? He said that the person who purely accepts and believes the word of God like a little child is the great one in the kingdom of heaven. The disciples asked who was great in the kingdom of heaven, but Jesus spoke about entering the kingdom of heaven. Only when one first enters the kingdom of heaven can there be great ones and small ones. The Lord then went on to say, *"Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his*

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neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:5–6).

What our Lord said in verses 5 and 6 is as follows. If the word of the preceding verses 1 through 4 means that the pure person who has accepted the word of God like a little child is the great one in the kingdom of God, and that such people believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, have all their sins washed away, receive the remission of sins, enter the kingdom of heaven, and become the people of God, then verses 5 and 6 are words He spoke to mean that receiving the words of those who believe purely like a little child in this way and preach this gospel is receiving the Lord. This is because the Lord said, *"Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me" (Matthew 18:5)*. We must listen carefully to the words of the Lord revealed in the Bible. In this present age, there are many people throughout the world who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That is, there are many who preach this gospel that the Lord has removed all our sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When you hear it, it is so easy, simple, and comfortable to believe. People may think that being born again of water and the Spirit is very difficult. But what is being born again of water and the Spirit? It is believing that the Lord came to this earth, received baptism from John and had the sin of the world transferred to Him, was hung on the Cross and died, rose again from death, and saved us. Believing that He has made us sinless in this way—this is exactly being born again of water and the Spirit.

Receiving those who preach this gospel is receiving the Lord

Many people in the world receive those who preach such a gospel in two ways. One group consists of those who purely believe it just as it is, thinking, "So the Lord had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John and removed them. He received the judgment on the Cross for us. He rose again from death and became our Savior." Another group of people say, "What kind of being born again of water and the Spirit is that? If it were that easy, anyone would receive the remission of sins. There must be something special about being born again of water and the Spirit." That is, there are people who think of it as very difficult, saying that those who see something while praying, see visions, hear the Lord's voice in a special way, enter into a spiritual marriage with the Lord, or receive the Holy Spirit through tongues and commune with the Lord while praying in tongues—such people are the ones who have been born again of water and the Spirit. But the Lord said that in the kingdom of heaven those who are like little children are great. This means that since God has planned, accomplished, and completed our salvation entirely, those who simply hear purely and believe purely what God has done receive the remission of sins. And it means that they go to the kingdom of God. And it means that they become God's workers. Therefore, this word means that receiving the words of those who believe purely like a little child in this way and purely preach the gospel is receiving the Lord.

What is receiving the Lord? In the Gospel of John there is this word: *"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)*. Who, then, are those who receive? They are those

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who believe in His name. What is that name? It is Jesus Christ. He is the Savior, and He is the One who came to this earth and fulfilled the duties of the Christ. He is our King and our High Priest, and He had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, was hung on the Cross and died, rose again from death, and became our Savior. This word means that receiving those who believe in the Lord who has made this fact known to us—those who believe in Jesus Christ, who came to this earth by the water, the blood, and the Spirit, as their Savior—is receiving the Lord. So the Lord said here, *"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6)*. In the Lord's sight, if someone makes a person stumble who, like a little child, has purely accepted and believed the word of God concerning the gospel of the water and the Spirit and has become a child of God, and so causes that person to fall off a cliff and die, what is such a person like? It is like seizing a person, hanging around his neck a millstone—a round block of stone for grinding grain such as beans—and drowning him in the waters of the sea. It is like committing the sin of murder. He said that although there cannot but be things in the world that make people stumble, in any case, those who make the children of God stumble are like those who commit such a sin, and they will receive judgment for that sin.

People who make others stumble by quibbling over the letter of the text

Dear fellow believers, what happens if someone makes those who believe in the Lord, those who believe in the gospel of the

water and the Spirit, stumble? He goes to hell. The person who makes those who purely believe the word of God stumble, the person who causes them to fall off a cliff and die, will receive terrible judgment from God, and even because of that sin, he more than deserves to go to hell. Such people must repent. They must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and they must never do such a thing again. When I look back on the old days, there were many such people. Someone heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit for the first time, accepted it, thinking, "So the Lord has truly removed our sins like this," and went home overjoyed; but then he went to his pastor to ask, thinking he should ask him once anyway. Then that pastor said that it was wrong. He asked where it is literally written that the Lord took away all our sins when He received baptism from John, that the sin of the world was all passed on to Him. He said that it was not that Jesus had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, was hung on the Cross, rose again from death, and became our Savior, but that He saved us by being nailed to the Cross, bearing our sins, and dying for us. There were many people who wrongly made others stumble by arguing in this way, asking where in the Bible it is literally written so.

Where is this mostly done? It is mostly done within Christian denominations today. Among those who live a life of faith within Christian denominations today, those who do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are living a religious life. Those who live a religious life consider the words of their own denomination more important than the word of God. Among them, there are many cases in which they put the words of famous people in their own denomination ahead of the Bible, which is the word of God. That is why there are many people who argue with those who heard this gospel from us—those throughout the world who heard this gospel of the water and the

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Spirit from our preachers, received the remission of sins, and rejoiced greatly—saying that it is not so, and asking where in the Bible it is literally written that the sin of the world was all transferred through the baptism Jesus received from John. And so there are many people who say that it is wrong because it is not literally written. Is it not literally written so somewhere in the Bible? When Jesus said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15),* received baptism from John, and came up from the water, was there not a voice from heaven saying, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)*? Is that not the very statement? To fulfill all righteousness in this way means to accomplish the work of removing all sins. Does this not mean that Jesus had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, was hung on the Cross and died, rose again from death, and saves us? Yet, because it is not literally written, "Now the sin of the world is being passed on," they cling to that nitpick, saying that it is wrong, and make people stumble.

People who feed poison to those who have just received the remission of sins

Such people are like someone who hangs a millstone around a person's neck and makes him sink alive in the waters of the sea. That is what the Lord said here. The reason I say this is that there are now many preachers throughout the world who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. As our preachers, like little children, believe just as it is and preach this pure word written in the word of God, many people believe and receive the remission of sins; but there are many people who feed poison to these people who have just received the remission of sins. And

so they kill them. When faith is young, it dies quickly. Even though someone has received the remission of sins, if he hears talk from a religious person who has not been born again and eats poison, he dies quickly. Here is an example. Some people teach as follows. They say that since the Lord said not to use vain repetitions, there is no need to pray deliberately. They say that since the Lord knows everything we think and everything else, and knows all our hearts, thoughts, and inner being, if we simply hold it in our hearts, the Lord knows everything and answers. And so they said that there is no need to pray. So in places that follow such teaching, when they pray, only a representative prays. They do not pray aloud together. The congregation does not pray together; only one representative prays. Of course, since it is a prayer offered as a representative, that may be so. But there is no prayer meeting where people gather together and pray. That is, they do not pray in agreement. When you hear such talk, much of it sounds very plausible. Did the Lord not say in the Bible not to use vain repetitions, and not to stand on the streets and pray so that others may see? And did He not say to go into the inner room and pray secretly so that others do not know? Is that so, or is it not? And did He say, or did He not say, that He knows all the intentions, thoughts, and everything we hold in our hearts? He did. So when you bring up such words, it seems right. But dear fellow believers, did the Lord tell us to pray, or did He not? He told us to ask, to seek, to knock, and to cry out.

Dear fellow believers, the word not to pray for show was spoken to the hypocrites. It was spoken to the Pharisees, who prayed so that others would see them, not to us, the righteous. Of course, if we, the righteous, also pray to be seen and heard by others, that too is wrong. But we must pray aloud before God. Even though God the Father knows everything we need and will

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give it to us, He said in the Book of Ezekiel, *"I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them" (Ezekiel 36:37)*. We must pray. This is only one example. In this way, they say, "How could Jesus have taken away sins through the baptism He received from John? He saved us by being hung on the Cross," and they also bring out this and that word of the Bible and talk about it.

He saved us by the water, the blood, and the Spirit

Dear fellow believers, even if people drag in Bible verses this way and that, when you put this whole Bible together, the Lord saved us by the water, the blood, and the Spirit. He saved us not by the water only, nor by the blood only, but by the water, the blood, and the Spirit. That is the truth. We must not speak of the Bible from only one side. It may seem that we speak only of the baptism Jesus received from John, but because there was that baptism, Jesus could be hung on the Cross, and He could die, rise again, and become our Savior. We are placing more emphasis on the fact that He took away our sins; we are not saying that only the baptism Jesus received is our salvation. Even though the Lord had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, He had to bear those sins, go to the Cross, and shed His blood, and He had to die. But only when our sins are first passed on to Jesus can Jesus be hung on the Cross, rise again from death, and become our Savior. Because this process is extremely important, we testify of it and emphasize it more.

So our Lord said that if there are people who make such people, who are like little children, stumble, they will meet with great woe before God, and that it is the sin of murder and they

will receive judgment. In a life of faith, the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, or the sin of disturbing the faith of those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and causing them to lose their faith, is a great sin. It is no ordinary sin. Let us read the word that follows. *"If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire" (Matthew 18:8–9)*. This tells us that there are things that those who have received the remission of sins lose. Those who have received the remission of sins, those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, lose something. What do they lose? They lose many of the old things. Old friends, old religious faith, people they were close to in the old days—they lose many such people. That is what the Lord said.

In verse 9 the Lord says that if your heart has gone wrong, cast it away. He says to have proper faith. That word is as follows. *"And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire" (Matthew 18:9)*. The previous word means that if your actions have gone wrong, turn back, and this word means that if your heart has gone wrong, turn back. It says that if your eye sins, pluck it out—and how often do our eyes see this and that and do wrong! But if we pluck out our eyes for that reason, we will not be able to see ahead. What the Lord meant by telling us to pluck out the eye is not that we should pluck out our physical eyes, but that we should cast away our wrong hearts, thoughts, and stubbornness. *"It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire."* Dear

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fellow believers, you must cast away the evil heart you harbor and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord has given. Dear fellow believers, is there in your heart a heart that says, "I will never subdue my stubbornness. I will never subdue my pride"? Dear fellow believers, what need is there for pride before God? Being proud before God is itself evil. God is so exalted—how can you put forward your pride before Him? We are beings lower than worms. Dear fellow believers, we are insignificant beings before God. We are those who would have no choice but to go to hell if God, saying no, blew us away with a puff and put us into the eternal fire of hell. Since we have nothing to assert about ourselves, what would we assert? So when God says, "You are wrong. Cast away your evil," we must cast away the evil. The Lord said to us, "Cast away the evil of your hearts and return to Me." Dear fellow believers, if you have been going along with wrong thoughts, you must cast them away. And you must return to God. And you must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord has given and receive the remission of sins. Only then do you go to heaven. While you and I are on this earth, there may be wrongs in our actions, and our hearts may go wrong. But before God we must cast away the evil of our hearts, cast away the wrongs of our actions, and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord has given. So we must receive the remission of sins and serve by faith in the gospel of the remission of sins.

It is true that there are words in the Bible telling us to repent. But that repentance means that while going down the wrong path, you come to know that this path is wrong, turn back, and go on the right path. It says, *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19)*, and this word means to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins. Dear fellow believers, there is no word in

any verse of the Bible that says to receive the remission of sins by offering prayers of repentance. There is not a single such verse. Dear fellow believers, if there is one, look for it. If there were such a word, it would be fine to make a new religion. If there were such a word, we would not have received the remission of sins. If there were such a word, sins would not be removed by the gospel of the water and the Spirit; rather, God would become a God who removes sins if one offers prayers of repentance. Then that God would become an unfair God, a lying God, a God who is not just. Why is that so? Because if a person's sins were washed away just by begging with words, saying that he did wrong, God would become a liar.

Dear fellow believers, God is fair. If there is sin, the price of sin must be paid. The wages of sin is death. If there is sin, one must be put to death. Only when the Lord bears our sins and dies in our place are our sins remitted. That is the law God has established. That is why Jesus needed to come to this earth, had to have your sins and mine transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, and had to be nailed to the Cross, die, and rise again. Therefore, if someone has attended a wrong church and so has not received the remission of sins in his heart, and thus the fruit of sin has formed in his heart, he must cast it away and turn back. There are many wrong teachings in this world. If you are attending such a church, you must turn back from that wrong. Even if you are persecuted, you should rather turn back, believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and receive the remission of sins. This is what the Lord said.

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When we meet the Lord, there are things we lose

Dear fellow believers, if a person cut off his hands and feet every time he sinned, could his hands and feet remain attached? If you and I, every time we sinned, cut off the right hand when the right hand sinned, cut off the left hand when the left hand sinned, and cut off a leg when a leg sinned, would our limbs remain, or not? They would not.

Then what was our Lord speaking of when He said that if your hand or your foot or your eye causes you to sin, cut it off and pluck it out? It is that there are things we lose after we meet the Lord. After we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins, there are things we lose. Dear fellow believers, if after receiving the remission of sins you go in among those who have not received the remission of sins, those who live a religious life, and live a life of faith there, your faith dies. You eat poison and die. In the past I once preached a sermon with the title "Cut off your foot." It may sound too strong, but that word is right. It says to cut off your foot. After receiving the remission of sins, may we go back again under teachings different from the gospel? Then faith dies. We have many coworkers throughout the world, and even they, who have received the remission of sins, will have their faith die if they keep eating those old things. And our Lord spoke of what kind of people we who have received the remission of sins are, and how precious and valuable we are. Let us read that word. *"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10).*

"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones"

We must look carefully at this word that says not to despise even the least among those who have received the remission of sins. Not to despise means not to make light of them and ignore them. Why must we not do so? The Lord says, *"I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10)*. It means that an angel is assigned to each and every person who has received the remission of sins. It means that an angel who runs errands is assigned to them. Dear fellow believers, have you thought about the fact that angels are assigned to you and me, who have received the remission of sins? The Lord said that God has assigned an angel to each one of us, and that angel always sees His face before God the Father. That is, the angel speaks to the Father and conveys things to Him. It serves its master and runs errands for him. It means that God the Father has assigned angels to all of you and me, who have received the remission of sins, and the angels are attending to you and me. We are the masters. We are the sons of God and the children of God, and in the kingdom of God you and I are the masters. That is why we must not ignore them. It means that we must not ignore those who have received the remission of sins. I have a heart of thanksgiving before God for the fact that angels are assigned to you and me.

Dear fellow believers, does it sound too strange that angels are assigned to such people? It means that even you and I, who are now living on this earth, have angels. It is not only saying that angels protect us. Since it says they always see the face of God the Father in the kingdom of God, they will convey things to the Father and speak to Him. What our Lord is saying today is that those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit,

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those who purely believe the word of God, and who have therefore received the remission of sins by faith, are this precious. He is saying that though they may be very small and insignificant in the flesh, in the kingdom of God they are great ones and blessed ones, and since they are the children of God, the sons and daughters of God, how precious they are! And so He is saying, would they not have servants who serve them? He is saying that they are such precious people. So, while our having received the remission of sins is precious, it is also important to know what kind of people you and I are. Also, because you and I have received the remission of sins, we must have a sense of dignity. You and I must know that we are children of God and more precious than anyone else in this world. If someone is a prince yet does not know that he is a prince, he cannot but live like a very lowly commoner.

The sense of dignity of being children of God

Dear fellow believers, you must know exactly who you are. If you do not know what you are, will you not abandon your faith when people of the world tempt you even a little, saying, "I will give you money, I will get you a job, I will buy you a car, I will send you abroad to study"? Dear fellow believers, after I met the Lord through the word, this temptation and that temptation came in—there were many such things. To speak frankly, if I had compromised this gospel, I might have gained a name in the world. And before God I would have been a betrayer, and in the flesh I would have been one who adorned his outward appearance splendidly. Dear fellow believers, in the world, if, while having received the remission of sins and knowing this truth, you chime in, agreeing that believing only in the blood of

the Cross is also right, you can win people's popularity and gather much wealth. When I thought about it, it occurred to me that I could easily do so. If I did not live only before God, and if God said it was all right, I could have done so. But God did not allow it, and He said that if I went out into the world, He would take away all the word that was in my heart. So I thought that it was right to follow the Lord even if I could not gain a name in the world.

There was much persecution, there was temptation, and many things happened, but I had a sense of dignity. "I am one of God's people and a servant of God; would I stay here because they give me a few coins, or because my honor rises in this denomination and they give me a high position? Could I exchange this for that? I am a child of God and a servant of God—it makes no sense." In fact, the reason I could endure even though there was much persecution and much temptation after I met the Lord through the word is that I had a sense of dignity. Even now I have that sense of dignity. Even if people say this and that about me, it does not bother me at all. In the flesh, I have nothing to boast of as being great.

But I am a servant of God. This is not just my story. You, too, who have received the remission of sins, have angels. It is because you are God's people. So no matter who says this or that, such words do not even enter our ears. If we have done anything wrong to them, we will say we are sorry, but if they persecute us without reason, we will only tell them to stop persecuting and just believe in this gospel. That is, we have such a sense of dignity.

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Only when we can overcome rebuttals can we preach the gospel

In this world there are many preachers who have degrees and fame and are respected by many people. We should not ignore them in the flesh, but spiritually we do not envy such people at all. If they are respected while preaching what is not the truth, will their consciences not be troubled? Will they not be afraid before God? But God has assigned angels to you and me, and even now He has those angels run errands for you and me. So you and I are precious people. Also, this gospel that you and I preach is truly a precious gospel. No matter where you go, you cannot hear this gospel. Even if one knows the gospel of the water and the Spirit, even if one believes it, to preach it one must know all the theology they hold and must be able to oppose them with this word. We must not think that it is enough just to preach unconditionally. Just as, when you go out to battle and face each other with swords drawn, you must win, only when you can win with this word can you preach this gospel. Just writing down a few words of this in a document and sending it out does not amount to preaching. When a rebuttal comes in, you must be able to overcome that rebuttal.

Crying out, “Believe in Jesus and go to heaven,” and saying that the gospel of the water and the Spirit has saved us, does not mean that the gospel is spread. If the gospel were spread that way, anyone could do it. Even when they put forward their fasting prayers and their speaking in tongues, we must be able to overcome them. Only then can the truth enter that person’s heart. There are indeed people we cannot overcome. We cannot overcome those who are obstinate. If they obstinately refuse to believe, we cannot overcome them. But we can overcome all those who are not like that. The Lord then went on to speak about

sheep as well. He asked whether, if there are a hundred sheep and one of them is lost, one would not leave the ninety-nine on the mountain and go to look for the lost sheep. Through this word, the Lord told us that we must set out to find the lost sheep; that we must keep in mind that even the one who looks most lowly among the children of God is precious before God and is one of God's people, and treat him as precious; and that doing so is the will of God the Father.

The reason I keep preaching the word about actual sins is that the saints of many countries quote much of what they knew in the past. Then their faith dies. If they eat poison, they die. When a person eats poison, both his body and his spirit die. God's people must know that they are precious ones and treasure one another. Also, they must believe this word purely like little children and accept the words of the preachers who preach this gospel as the word of God. That is what our Lord said. I believe it. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Receive one little one in the name of Jesus

< Matthew 18:1–10, 12–14 >

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire. Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the

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mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.'"

The little child He set before the disciples, who asked about the great one

Wanting to know who was great in the kingdom of heaven, the disciples came to Jesus and asked. In answering that question, Jesus called a little child and set him in the midst of the disciples; that is, He spoke with a little child placed before the eyes of the disciples, who had been weighing who was great and who was small. But Jesus' answer began not with who is great but, before that, with who enters the kingdom of heaven. His word was that unless they were converted and became as little children, they would by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Entering the kingdom of heaven and becoming the great one there are not separate from each other. Since no one can take a high place in the kingdom of heaven while leaving the heart that exalts oneself as it is, Jesus taught that the person who humbles himself is the great one. What the disciples had to correct was not only the result of comparing themselves with one another, but the heart that puts self forward and tries to decide who is great and who is small. That is why the first word Jesus spoke was *"unless you are converted."*

To humble oneself as a little child is not to insist on one's own judgment to the end before the word of God, but to accept it just as He teaches. It is to acknowledge our sins just as they are when God reveals them, and, when He says that Jesus had

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all the sins of our whole lifetime passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, to believe that word without cutting it down or taking anything away from it. When we put forward our own knowledge or career and begin to reason things out with our heads, we become unable to receive that word. Even if we are old in years and have accumulated experience, always standing in the place of a learner before God—that is the faith that humbles the heart.

This humility is not revealed only by words in which we call ourselves low; it is revealed in our attitude toward other people. If a person who has been lowered before God despises a little one, he is still looking at his brother with a heart that weighs whether he himself is the great one. That is why, in the words that follow, Jesus moves the disciples' attention from their own position to one person among them.

One person to be received in the name of Jesus

Let us read chapter 18, verses 5 and 6. "*Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:5–6)*. Jesus linked receiving one little child in His own name with receiving Himself. The standard is not how much strength the person being received has, or what he can give back; rather, it is receiving him because of Jesus' name. So the meaning of receiving becomes clear when we, too, treasure the person whom the Lord treasures.

Then Jesus warned of the sin of making one little one who believes in Him stumble. Receiving a little one and making him fall bring about entirely different results: the one helps that

person to live by faith in the Lord, and the other blocks that faith and makes him fall. Jesus spoke of a millstone and the deep sea so that the harm done to even one little one would not be regarded lightly.

When we deal with people, our hearts easily go first to visible ability and skill in speaking. But if we treat a person who believes in Jesus rudely because he is clumsy and lacking, we depart from the word that tells us to receive him; and even when we correct his wrongs, it becomes right teaching only when there is a heart that cares for him. Exposing his shortcomings to confirm our own superiority and urging him to believe the word and grow differ in their very purpose.

In particular, if a person who has just heard and believed the gospel is shaken by being told that his faith is wrong, he cannot hold on to his faith and falls. Since a single word of ours can either build up or shake the faith of a person who has just believed, refrain from words that make him doubt the gospel he has accepted, and help him at his side to hold on to that faith. Helping a little one does not stop at offering gentle words; it reaches as far as enabling him to hold on to the end to the word of salvation on which he can rely.

The sin of making others fall and the sin within oneself

Verse 7 says that there is woe to the world because of the things that make people stumble, and warns that there is woe to that man who does such things. The fact that such things cannot be absent does not lessen the responsibility of the person who has done them. So do not justify your own words and actions on the grounds that other people also do so. Jesus teaches sternly so

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that the disciples will not treat little ones carelessly by following the familiar attitudes of the world.

In verses 8 and 9, that warning turns toward each person himself. The word says that even things treasured like hands, feet, and eyes are to be cut off and cast away, or plucked out and cast away, if they cause you to sin. The reason entering into eternal life is compared again and again with being cast into the everlasting fire, into hell fire, is so that casting away would not be reckoned as a small loss.

On the way of believing in and following the Lord, there are things we lose as well as things we gain. Just as one cannot grasp anything else while holding something in one's hand, there are things one must let go of in order to gain what the Lord gives. So if it is something that keeps you from following the Lord, let it go, even if it is something you have treasured like your hand or foot. The fact that it was precious to you cannot be grounds for continuing to hold on to what blocks the way of following the Lord.

The word to humble oneself and the word to cast away what causes one to sin were given to the disciples in the same place. The word, which began with a little child set before them, passed through the matter of making little ones stumble and continued on to what causes each person himself to sin; so caring for a little one also includes first examining one's own heart, which could harm him.

The little one whom the heavenly Father treasures

In verse 10, Jesus says not to despise one of these little ones. And He spoke of "their angels" as the reason; even though we cannot see them with our eyes, these little ones have angels who

always see the Father's face in heaven. The person whom we may regard as insignificant is this precious before the heavenly Father, so the heavenly Father knows all about even the act of making him stumble. Just because people's evaluation of him is low does not mean that even the concern God has toward him becomes smaller.

When we hear this word, the eyes with which we see our brothers become new. If we think only of how much help that person is to us, we easily ignore him when he is of little help; but if we think of the fact that he is a child of God, the basis on which we treat him changes. Even if he is clumsy in speech and slow in work, he is not a person who has received less grace from God; all of us stand before God by the same grace of salvation.

That grace is revealed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had the sins of all the people of the world passed on to Him once and for all, without distinguishing between the great and the small, and at that time He also had transferred to Him the sins each of us would commit throughout our lifetime. And to pay the price of those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place, and He rose again from death. That we have believed this gospel and received the remission of sins is not because we accomplished something worthy of exalting ourselves, but because Jesus accomplished salvation for us.

Therefore, a heart that despises people who believe the same gospel comes from forgetting the grace we have received. If we think as though we became children of God because of our own excellence, it is hard to bear with the shortcomings of others; but if we think of the salvation we received from Jesus, we come to know that that person, too, is a child of God made precious by grace. In this way, the faith that humbles oneself and the attitude that respects little ones continue on from the same grace.

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The will to seek the one that has gone astray

With the question *"What do you think?"* Jesus asked whether, if one of a hundred sheep went astray, one would not leave the ninety-nine on the mountain and go and seek the sheep that had gone astray. Anyone who owns sheep would not cover over the fact that one is missing with the number that remains, but would set out to find that sheep that has now gone astray. Through this question, Jesus shows the Father's will in dealing with the loss of one person.

Verse 13 tells of the joy when it is found. That joy is not rejoicing that it went astray, but joy that arises because the sheep that had been lost has been found again. If, while looking at a person who has gone astray, we stop at confirming his wrongs, it is hard to know this joy; but a person who knows the Father's will hopes that he will hear the word and return, and rejoices together when he returns.

Let us read chapter 18, verse 14. *"Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:14)*. At first the disciples asked who was the great one, but Jesus now concludes that answer with the word that it is not the Father's will that even one little one should be lost. So if you wish to become the great one in the kingdom of heaven, learn this will of the Father first. To look after the one person who is easily missed while our hearts are set on exalting ourselves, to urge him with the word when he drifts away from the faith, and to ask that he return to the Lord—this is the way of following that will.

The person who sees one little one according to the Father's will walks the path of the great one in the kingdom of heaven. Before we deal with him, let us ourselves first become lowly like little children before the word of the Lord, and when his

shortcomings are seen, let us lead him rightly. Following this word given to the disciples who asked who was great in the kingdom of heaven, let us welcome in the name of Jesus the one little one beside us. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Admonish in order to gain your brother

< Matthew 18:15–20 >

“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

The purpose of admonition is to gain your brother

When a brother sins, how should we deal with that matter? Jesus said that we should first go to that person and admonish him between him and us alone. Just because we have come to know of a wrong, that does not immediately become a reason to make it known to many people; so what comes first is going to the very person who sinned and admonishing him so that he can

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understand. And since He said that if he hears the admonition, we have gained our brother, this word makes clear from the beginning what the purpose of admonition is.

The person whom Jesus called *"your brother"* is someone in the church who believes in the same Lord. Even a person who has been saved can commit wrongs because he still lives clothed in the flesh, and we cannot say that we want a brother to do well while leaving that wrong as it is. So pointing out sin rightly and loving a brother go together. However, if, while exposing his wrong, we set our hearts only on bringing him low, we move away from the admonition that hopes for his return; so Jesus makes us look back not only on what we say is right but also on what we are trying to gain.

What is gained when that person hears is not victory in an argument or the honor of one's own judgment. Jesus says that we have gained our brother, so the fruit is that he, who had been going the wrong way, hears the word and comes back. When we keep this purpose in our hearts, the words with which we admonish also change, so that rather than gathering up all his past wrongs and attacking him, we make clear to him what is wrong now and why he must turn back.

We too can become people who receive someone's admonition. If we know how to admonish others yet do not listen to the word given to ourselves, we are not standing before the same truth; so do not push away the words of a brother who comes to you and tells you your wrong merely because they make your heart uncomfortable. When the word exposes our wrong, acknowledging it and turning back is the way to follow the Lord together with our brother.

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Even when he does not listen, hold on to the facts and the word

When he does not hear the admonition, Jesus said to take one or two people along and let every word be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses. This process does not mean to gather more people and corner one person, but to set up witnesses and have each word confirmed. So, rather than whose voice is louder, it becomes clear what the facts are and what is being admonished.

Even if the first admonition is not accepted, we do not immediately give up on the brother, but have the opportunity to admonish him again together with others. This is not dragging out the time by taking sin lightly, but striving again and again so that the brother may hear and come back. Since the purpose at the beginning was to gain the brother, do not lose sight of that purpose in the next step either.

Our personalities and ways of speaking differ from one another. If we confuse such differences with sin itself, trivial differences end up becoming the standard for judging faith. Since we have all been saved by grace, even after being saved we bear with one another's shortcomings, and yet we correct together the wrongs that go against the word. When we distinguish between bearing with each other's different ways and accepting sin as right, our patience toward a brother leads to true admonition.

Those who admonish together also have a responsibility. If you exaggerate what you have heard or add your own feelings, it does not help in gaining the brother, so speak according to the confirmed facts and judge before the same word. The help the Lord has given within the community was not given to be used

for forming sides in order to defeat someone, but to be used for serving so that everyone may stand before the truth.

The weight of receiving the admonition of the church

Verse 17 says to tell it to the church if he does not hear them either. Now the community deals with that matter together, and the church admonishes, according to the word of God, that person who has rejected both the admonition of an individual and the admonition of the witnesses. Just because it is a matter between brothers, it is not left to individuals alone to the end; rather, the church takes responsibility and makes clear the way to turn back.

He said to regard one who does not hear even the church like a heathen and a tax collector. This word does not allow us to pass off persisting in a wrong to the end as a light difference of opinion; so a clear judgment is needed toward the attitude of continually rejecting the admonition of the word of God while claiming to believe in and follow that word together. The fellowship of the church is not formed by merely calling one another brothers in name, but by believing in the same Lord and accepting His word.

Let us read chapter 18, verse 18. *"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18)*. Jesus spoke of the case of one who does not hear even the church, and right after that He said, "Assuredly, I say to you," and connected binding and loosing on earth with heaven. Therefore, the church's admonishing according to the word does not stop at settling feelings between people, but becomes

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admonishing him before God concerning his faith and life. The one who hears the admonition humbles his heart before the Lord's word, and the church that admonishes also serves according to the Lord's word.

It is Jesus who spoke of binding and loosing on earth as connected with heaven. Therefore, those who admonish must also not try to establish their own will but must follow the Lord's word, and even in dealing with sin, the purpose He first made clear in verse 15—that is, the purpose of gaining the brother—must be revealed. Preaching the word clearly while being patient so that the brother may come back, and rejoicing together in his restoration, is what the church must undertake.

Jesus, who is in the midst of those who agree and ask

Jesus then says, "Again I say to you," and speaks of two people agreeing on earth and asking. When we deal with a brother's matter, it is easy to rely only on our own judgment and words, but the church is a community that asks of God. Both hearing the admonition and coming back, and our serving with love and truth as those who admonish, are accomplished when we rely on God's help.

Just as in verse 18, the words "*on earth*" and "*heaven*" form a pair in verse 19 as well. Just as binding and loosing on earth were connected with heaven, the Father in heaven brings about what two people on earth agree and ask for. If we have received the Lord's will to gain a brother, we too must ask together that he may turn back. We cannot merely match the words of our prayers while each of us puts our own feelings and pride first; so when we receive the same word and gather our hearts toward the

same purpose, the meaning of the prayer we offer together becomes clear.

Let us read chapter 18, verse 20. *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20)*. Jesus is present in the place where people have gathered in the Lord's name. The strength the church relies on lies not only in the number or excellence of those gathered, but in the promise that the Lord who saved us is with us. Therefore, even if only a few people have gathered, do not take lightly hearing the word, praying, and serving one another. We who are gathered in the Lord's name uphold His will and take care of a brother's matter together.

We can gather in that name because Jesus has saved us. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and He also had the sins of the one who admonishes and the sins of the one who is admonished passed on to Him together, without leaving a single one. And as the price of those sins He shed His blood on the Cross, received the judgment in our place, and died, and He rose again from death. We who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit are people who have received the remission of sins by the same grace, so the starting point of serving one another also lies in this grace we ourselves have received.

Because we know the grace with which Jesus accepted us, we can be long-suffering toward a weak brother, and because we know that Jesus received the judgment in our place because of sin, we regard sin as grave. Grace does not make us say that sin is right, but makes us accept a brother who turns back from sin. When we hold on to these two things together, admonition does not become cold condemnation, and love does not lose the truth.

When you see a brother's wrong, go to him first with a heart that seeks to gain him, and also listen to the admonition that

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comes to you. Believe in the Lord, who promised that He would be present where two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, and admonish together with the church and ask together until you gain your brother. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Be united with the Church of God

< Matthew 18:15–20 >

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

All that we live out in the kingdom of God, everything that is in the world of God, is all a world of faith. Without faith we can know nothing, and without faith we can accomplish nothing. Knowing that this universe was made is also faith; our living on this earth, preaching the gospel, and doing the work are also faith; and even our breathing now is all faith. At every moment, nothing works out without faith.

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In particular, the spreading of the gospel that we do and the work that we do are done 100 percent by faith. There is not a single forerunner who did such work first, succeeded, and taught it to us. We have done all of it by faith from the beginning. So do not shrink back for lack of faith. If you shrink back, you can do nothing. Even in the work of preaching the gospel to the whole world, if you shrink back, you can do nothing. Apart from the early apostles, it is hard to find any place other than us that preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If there is one, we must go to them and have fellowship with them. Therefore, you must never shrink back.

Since I met the Lord, I have lived until now with nothing to be ashamed of. If you have not deceived others or done wrong, you have nothing to be ashamed of. So, dear fellow believers, do not shrink back.

God works through the church

Let us share the word while looking at the word we read today. The Lord said, *"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector" (Matthew 18:15–17)*. This means that if a brother sins, you are first to meet him alone and admonish him; if he does not listen, you are to take one or two people and admonish him again; if he still does not listen, you are to tell it to the church; and if he does

not listen even to the church, you are to treat him like an unbeliever.

Next, the Lord said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18)*. This means that God works through the church. We are preaching the gospel while serving this church together. It is good to be united with the Church of God and to believe that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is right. But if, even though the church is preaching the gospel in this way, someone says, "I can be saved even if I do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. I can obtain salvation by believing only in the blood of the Cross," that person becomes an enemy of the church.

God works through the church in everything. In the old days, God not only conveyed and proclaimed His will to the people through His servants, that is, the prophets, but also led the people. In this present age, He leads the people of God through the church. Then what becomes of not uniting one's heart with the servants of God who came first? The saying that if you bind on earth, it will be bound in heaven as well, is a word spoken by likening it to tying and untying a cord. If you tie a necktie, it is tied, and if you untie a necktie, it is untied. If you are not united with the Church of God, then in the end you are not united with God, and if you are united with the Church of God, you are united with God. That is to say, the two are connected to each other in that way.

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Not being united with the church means not being united with God either

"No matter what the church is like, I will look only to God and follow only God." There are people who say this. "What does it matter what the church does? I will deal with God one-on-one." Such people end up leaving the church.

Dear fellow believers, would a person who is not united even with the visible people of God, those who follow the will of God, listen if God spoke to him directly? That is deceiving oneself. If one is not united with the church, one is not united with God, and if one becomes an enemy of the church, one becomes an enemy of God. Can you say, "I am an enemy of the church, but I am not an enemy of God"? What does the Bible say? The saying that if you bind on earth, it will be bound in heaven as well, was spoken about the church. It means that if believers, while being in the church, make enemies of one another among themselves, they become enemies of God as well, and if they are reconciled to one another, they are reconciled to God as well.

If you, saying that your will does not agree with mine, do that when you are told to do this, and say, "I believe only in the blood of the Cross," when you are told to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, would that person be someone who is united with God? Would he be someone who believes in the gospel God has given? No. That is so no matter how much he says he believes on his own. There are also people who leave the church, saying that they were saved by believing only in the blood of the Cross.

Whether you are united with me or not does not matter. But you must know one thing clearly. Why must we be united? Because even if we follow the will of God, we cannot do the work alone. When the Lord spoke of two or more people, He

was speaking about the church in every case. Alone, we can do nothing. If you were told to live a life of faith alone, believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit without this church, could you do it? If someone says, "I believe. Praying and preaching the gospel—that is a life of faith. I can do it," that person is lying.

How could you do it alone? Your heart does not rise up. When you agonize over this and that and have many things to trouble your heart, there are times when your heart grows as distant from the work of preaching the gospel as if it were five thousand miles away. When is that heart restored? It is restored when you come to church and worship, pray, and praise together; can you restore it by yourself? It cannot be done alone.

Dear fellow believers, can you do righteous work alone? Can you keep on alone, saying, "This is the right thing; this is the just thing"? You lose heart and cannot do it. It is because there are fellow workers beside you that you do it together with them; alone, you cannot. The one who is united with the work the church does is the one who is united with God. This is the truth the Bible speaks of.

Do not fall into your own thoughts

In the church, when something is wrong with someone and you admonish him, asking, "Do you believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit?" he says, "I believe only in the blood of the Cross, and I have no sin." Does he really have no sin by believing only in the blood of the Cross? Is what the Bible speaks of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, or only the blood of the Cross? So discord arises. When you admonish him that he must not believe that way, he says, "There are so many people on this earth who believe as I do; are you saying that those

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people are saved and we are not?" and he takes the side of the people who believe as he does. He does so even though the church says that it is not the gospel.

I am saying this because it is in the Bible. We must give this some thought. We must look back to see whether we are living the life of faith properly, whether we are living it alone, or whether we are being led by the church and serving the Lord in union with it. There are many people who have gone wrong by falling into their own thoughts while living the life of faith. They judge and decide on their own, decide even their life of faith by themselves, and fall into a great trap. Without even knowing that they have fallen into it, they may end up becoming enemies of the church.

That is why I preach the word of the Bible. What this word says is important. Because this word is the word of life, anyone must look back on himself based on this word. I am not telling you to be united with me. But if there are many people, not only me, who have gone ahead of you by upholding the will of God before you, then uniting your hearts with them and serving the Lord is itself being united with God and serving the Lord. You must know this.

Ask with wisdom, agreeing together

Dear fellow believers, you must have wisdom. If you have only knowledge without wisdom, you will be ruined. If you know and yet do not believe, you will be ruined. Wisdom is something absolutely necessary for carrying out any work, and actually carrying out that work is what is called wisdom. But knowledge refers only to knowing. Many people can have knowledge, but wisdom is not something many people can have.

Everyone knows that it is right to preach the gospel to the whole world. But a person who has no wisdom cannot put this into practice. He does not know how this can be done. But we are now doing it. A small family is preaching the gospel to more than eight billion people. This is wisdom.

The Lord said, *"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19)*. This means that when the people of God, those who follow the will of God, gather their wills together before God and pray, it is done. When the Church of God, the people of God, pray according to the will of God, it is done in this way. This is the Lord's word of promise.

Dear fellow believers, our gathering and praying at the worship service is not a ritual. The life of faith we live is not a formality. We actually do it staking our lives on it, and we do it by faith. If a church exists but cannot preach the gospel, would that church be worth existing on this earth? That is to say, God works through the church in that way. The Lord said, *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20)*.

Therefore, this church is the kingdom of God. God fulfills His will through the kingdom of God, through you and me. You and I are not doing this work because we have no choice. If we say, "While serving the Lord we cannot do anything else, so we are doing this because we have no choice," how could we work, being ashamed, miserable, and servile? This work I am now doing is the work God has entrusted to me. Through this work God is fulfilling His will, and He is now using me and blessing me. I have that faith. You too must have that faith.

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Live with the faith that it is the work God has entrusted

We must not just say, without faith, that doing it this way is enough. The Bible says, *"Whatever is not from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23)*. Even in living, if we do not live with a purpose, that is sin. If we live only because we have no choice, since life is still in us, how servile that is! We live to fulfill the will of God. Just as the body, too, must be treated when it falls ill, we must do everything actively and positively; to say that we do it because we have no choice makes no sense.

The word says that if you bind on earth, it will be bound in heaven as well, and if you loose on earth, it will be loosed in heaven as well. Therefore, the work we do is the work God does. This truth of the gospel that we have is the gospel God has given us, and the gospel that has saved you and me. This gospel is the gospel by which Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross, rose again, and saved us. Our preaching the gospel is God preaching the gospel through us. God is using the church as the kingdom of God, as God's workers, and as people who do the will of God. We must believe that. If we do not believe that, it is all too miserable.

I do not have much money, so I cannot do big and fine things, but even when I do one small task, I work with the heart that says, "By doing this work, I serve the gospel." I work with great pride. I hope that you too will work with pride. Do not be people who do it because you have no choice. I have nothing at all to be ashamed of.

Sometimes, when my heart grows heavy, I think quietly by myself. I look back over everything and also examine myself. I live thinking about why I must live, what the reason is, and why

I must do this. It is not something I do out of habit. When I was running the church, and also when I was making booklets that preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world, I attempted it with great faith and a great dream. No matter what others said, and whether they laughed at me or not, I did it with faith. And the work I did with faith in God was never in vain.

I do not set my heart on increasing the size of the church. Although we are a small family, I believe that even this much is more than enough to preach the gospel to the whole world.

He had the gospel preached by mouth and through literature

In the old days, I thought that if it seemed I had to deceive others with what was not the truth, I would rather quit and do even menial work. I thought that, whether I ran a business or did anything else, it would be enough to earn money without doing wrong and give many offerings. But the Lord's heart was not in that. "Are you wasting so much time now doing that? Use your mouth." "What shall I do?" "Speak." "What shall I say?" "Speak what you believe."

So I preached the gospel all day long. Ten or twelve hours a day were ordinary. It got to the point that the inside of my mouth was all sore. So while thinking, "I must do the Lord's will, but is there not a good way?" I came up with the literature ministry. When I preach, let me preach in an orderly and solid way. And let me write it down, translate it, and preach the gospel to the world. If one book is given to a person who has truly made up his mind to receive the remission of sins, how many people will be saved! So I had the sermons collected, and as a result, has it

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not turned out this way? The word I am giving you today is the word the Lord spoke to the Church of God.

Believe in the gospel the church believes

Dear fellow believers, be united with the church. Believe in the gospel the church believes. If you did not believe in the gospel the church believes but believed alone in your own way, believe again. Do not be needlessly stubborn. As I say again, if you try to know, meet, believe in, and follow the Lord alone with only the word, the probability of that happening is so low that it would hardly be even one person among all the people in the world.

The early church had all come to an end by around A.D. 100. The apostle Paul died, and the apostles all departed from this world. After that, for a long time, it was hard to find anyone who met the Lord through this word and clearly preached the gospel with this word. There is no need to go far to look. Even if you listen to the sermons of famous preachers, it is hard to find anyone who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Dear fellow believers, have you seen one?

And we are remarkable people. You and I are now being used for a remarkable work. We must know that and believe it. You may say, “What is so remarkable about you and me?” If we look only at ourselves, we are nothing. But if we look at the Lord, who gave you and me the gospel of the water and the Spirit, look at the Lord’s word, and look at the work of the Holy Spirit of God, who works through you and me, then you and I are people with remarkable power from God and servants of God. That is what I think, and that is what I believe. Do you believe so too?

Just having been born on this earth and having met the Church of God is remarkable, and just working within it is remarkable. Had we not met such a church, we would have ended our lives laboring in vain without knowing the gospel. Does it seem as though I am boasting about myself? But when you come to know it, it is all boasting about God. Is it not God who has done this for us? Just as Abraham received the call of God and left his hometown, I too received the call, met you, and have formed one family, and we are living together in this way, so I am truly thankful, so very thankful.

The word I am giving you is a word that is in the Bible, and a word you must believe. Are you perhaps not united with the Church of God and yet thinking, "I am living a good life of faith now. What I am doing is right"? If there is such a person, he must know this: not being united with the church is not being united with God. Dear fellow believers, can a person who is not united with the church say that he is united with God? He cannot. How can one be united with God when one is not united even with the visible church?

Knowing, believing, following, and preaching the word of God is a remarkable thing. Because I speak of such tremendous things, if you think wrongly, I may seem to be someone who exaggerates. But that is never so. There are people who, even while working here, live the life of faith according to their own thoughts. The life of faith is something in which you must watch, learn from, and follow what those who have gone ahead do; doing it zealously alone in your own way is not a life of faith. That is self-indulgence. That is committing sin and challenging God.

I have received more training than you, and I have also been struck with the rod by God more than you. Now it may look as though I do as I please, but I think of myself as a worker just like

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you and work just as you do. Just as you serve the Lord, I serve Him too, and just as you find it hard, I find it hard too. Just as you agonize a great deal, I agonize a great deal too. Dear fellow believers, when anxiety comes into your heart, pray to God to keep you. I hope that God will give you faith, so that all of you will be united with the church and live the life of faith well with the same faith. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Forgive your brother from the heart

< Matthew 18:21–35 >

"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, "Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all." Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, "Pay me what you owe!" So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all." And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you

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not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.'"

The heart that asks how many times to forgive

Regarding a brother who sins against him, Peter asked, *"How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?" (Matthew 18:21)*, and he added the question of whether up to seven times would be enough. Jesus answered that he should forgive not only up to seven times but even up to seventy times seven, and then immediately told the parable of the king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. In this way, Jesus turns our eyes away from counting how many times we have been patient, and makes us look back on what debt has first been canceled for us.

When we think of the wrongs we have suffered from a brother, the times we have already been patient with him come to mind first, and then our judgment easily stops at comparing the number of times we have been patient with the wrongs the other person has repeated. But Jesus' parable begins with the grace that came before that: the very person who demands that another pay his debt was himself a servant who, before the king, owed a debt he could not possibly handle. If we look at ourselves only from the position of one who is to collect a debt, we forget this fact.

The reason Jesus spoke of the kingdom of heaven in terms of the relationship between a king and his servants is that how we treat our brother is a matter before God. We think of it as a matter

only between our brother and ourselves, but as He said in verse 35, *"My heavenly Father also,"* we treat our brother within the grace we have received from God. So this word is not a vague admonition to live as good a life as our strength allows, but a word telling those who know the God who had compassion on us to live in a manner worthy of that compassion.

The debt that was not resolved by a promise to pay

The servant brought before the king was one who owed ten thousand talents, and verse 25 first makes clear that he had nothing with which to pay. When the master commanded that he himself, his wife, his children, and all that he had be sold and payment be made, the servant fell down, bowed, and begged him to be patient with him. He promised to pay it all, but his situation, which the passage had shown first, was that he had nothing with which to pay.

When we set the servant's plea and the master's response side by side, the grace becomes clearer. The servant asked him to be patient, that is, to give him time, but the master canceled the debt itself. This was not a result the servant obtained by newly showing an ability to pay; rather, the master had compassion on him and released him. So the reason the servant could live again lay in the compassion the master showed rather than in a promise to pay faithfully from then on.

Let us read chapter 18, verse 27. *"Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt" (Matthew 18:27)*. This grace must also be present in our situation, in which our sin must be resolved before God. Resolving not to commit sin does not make the judgment for the sins we have already committed disappear; so what we need is

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not to have our resolutions valued more highly, but to receive the remission of sins. That is why the Lord Himself accomplished the work of salvation to save us, who are unable to handle our own sins.

Just as the master had compassion on the servant who had nothing with which to pay, God also had compassion on us, who had no way to pay, and sent His Son Jesus. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and in that baptism He also had transferred to Him the sins we have already committed and even the sins we will commit as we go on living. Then, as the price of that sin which had been passed on to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross in our place, and rising again from death, He canceled our debt, leaving none of it remaining. God gives the remission of sins to those who believe in this salvation; so what we must hold on to is not our own promise that says, *"I will pay you all,"* but this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The compassion he did not show even after hearing the same plea

The servant whose debt had been canceled went out, and when he met one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, he seized him, took him by the throat, and told him to pay his debt. Then the fellow servant also fell down and pleaded, *"Have patience with me, and I will pay you all"*; these were almost the same words as *"Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all,"* which that servant had spoken a little earlier as he fell down before his master. Because the two pleas are this much alike, the servant's actions are revealed all the more

clearly. Though he himself had received compassion, he did not show compassion to the one who fell down before him.

It is not that the fellow servant had no debt. Because that debt really existed, this parable shows a relationship in which a debt needs to be canceled; if the wrong we suffered from a brother were nothing at all, the word telling us to release our brother would not have been needed either. But the mere fact that we have actually been wronged does not make right a heart that holds on to the other person to the end and will not release him; the compassion we have received from the Lord must govern our attitude toward that wrong.

The servant did not grant his fellow servant's plea, but threw him into prison so that he would pay the debt. Holding as knowledge the fact that one's debt has been canceled is different from treating people according to that grace; though the master's grace did benefit him, it did not reach as far as the heart with which he treated his fellow servant. Let us also examine whether we, while speaking of the grace of salvation, are strictly demanding only our own standards of our brother.

The other fellow servants who saw this were very grieved, and they went to the master and told him all that had happened. What the servant did to his fellow servant took place before the eyes of the other fellow servants and was eventually made known even to the master; thus the way the servant whose debt had been canceled treated his fellow servant was laid bare before the master just as it was.

The fitting life that the grace received demands

The master called that servant and rebuked him, saying, *"You wicked servant!"* What the master asked was not why he

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had tried to collect the debt, but whether it was not right that he too should have compassion on his fellow servant, just as the master had had compassion on him. The standard of judgment was the compassion he had already received rather than the rights the servant could claim.

Let us read chapter 18, verses 32 and 33. *"Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'" (Matthew 18:32–33)*. Having received grace does not mean that it no longer matters how we live; for those who have received grace, there is a life worthy of that grace. It is this: just as God has remitted our sins, we too let go of our brother's wrongs, and just as He has had compassion on us, we have compassion on one another. If we keep in mind the fact that we have been accepted by God even though we are lacking, then even when we see our brother's shortcomings, we come to know the reason to be long-suffering and to accept him.

Forgiving a brother is not merely a matter of pretending to be generous with words. If you keep hating that person in your heart while saying only with your mouth that it is all right, that is far from the compassion that verse 33 speaks of; so when a wrong must be corrected, admonish rightly, but cast away the heart that would hold on to that wrong and keep the other person bound in a low place forever. This heart toward a brother goes together with a heart that wishes for him to be restored.

The apostle Paul also taught the same relationship of grace to those who had been saved. *"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32)*. See that the basis for how we treat one another lies first in God. If we depart from the remission of sins we have received from God and rely only on

our own generous character, we soon run into our limits; but when we think of the grace He has bestowed on us in Christ, we can humble our hearts again. So the way for us, who have different personalities and shortcomings, to live as one family lies in accepting one another as we are, just as the Lord has accepted us.

Forgive your brother from the heart

The end of the parable is severe. The master was angry and delivered that servant to the torturers until he should pay all the debt, and Jesus said that His heavenly Father would also do likewise to them if each of them did not forgive his brother from his heart. In the light of this warning, we cannot dismiss a heart that will not release a brother as a trivial matter of personality. An attitude that claims to have received compassion while stubbornly refusing the same compassion to a brother is something to be rebuked before God.

This warning does not mean that we are to pay the price of our own sins by the number of times we have released our brother. The one who canceled the debt was the master from the beginning, and what was required of the servant was not to produce the price of that canceling, but to have compassion on his fellow servant as one who had received that grace. So whoever hears this warning first looks back again on what debt the master has canceled for him.

Peter's question was *"how often,"* but Jesus' last word was *"from his heart."* Now is the time to turn back the heart's direction that we lost while counting the number of times. When we return from a heart that thought only of how much we had been patient to a heart that knows how the Lord had compassion

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on us, that grace actually appears in the words and actions with which we treat our brother.

Let us keep in our hearts the grace with which the Lord has remitted all our sins, and rather than holding on to our brother's wrongs to justify our own hatred, let us remember that we too are people who have received compassion. When one who has had ten thousand talents canceled stands before a brother who owes a hundred denarii, releasing him from the heart is the fitting step of one who has received compassion from the heavenly Father. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord canceled all our sins

< Matthew 18:21–35 >

"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, "Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all." Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, "Pay me what you owe!" So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all." And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" And his master was angry, and delivered

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him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.'"

I truly give thanks for how greatly God has blessed the Church of God and all of us all this time. These days, as I work and see the things happening around me and the things happening to me, I very much feel the Lord working within me. Before I was born again, I thought only about how I could avoid suffering even a little loss and how I could gain more profit. But after I met the Lord, my heart changed. When the other person asks for something, I understand him, thinking, "Yes, you must be having such a difficulty," and I do it for him, and the thought comes to me, "If the other person does well, do I not do well too?"

Once, there was an occasion when neighbors found fault with a road we had made, even while they were benefiting from it. In the old days I would have grabbed them by the collar, but the thought came to me, "They may not like the road. If I take just a little more care, those people will be very grateful," and so I worked on the road to make it even better for them. Also, thanks to that road, one neighbor gained the courage to try cultivating a field on his own land. Seeing that, I thought, "I really did a good thing for him," and my heart was gratified. This is not something I did. My heart changed because I met the Lord and the Holy Spirit is in me; by myself I could never be like that. It is truly good to be coming to resemble the heart of God.

How greatly God has blessed you and me! Think back to the old days. When we first began the literature ministry, we were so poor that we did not even have money to make book covers; we tore pages from calendars to wrap the booklets and

photocopied the titles and pasted them on. But now we are sending countless books out into the world.

In the difficult times, we also caught fish in the stream and picked mugwort in the fields, and boiled them to eat. But now how abundant things have become! When I think about it now, it is truly a great blessing. We must not keep looking only ahead, but must look back and give thanks, seeing what God has blessed us with, how He has led you and me, how long He has waited, and how much He has made our faith grow.

"Up to seventy times seven"

Let me share a little about the word we read today. Peter asked Jesus a question. *"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven'" (Matthew 18:21–22)*. Is that seventy multiplied by seven, that is, four hundred ninety times? It means to forgive that many times. Here the number seven tells us that there is no end. As we people live, there are many things we have done wrong and many ways in which we fall short with one another, and this word tells us to forgive such things.

Taking this question of Peter's as the occasion, the Lord explained what kind of person goes to the kingdom of heaven. The Lord never spoke one-sidedly; when something happened, He took up that matter and explained it by connecting it with the kingdom of heaven. That is because it is easier to understand that way.

The Lord said, *"Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants"*

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(Matthew 18:23). This means that the king of the kingdom of heaven settles accounts with his servants for the work he had entrusted to them until then. But one of the king's servants owed an enormous amount of debt. It says he owed a debt of ten thousand talents. This means he owed an enormous debt that one person could not pay back even by working a whole lifetime thousands of times over.

If you were in debt, up to how much would you be able to pay back? If you owed a certain amount of debt, would you be able to earn the money and pay it back? There will be people like that. Some will say that they could pay it back even if they owed about a hundred times that much. But ordinary people would shake their heads at that point. If you owed a debt ten times larger again than that, do you think you could pay it back, or do you think you could not? At that point, would you not say, "How can I ever pay this back? Either kill me instead, or cancel all the debt—do one of the two"?

Ten thousand talents is an enormous amount of money. If you and I owed a debt up to the limit where we could never possibly pay it back, what would you do? The Lord speaks about this matter. That servant owed the king so much that when it came to settling accounts, he had no ability to pay. So he fell down before the king and begged. Then the king had compassion on him and said, "You have no ability to pay, so I will cancel all that debt. Let us treat all the debt as nonexistent," and he canceled all the debt. It means that the kingdom of heaven is like that.

The kingdom of heaven is entered by faith

The kingdom of heaven is a matter of whether we can pay back by ourselves, whether we can resolve, the wrongs that you and I have done against the Lord. If we did wrong only once or twice, we might be able to do something about it; but we do wrong once and do wrong again, we say that if we are forgiven just this once we will never do it again and then do it again, and we say we will get angry just this once and not get angry next time and then do it again. We human beings have no ability to resolve the sins we have committed against God. It means it is exactly the same as that. That is why the Lord says He will cancel that debt. It means the Lord removes all those sins. Of course, God removed those sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, through His own Son.

Those who enter the kingdom of heaven enter in this way. They enter by faith. Because the Lord has canceled all our sins, because He has removed them all, we enter with thanksgiving, by faith. Dear fellow believers, is that not so? If it were not so, would there be anyone who could enter the kingdom of heaven?

If you owed such an enormous debt that you could not pay it back even if you earned money your whole life, could you pay it back? You have no ability to pay. Then what words would come out of your mouth? The words “Please have compassion on me” would come out. Is there anyone who can say that if he is given just a little more time, he will pay back all that debt? As for me, even if I owed not that much but just one-thousandth of it, I would say, “Just seize me and kill me instead.” With such a debt, one gives up. There is no choice but to say, “I cannot pay it back even if I live my whole life. Please have compassion on me, and if you want me to live, please cancel all the debt. From now on I will live well for you.” It means that this is how we are

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before the Lord. Can we go to the kingdom of heaven because we do something well? It is impossible. That way, we cannot go to the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John

That is why God sent His own Son to this earth and had John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, pass all our sins on to the head of His Son. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all our sins transferred to Him, received the judgment in our place and died on the Cross, and by dying and rising again, He removed our sins. This is exactly what canceling is. It means that there is no sin.

Through His own Son, God the Father received in full the price of the sins of you and me. “My Son was sent, received baptism from John, was hung on the Cross and died, went into the tomb, and by rising again removed the entire price of your sins.” Since the Lord has canceled all our sins in this way, we have all had them canceled. We have received the remission of sins. We have received salvation. That is why we go to the kingdom of heaven. Is that not so? This is what the Lord spoke of.

If you watch something like the old martial-arts films, some evil person kills the parents of the main character. The main character, having watched his parents die at a young age, feels so wronged that he hides somewhere and trains in martial arts, and then appears and defeats that enemy. Then that enemy’s child in turn takes revenge, and this goes on and on. People cannot help but be that way. But our Lord, who is the King of the kingdom of heaven, when He was settling accounts with His

servants and a servant asked Him to have compassion because his debt was too great, said, "All right, I will cancel it for you." That is how we have had our debt canceled. This is how the Lord saved you and me. This is the gospel.

Dear fellow believers, do you believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit? Through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Lord has canceled all the sins of you and me. This is the gospel. Because there is the gospel, I live and you live too. Because there is the gospel, we can be tolerant of people who are lacking and bear with them. Also, even if someone has done wrong to us, we can let it pass, thinking, "Yes, it is because of your position, because of your circumstances, that you flared up." It is because of the Lord that this is possible. After we have received the remission of sins, there is nothing we cannot forgive. The Lord, too, said, *"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses" (Matthew 18:35).*

One whose debt has been canceled can also cancel the wrongs of his brother

Yet, after receiving the remission of sins—that is, after having a debt of ten thousand talents canceled—there may be someone who grabs by the collar a person who owes him a hundred denarii, chokes him, and, not content even with that, throws him into prison. This word is telling us not to become such a person. We born-again people, we who have had all our sins canceled by the Lord, can also cancel the wrongs of other people. We live that way in the church. That is why we are patient for a long time and wait until it comes about. If this were

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not the Church of God, many people would already have been judged by others, and that would have been the end for them.

Because we have received the remission of sins, we are preaching the gospel to the whole world. We are able to give it to those people. If we had not received the remission of sins, it would be out of the question. People would just use the money they earned with difficulty to buy themselves something to eat; who would do overseas missions? Those who have not been born again regard it as a waste. Even if they have been born again, if they do not truly have the heart of God, they regard it as a waste. Dear fellow believers, is that not so?

Since the Lord has canceled all our sins and has canceled all the sin of all mankind, we do this work so that those people, too, may know that the Lord has canceled their sins. We first had our debt canceled by the Lord, received the remission of sins, and became able to go to the kingdom of heaven; and the Lord is also using us as servants of God and blessing us; that is why we are doing this work. Otherwise, it would be out of the question. With the heart we had before we were born again, it would be out of the question.

Peter asked whether he should forgive up to seven times if someone did wrong to him. When we think about it, forgiving even up to seven times is forgiving a great deal. Frankly speaking, though Peter was quick-tempered, he was a very generous person. Some people forgive twice, and if that does not work, they get angry. One would think that forgiving seven times is already doing well, but the Lord said to forgive seventy times seven, that is, up to four hundred ninety times. It means that there is no end at all.

The point is that, although we cannot do so, the Lord has done so for us. The Lord has canceled all our sins. Because we could not resolve our sins, the Lord came to us and resolved

them for us. So this word says that you, who have received the remission of sins in that way, should also live in that way. But that does not mean that we may do wrong among ourselves and then use the word as an excuse, saying, "Did the Lord not tell us to forgive?" We must not misuse the word of God, but must believe as the Lord has spoken and live according to the Lord's will.

God saved us by paying the price

When we look at this word after being born again, we are truly thankful. The Lord canceled the whole debt of ten thousand talents. The word "cancel" means that it has been removed, that it is simply treated as nonexistent, that there is no debt at all: "You owe me no debt. I make you free of debt." But God did not merely say this to us in words; through the baptism His Son received from John, He passed our sins on to that Son, judged His own Son in our place, had Him die on the Cross in our place, and raised Him again, and so removed our sins. How fairly and justly He has saved us!

Jesus—God—is truly One who is just. This is because He has removed our sins perfectly. It is because He did not do it merely in words but saved us by paying the price. How good it is that He has made you and me without sin! As I look at this word, I am truly thankful. Having heard such a word, we live another week, another day. This is the food of life. The word of God makes us live and makes our souls live. What is it? It is that the Lord has canceled our sins.

The Lord also said that we must be united with the church. Only when we are united can we learn faith, and only when we are united can we do the work of God. The Lord spoke these

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truths at every moment. We share the words the Lord spoke in this way and reflect on them. How thankful we are! The Lord has given you and me the food of life. It is not only food for the flesh that we need. That the Lord has canceled the sins of you and me—this becomes great food and great strength for us. This is a blessing.

Dear fellow believers, I hope that you will have faith. I hope that you will believe that the Lord has canceled all your sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. And I hope that you will live the life the Lord desires. It does not come about as we please. If we follow the Lord, it comes about naturally. That is why I am truly thankful.

However, the word telling us to forgive a brother's wrongs without end does not mean that we should leave injustice as it is. We are not good-natured men who always give away anything and everything. If the other side deceives us, oppresses us, pins us down so that we cannot move, and tries to take away what we have, we must not leave it as it is. Is a Christian a good-natured man who gives away anything and everything? That is not so. We must help the weak and take part and unite in what is right. But if the other side tries to take away what belongs to the weak and tries to oppress them, stopping that is all the more the work of the righteous. I give thanks that our Lord has blessed you and me in this way. I am truly thankful. ✉

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CHAPTER

19

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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 Lord, who finished His words and healed the sick multitudes

< Matthew 19:1–2 >

“Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there.”

The work He continued after finishing His words

Jesus finished the words He had been speaking to His disciples, departed from Galilee, and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. That is, after finishing His teaching, He moved to another place and continued His work, and the text records that movement and what happened there together within two verses. So we who hear the Lord’s teaching also see in this record how the One who spoke those words dealt with people’s weakness.

In chapter 18, Jesus taught not to despise even one of these little ones and to gain one’s brother, and He concluded those words with *“if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses” (Matthew 18:35)*. Jesus, having finished those words, now heals the diseases of the multitudes who had

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followed Him. The One who taught that it is not the Father's will that even one of these little ones should be lost is personally working among weak people. In this scene we see together Jesus, who teaches, and Jesus, who heals people.

Although the place changed from Galilee to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan, great multitudes followed Jesus, and Jesus healed their diseases there. The One the multitudes needed was the same Jesus in any region, so the One on whom we, too, are to rely is Jesus Christ, who speaks and works.

Jesus, who heals those who are weak

Let us read chapter 19, verse 2 again. *"And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there" (Matthew 19:2)*. Right after the words that great multitudes followed Jesus comes the word that He healed their diseases. Jesus did not stop at the fact that many people had gathered, but healed the diseases they had. The multitudes who followed the Lord also had weaknesses, but those weaknesses did not block their way of drawing near to Jesus; rather, the grace of healing appeared in that very place.

This event shows who Jesus is. Jesus is the One who knows people's difficulties and helps them with power, so He not only preached the word but also healed the sick. Therefore, believing in Him does not end with agreeing with good teaching, but is relying on the living God, who is able to help us, who are weak.

The Gospel of Matthew earlier testified of Jesus' healing by connecting it with the word of Isaiah. Let us read chapter 8, verse 17. *"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses'" (Matthew 8:17)*.

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This testimony given by Matthew becomes the ground for our relying on the Lord. The multitudes in chapter 19, too, did not follow Jesus after all their diseases had been healed, but were healed in the very place to which they had followed Him. We also come to the Lord because we need help, and the reason we can ask the Lord for help when we meet problems that are hard to handle with our own strength is also that we believe Jesus is the One who cares for and heals the weak.

The Savior, who bore even our sins

As we look at Jesus, who healed the diseases of the multitudes, we also look at the work of salvation He accomplished. People have not only the weakness of the body but also sin that must be resolved before God, and that sin cannot be removed by our own strength. That is why Jesus came to this earth to have that very sin passed on to Him and to remove it. We rely on Jesus as our Savior because He had compassion on us and accomplished salvation.

Jesus, who healed the diseases of the multitudes there, had the sin of the world passed on to Him without leaving any of it out, through the baptism He received from John, in order to deliver us from sin. At that time Jesus had not only the sins of a few people but even the sins that all of us commit throughout our lifetime transferred to Him all at once. To pay the price of that sin which had been passed on to Him, Jesus shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place, and on the third day He rose again from death. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit have all their sins remitted and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.

When we believe in this grace, the basis on which we come before God also becomes clear. It is not a way of coming by proving that we are excellent; rather, we come because Jesus has washed away our sins and God has received us as His children. So even after being saved, when we feel weak, we can pray to the Lord with that weakness, for Jesus, who saved us, is the One on whom we are to rely every day.

It is easy for us to keep looking only at the shortcomings within ourselves, but faith also looks at the Lord, who knows those shortcomings. Knowing a problem yet keeping it to ourselves alone is different from believing in the Lord and laying that problem before Him; so just as great multitudes followed Jesus, we, too, come to the Lord with that problem. Prayer is not repeating familiar religious words, but believing that the Lord has the power to help and actually asking for that help.

Rely on the Lord and care for one another's weaknesses

Having seen Jesus, who healed the multitudes there, we come to rely on Him in the face of weakness. Hear and believe the word of God, lay your own difficulties before the Lord, also keep in your heart the circumstances of a brother who needs help, and ask God together. For people who have received the same grace of salvation to pray for one another is to rely together on the help of the Lord.

Another person's weakness is not something to evaluate from a distance. Jesus, who taught in chapter 18 to gain one's brother, finished those words and worked in the midst of the multitudes' weakness. So when we, who have heard the word, meet a brother who needs help, let us set our hearts on his

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difficulties, help him with whatever labor we can, and make supplication to the Lord together.

The work of Jesus, which extended from Galilee across the Jordan to the region of Judea, continued, after He had finished His words, at the side of the sick. That very Jesus, who spoke and healed the sick, is the Savior who had our sins passed on to Him. Let us not put off coming to the Lord while trying to hide our weakness; rather, let us follow by faith Jesus, who, after finishing His words, healed the diseases of the multitudes there. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Cast away your hard heart and accept the Lord's will

< Matthew 19:3–15 >

"The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?' And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning "made them male and female," and said, "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.' They said to Him, 'Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?' He said to them, 'Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.' His disciples said to Him, 'If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.' But He said to them, 'All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.' Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples

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rebuked them. But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' And He laid His hands on them and departed from there."

Jesus, who answered with the word of the One who made man

The Pharisees came to test Jesus and asked whether it was right for a man to put away his wife for just any reason. To that question Jesus answered with the word that the One who made man made them male and female from the beginning, and so He made them think first of who the One is who made male and female and caused the two to become one flesh. So the question that had judged marriage only by people's decisions was turned toward the relationship God has established.

While we ask what we may do, we can forget what God has given. The Pharisees asked whether it was right to put away one's wife, but Jesus spoke of the relationship in which a man is joined to his wife and the two have become one flesh.

Let us read verses 5 and 6 of chapter 19. *"And said, '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" (Matthew 19:5–6)*. From the word that the two shall become one flesh, Jesus drew the conclusion that God has joined them together, and He said that therefore man must not separate them. The fact that it is God who joined the two together as one flesh is the reason given in this word.

Do not justify the hardness of your heart

The Pharisees asked again, *"Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" (Matthew 19:7)*. Jesus answered that Moses, because of the hardness of their hearts, had permitted them to put away their wives, and He made clear that from the beginning it was not so. The Pharisees said that Moses "commanded" it, but Jesus called it what Moses *"permitted."* In this way, in this conversation Jesus revealed not only the grounds the Pharisees put forward but also the heart that clung to those grounds.

In verse 9, Jesus says that whoever puts away his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery. With this He gave a clear answer to the question that had asked whether it was right to put away one's wife for just any reason.

So, before this word, first lay down your claim that you are right. Husbands and wives are both people whom God made and people who are to follow the Lord's word together; so, rather than piling up words that blame the other person, we come to look first at the responsibility we have taken on. In a relationship of living together there is the labor of loving, caring for, and consulting with each other, so do not treat carelessly the person God has joined to you just because that person does not fit your will.

He who is able to accept it, let him accept it

Having heard what Jesus said about putting away one's wife, the disciples said that if a man must act this way toward his wife, it would be better not to marry. But Jesus said that not everyone

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can accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given, and He said that there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake.

And Jesus said, *"He who is able to accept it, let him accept it" (Matthew 19:12)*. The words that it would be better not to marry came from the disciples, but it was Jesus who spoke of who could accept it in that matter; so all must first be taught by God.

Do not stop little children from coming to Jesus

Next, people brought little children, hoping that Jesus would lay His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. Then Jesus said to accept the little children and not to forbid them to come to Him; so Jesus received the very people whom the disciples had stopped. Those who would come to the Lord were not to be sorted out by the disciples' judgment alone.

Let us read verses 14 and 15 of chapter 19. *"But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' And He laid His hands on them and departed from there" (Matthew 19:14–15)*. To His word to receive the children, Jesus added the reason that the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. These children did not come out presenting anything of their own; rather, people brought them, and they stood before Jesus. So it is not because a person looks great by the standards of adults that he gains the kingdom of heaven. If we do not know what Jesus delights in and weigh only how useful a person is, we end up, on the contrary, blocking those who come to the Lord.

This scene makes us look back on our own hearts as well. Earlier, the Pharisees tested Jesus with their own question, and here the disciples rebuked those who brought the children; the people were different, but both had to correct their own judgment before Jesus' word. So you, too, who hear the word, rather than putting first the thought that you already know it well, learn what the Lord calls right and whom He receives.

We, too, enter the kingdom of heaven, of which He said that it belongs to such as these, not by putting anything forward, but by believing in the salvation Jesus has accomplished just as it is. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and at that time He had even the sins we would commit throughout our lifetime passed on to His body. And as the price of those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross, received the judgment for sin in our place, and rose again from death. Believing this gospel of the water and the Spirit and receiving the remission of sins is the way of salvation God has given us; so those who have received this salvation lay down the heart that pushed people away in order to keep their own will, and they come to accept together the people whom the Lord receives.

A life that humbles the heart before the Lord's word

In the text there are three different scenes, and in each scene people first asked, spoke, or stood in the way, and each time Jesus answered. Concerning marriage, He made clear the will of the One who made man; to the disciples' words that it is better not to marry, He made clear the word that not everyone can accept this saying; and concerning the little children, He made

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clear the will of the Lord, who receives them. So we, too, whatever matter we face, must first hear the word the Lord has given concerning that matter, rather than making our own convenience the standard.

The hard heart tries to fit the word to its own will, but a heart that has been lowered fits itself to the word. Fulfill your responsibilities in the relationships God has given, follow the Lord's will together, and help little children come to Jesus. We cannot live that way with the attitude that we are always right; so we must have a heart that is taught by the Lord, who saved us.

Jesus laid His hands on the little children and departed from there; thus He Himself fulfilled the word He had spoken, telling them to receive the children. We, too, must not stop at having heard the Lord's word, but must treat people according to His will. Cast away the hardness of your heart, and, following the will of Jesus, who accepted the little children, treasure the relationships God has entrusted to you and the people who come to the Lord. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Those who are poor in heart can enter the kingdom of heaven

< Matthew 19:16–30 >

“Now behold, one came and said to Him, ‘Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’ So He said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ He said to Him, ‘Which ones?’ Jesus said, ‘“You shall not murder,” “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “Honor your father and your mother,” and, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”’ The young man said to Him, ‘All these things I have kept. What do I still lack?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, 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.’ When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But Jesus looked at them and said to them, ‘With men this is

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impossible, but with God all things are possible.' Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?' So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.'"

Today's passage teaches us that those who are rich in heart cannot go to the kingdom of heaven, and that one goes there only by faith.

"What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

If we look at today's passage, a young man asked Jesus, *"Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16)*. As we know well, Jesus, while saying that the only One who is good is God alone, said, *"If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17)*. When the young man asked which commandments, He told him the commandments, and the young man said that he had kept them all. Then Jesus told him to sell everything he had, give it to the poor, and follow Him. This young man seems to have been rich. So those words were hard for him. So he went back sorrowful.

We know this passage well. In the past, when we preached the gospel, we preached on this passage a great many times. Although we know its meaning well, today I would like to go a little deeper and examine it.

This young man asked about eternal life, asking what good thing he should do to obtain eternal life. The Lord told him to keep the commandments, and this young man said that he had kept all the commandments. Then Jesus told that young man to sell all that he had, distribute it all to the poor, and then follow Him, and this young man went away. When we think about it, this sounds like a single incident meant to tell us something. It sounds that way, but if we actually look closely at its content, we can see that He is speaking very serious words.

The commandments of God are not ethics

Since He told him to keep the commandments, what commandments was He telling him to keep? Jesus said, *"'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 19:18–19).* The young man said that he had kept them all. Then Jesus told him to sell everything, distribute it, and then follow Him. Here, let us set aside all the other words and look at just the one commandment, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* This young man said that he had kept all the commandments, but the point is whether he had kept even that one commandment. He said to love one's neighbor as oneself, and the point is whether he had really done so.

The point is, had he not failed to do it? Jesus was saying, "Sell all the property you have, distribute it to the poor, and then

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come follow Me. Try putting it into practice yourself." This man cannot do so. Yet he is saying that he himself has kept them all. What does this tell us here? It tells us that this man thinks of the commandments, which God has established and spoken, as merely human ethical rules.

We, too, think of the words of the Ten Commandments as a form of ethics and morality. If that were so, they would be something we may keep or may not keep, but whose word is this word that says to keep the commandments? It is the word of God. Then can we keep all the word of God? Of course we cannot keep it. Yet can we say that we have kept it all? It tells us to put it into action, but can we do it? The point is that we have not done it.

This young man tried to believe in Jesus and follow Him, but he was mistaken about the words that Jesus spoke. We, too, are mistaken about many things. Regarding the word of God, we tend to think that we have kept it if we do not commit adultery, and to think that we have kept it if we do not murder. But can we really say that we have kept it? The word of God is such that breaking it even once is absolutely not allowed. The law that God has established means hell if it is broken even a single time. Because it is the word of God and the law that God has established, one must think about it very carefully, but this young man said, "I have kept them all." He is mistaken. We are the same.

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

In conclusion, Jesus said to His disciples, *"Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of*

heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:23–24). How big is a camel? Can something as big as an ox go through the eye of a needle? It cannot go through. It is impossible. It means that for a rich man it is even harder than that. It means that it is impossible. Who is like that? A rich man is like that. What kind of rich man? One who is rich in heart. "I have kept them. I can keep them. I can do it. I have done it." This man is truly rich in heart. He thinks that he can do it, and he thinks that he has done it.

The word of God means hell if one breaks even one jot or one tittle of it, even as much as a single hair. The law that God has established means hell if one breaks even one jot or one tittle of it. Then those who think that they can keep it and say so are all rich. Even the person who says, "I live an upright and good life ethically," is very rich in heart. It means that it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. A rich man is a person who thinks that he himself can keep the word of God. How does one keep it? Who can truly keep all of that word?

The word of God says that if you have not kept it perfectly according to that law, even to one jot or one tittle, from the time you were born from your mother's womb until you grow old and die, you go to hell. It is unconditional. Then you must think about whether you can keep it or not. If, when you have thought it over and judged, you reach the conclusion that you cannot keep it, you are at least a wise person. Then going to hell is an undeniable fact, and if this word is the word of God, we will surely go to hell. If so, we cannot become rich in heart. It means that we cannot be rich in heart.

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One cannot help but be poor in heart

It means that one cannot help but be poor. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)*. Only those who are poor in spirit say, "I cannot make it. I cannot keep it. He said that if I break it even once until I grow old and die, I will go to hell, so there is nothing I can do. I am a person who will go to hell before God." The point is, is that not a poor person?

The rich young man here said, "I can do it. I have kept all the commandments." But when He said, "Sell everything, distribute it, and then follow Me," he said, "I cannot do that." Jesus is speaking of that. "It says to love your neighbor as yourself; have you done so? Have you not failed to do so? When you are told to sell, distribute, and come follow Me, are you not saying that you cannot? In the end, you are a person who cannot keep My law. Right now you are rich in heart, but in fact you are a person who is going to hell. In fact you are a poor person, but you do not know that you are poor." That is what He is speaking of now.

He is speaking of that to this young man, and also to you and me. We are not poor in heart because we want to be poor. We must believe in God and the word that God has spoken, but that word is so majestic and so stern that it says that if we have broken it even by as much as a speck of dust, we will go to hell, so the point is, who could put forward his own rightness before God? So we cannot help but become poor in heart. According to the word of God, we are people who are going to hell, so how could people who are going to hell be rich in heart? Even if we have much property now, our future ahead is hell, so how can we be rich in heart? Anyone who is in his right mind cannot help but become poor in heart. Today's passage is speaking of that. Yet today, people who believe in Jesus are far too rich in heart.

Jesus never said that those who are rich in a fleshly sense go to hell. It is said that a certain very rich man, while reading the Bible on his sickbed, was caught on the word "it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" and agonized greatly over it. So he put the question, "Then can I, a rich man, not go to the kingdom of heaven?" to a clergyman, but it is said that he left this world without ever hearing an answer. An explanation should have been given to him, but it was not.

It is not those who have a lot of money who go to hell, but those who are rich in heart who go to hell. Those who are poor in heart go to the kingdom of heaven. Being poor in heart is knowing that we are going to hell. Even if we know a great deal and have much property, if we believe in God, if we believe the word and the law that God has spoken, how could we become rich in heart? We cannot help but become poor. When I saw that the word of God contains the word *"the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*, I thought that it was all over. The situation was over.

Those who cannot help but go to hell look for the gospel

Do we go to the kingdom of heaven because we get high scores on Bible exams? Do we go to the kingdom of heaven because we know a lot about the Bible? Do we go to the kingdom of heaven because we preach well? Do we go to the kingdom of heaven because we give a lot of offerings? Do we go to the kingdom of heaven because we serve the Lord well? Thinking that way is also all being rich in heart. If we acknowledge God, believe in God, and believe the word that God has spoken, we come to know that we are people who are going to hell, 100

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percent. “I am a person who is going to hell. It is over.” What could people who are going to hell show off about? What could one put forward because one went to seminary? For people who are going to hell, what need is there for what they know, what need is there for what they have studied, and what need is there for being rich or for their background? It is over.

“Then what must I do to obtain salvation?” So I searched and searched again, and found the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. And to prove it, I searched through the Old Testament and the New Testament from the beginning. It was proven in the Old Testament and in the New Testament alike. I, too, believed that word and obtained salvation, and I preached it just as it is to other people as well. I preached the word to those who are poor in heart, who know that they are people going to hell because they cannot keep the law of God perfectly. Then everyone who heard and believed that gospel obtained salvation.

Dear fellow believers, only those who are poor in heart go to the kingdom of heaven. Those who believe in God and believe only the word that God has spoken are those who are poor in heart. What one has done or not done does not matter. *“But Jesus looked at them and said to them, ‘With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible’” (Matthew 19:26)*. With God, He can do it. This is because the Lord came to this earth clothed in human flesh to remove our sins, had our sins transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, was hung on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and rose again and saved us. Therefore we cannot be rich in heart. Even while preaching the gospel to the whole world, we cannot be rich in heart.

Do not let your heart be lifted up by the things of the world

People of the world become rich in heart if they have even just one house. If they have even one nice car, they show off. Such people are the ones who are rich in heart. Such people cannot go to the kingdom of heaven. If they have even one company, they become rich in heart, and if they get a high score on some exam, they become rich in heart. There are also people who throw their weight around because their children have doctorates. But no matter how highly educated a person is, what he knows is only a tiny part. Human beings know nothing. In this world there are many people who are nothing and yet are rich in heart, and we must come to our senses. We must turn back. We must become people who are poor in heart. We are people who have nothing.

When people obtain a high title in the world, their hearts become lifted up. But what is so great about that title? Will that title still be there when they go before God? It is nothing. People go to hell because their hearts are lifted up. Even if one is within our fellowship, if his heart is lifted up, he cannot fully accept the gospel. “I am rich in heart. I am good at this and good at that. I am a decent person.” He said that it is harder for a person who is not poor in heart to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

Dear fellow believers, what is there for us to lift up our hearts about? What is there that makes us so great? Today our Lord spoke this word: “The rich cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. But if you know that you are a sinner, if you know that you are going to hell, will your heart not be humbled? And after that, believe in Me. I am the Savior who has removed all your sins. I

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want you to believe in Me and go to the kingdom of heaven." This is what the Lord said.

The word of God does not change for all eternity

The word of God is not merely a moral book. It is not a system that people have made. God and the word that God has spoken are eternal and unchanging. They do not disappear but remain in effect just as they are. When God created the heavens and the earth, He said, "*Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself" (Genesis 1:11)*. The earth obeyed that word and is still bringing forth grass and herbs even now. Mugwort is an herb, and shepherd's purse is an herb too. Even though we did not sow any seeds, they are still springing up even now. What happens if we go and cut them all with a knife and eat them? They come up again. What happens if we pull them out by the roots? They come up again. It is because God has spoken that word.

We must know God that way and believe in Him that way. Even though we did not know it before, we must know it that way and believe it that way from now on. Knowing that the Lord spoke this word, I make this request of you. Let us all acknowledge God and the word of God, become those who are poor in heart, and become people who obtain salvation by believing the gospel. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

When your shortcomings are revealed, stay by the Lord's side

< Matthew 19:16–22 >

"Now behold, one came and said to Him, 'Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?' So He said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.' He said to Him, 'Which ones?' Jesus said, '"You shall not murder," "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "Honor your father and your mother," and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."' The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept. What do I still lack?' Jesus said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

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The first answer given to the man who asked about a good deed

A certain man came to Jesus and asked what good deed he must do to gain eternal life. In that question of wanting to gain eternal life lay the thought that he himself would do some good deed and so gain that life. But before first laying out a list of things for him to do, Jesus said, *"No one is good but One,"* and placed the basis of goodness in God. A good deed comes from one who is good, so this word that God alone is good causes us to look back on the very question that sought to gain eternal life through good deeds.

We often evaluate for ourselves how good a person we are; comparing ourselves with others, we recall the things we did well, and we also take as our grounds the fact that we have not done great harm. But eternal life is not determined by such self-evaluation; it depends on whether we have a righteousness that will be accepted before God. So Jesus said, *"If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments,"* and set that man before the commandments God had given. The commandments were placed before him with their full weight, and before them it comes to be revealed whether he had truly kept them.

The man asked again which commandments. Jesus said not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, and not to bear false witness, and He said to honor his father and his mother, and to love his neighbor as himself. These commandments make him look back concretely on his life, for thinking vaguely that one has done good deeds is different from actually practicing the love God has commanded.

In particular, the word that says to love your neighbor as yourself does not stop at the level of not having done great harm to others. It is a love that looks after the needs of other people as

we look after our own needs, so when we stand before this commandment, we come to see not only what we have not done but also whom we have loved and how. Yet if we reduce the word of God to fit our own actions, we easily give the answer that we have kept it all.

The young man who did not know what he lacked

Let us read chapter 19, verse 20. *"The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept. What do I still lack?'" (Matthew 19:20)*. While saying that he had kept all these things, the young man asked what he still lacked, so in him there were together confidence in what he had done and a question toward eternal life. Jesus did not stop at accepting the young man's evaluation as it was and telling him one more thing to add. He revealed what relationship there actually was between the love the young man said he had kept and the possessions he held onto.

This conversation does not end merely as a story about someone else's pride. A person who asks what more he needs to do easily thinks that there is no problem with the things he has already done, but the Lord's word makes him examine even the parts he considers he has already done well. The Lord makes him see whether he can become perfect before God by filling in just one lacking deed, and whether the goodness he holds onto is truly good.

Jesus told the young man to sell his possessions, give to the poor, and come and follow Him. To the young man who said he had kept even loving his neighbor as himself, the word was given to practice that love with his own possessions. When he answered in words, he said he had kept it, but before the word that commanded him to practice that love, he could not follow it

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as it was; so here the gap between his self-evaluation and his actual heart is revealed.

The commandments Jesus cited were all about people, and He did not cite the commandment about God, to serve God alone. Yet when we see that the young man went away sorrowful because of wealth, what he put before God is revealed. So this goes beyond a matter of knowing the commandments a little more minutely; it is a matter of what one loves and whose word one follows. In this way, there is a gap between saying that one knows the commandments and accepting those commandments so that they rule one's life.

The call to let go of possessions and follow Jesus

Let us read chapter 19, verses 21 and 22. *"Jesus said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:21–22).* In Jesus' words there are together the command to give to the poor, the promise that there will be treasure in heaven, and the call to come and follow Him. So this word does not end with getting rid of what one has, but goes as far as sharing one's possessions and coming to Jesus to follow Him. The question of eternal life that the young man had asked came in the end before the question of whether he would follow Jesus; so here it was revealed whether he would be satisfied with what he held in his own hands or would follow Jesus, who was speaking to him.

The young man heard this word and went away sorrowful, because he had much wealth. With the words *"for he had great possessions,"* the passage makes clear the reason he left. When

he asked about eternal life, he looked for a good deed he could do, but when the Lord actually gave a command concerning his possessions, he could not accept that word. He had come with a heart to gain something more, and then he left when faced with the call to let go of what he held.

Yet, as we look at this young man, we should not make the act of giving up property into a merit for salvation. Even if one gives away everything one has, the judgment for the sins already committed remains as it is. This conversation reveals that the young man, who thought he had kept everything, in fact had not kept the commandments of God, and it makes us, too, realize that rather than piling up more of our own righteousness, we first need a Savior.

So when the word reveals your own sins and shortcomings, stay by that word. If the grounds on which you considered yourself right have collapsed, that very place is the place to ask the Lord for grace. We cannot do good deeds enough to gain eternal life by ourselves, so we cannot cover up this problem by hiding our shortcomings or by lowering the standard of evaluation and being content. We must know Jesus Christ, who will save us from sin.

Believe in Jesus, who saves us

Jesus said, *"If you want to be perfect,"* but the young man could not become perfect by himself. Jesus is the Savior who came to this earth Himself to make us, who are just like that, perfect. There is a way of salvation for us, who cannot keep all of God's commandments, because Jesus accomplished the righteous work of salvation for us; so now the basis of faith must

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be moved from what we ourselves have done to what Jesus has accomplished.

The work by which Jesus made us perfect began with John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. Through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him, and the sins we commit from the time we are born until we die are all included in them. Then, as the price of those sins that had been passed on to Him, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place, and He rose again from death and saved us perfectly. We receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, so the basis of eternal life lies not in the good deeds we have piled up but in the salvation Jesus has completed.

Therefore, this gospel becomes a sure hope to those who have acknowledged their own shortcomings. The way of salvation opens at the very place where one has realized that one cannot become righteous by oneself, so cast away the thought of being saved by your own strength, and accept the salvation Jesus has accomplished. The person who tried to make his own eternal life through good deeds now receives by faith the eternal life the Savior gives.

Even after we have been saved, the same Lord leads our lives, and then too, if we exalt our possessions and our judgment above the Lord's word, it is hard to obey. Because we know how precious the salvation we have received from Jesus is, we can use what has been entrusted to us according to the Lord's will. Looking after the needs of the poor and serving according to the word is not paying the price of salvation, but the life of those who have received grace doing the Lord's will.

Stay with the Lord, bringing the shortcomings that have been revealed

At first the young man asked what more he needed to do, but in the end he went away sorrowful. When the Lord's word differed from the answer he had expected, he could not choose the way of casting off his own thoughts and following the Lord. We, too, as we hear the word, encounter demands different from what we wanted, and what matters then is not so much how well we asked our questions as whether we accept the Lord's answer.

Let us acknowledge our own sins before the word of God. Let us cast away the thought of considering ourselves good by comparison with others, and believe in the grace of Jesus Christ, who has saved us. The Lord has accomplished through the gospel of the water and the Spirit the salvation we could not achieve by ourselves, so those who believe in that grace can come to the Lord even while acknowledging their own shortcomings.

What we need is not so much a reason to leave the Lord as the faith to receive the Lord's word. Lay down the heart that strove to prove your own goodness, rely on Jesus, and look after your neighbors' needs in the grace you have received from the Lord. Unlike the young man who went away sorrowful because he had much wealth, I hope that even on the day the word reveals our shortcomings, you will stay by the side of Jesus, who gives eternal life, holding those shortcomings just as they are. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Acknowledge that you are a worthless person before God

< Matthew 19:16–30 >

“Now behold, one came and said to Him, ‘Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’ So He said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ He said to Him, ‘Which ones?’ Jesus said, ‘“You shall not murder,” “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “Honor your father and your mother,” and, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”’ The young man said to Him, ‘All these things I have kept. What do I still lack?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, 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.’ When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But Jesus looked at them and said to them, ‘With men this is

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impossible, but with God all things are possible.' Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?' So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.'"

This is a word we know well. Someone came to the Lord and asked, *"Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16)*. This person was a young man. Jesus answered him, *"Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17)*.

When the young man asked, *"Which ones?" (Matthew 19:18)*, Jesus said, *"'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 19:18–19)*. Then the young man asked, *"All these things I have kept. What do I still lack?" (Matthew 19:20)*. Jesus said, *"If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matthew 19:21)*. And it says, *"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:22)*.

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Try standing before the word of God

We always see and hear the words the Lord spoke, so we do know them well. But if we stand before God and examine ourselves in the light of this word, we can find out whether we are great or worthless. When the young man asked what good thing he should do to have eternal life, the Lord said that only One, God, is good, and told him to keep the commandments. When the young man said that he had kept them all, the Lord told him to sell all that he had, give it to the poor, and follow Him. The young man, who had said that he had kept all these things, became sorrowful and left Jesus when the Lord spoke that word at the end.

Did this young man know what he himself was like, or not? He did not know. He came forward boldly, asking what good thing he should do to have eternal life, and when he was told to keep the commandments, he said that he had kept all these things. Then the Lord told him to sell all his property, give it away, and follow Him, and that then he would have eternal life, but he could not do so. This man clearly considered himself tremendously great. There are not so many people who can talk before God even about such deep matters as whether they will go to hell or not.

Therefore, thinking first in human terms, we must take a look just to the extent of whether we are great or worthless. Are we really decent people before God, or not? Are we great people, or worthless people? When we are told that we are great people, we think it is only natural, but when we are told that we are worthless people, our pride is badly crushed. Our pride is hurt so badly that eventually we become deeply upset inside and make a great fuss.

But if, when we hear the words "You are truly a worthless person," our hearts are humbled and we can look back on ourselves, we can receive the blessing of receiving something precious as a gift before the Lord. The problem is that there are many people who cannot do so. If you and I also think about it, concerning keeping or not keeping the commandments of God, we all know the word *"by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20)*, so we may think, "Why are you trying to tie us down with deeds?" We may also think that we are great and say to ourselves, "I already believe in the gospel, so I am already a decent person."

But anyone must be able, like this young man, to go before God once carrying his own greatness, stand before the word of God, and discover how worthless he is. The Lord spoke to this man of all the other commandments as well, but last of all He told him to love his neighbor as himself. And next, He told him to sell and dispose of all his property and follow Him. This young man ran smack into a wall. All this while he had acted as if he were great and talked big before Jesus, asking what good thing he should do to have eternal life, but now he had run into an obstacle.

The Lord did not even bring up to this young man such a commandment as *"You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3)*. He spoke only these words: do not murder, honor your parents, do not commit adultery, do not steal, love your neighbor as yourself; but because the young man did not grasp what He meant, He told him to sell and dispose of all his property and follow Him. Then the young man went away as if to say, "No. Excuse me. I am sorry." He had tried to act as if he were great and to boast of his greatness before Jesus, but when Jesus spoke the commandments and told him that if he was so great,

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he should sell everything off and try following Him, and that then he would have eternal life, he left.

When he heard that word, everything inside the young man was exposed. “So I am not great. I know the law, but I do not keep it. I am not someone who keeps the words of the law perfectly. I was only talking at the level of knowing.” He realized that. “Ah, I am a worthless person.” When we call ourselves worthless, we can just let it pass, but when people say, “You are a worthless person,” we feel offended. We will probably even lose our appetite.

God will say one of two things to you and me: whether you are great or worthless. If God says to us, “You are a worthless person,” how will our hearts be? Will we be able to admit it, saying, “That is really so”? I am not trying to persuade you by preaching well. Jesus, who is God, spoke to this young man only the commandments concerning people, which come after the fourth commandment: *“‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 19:18–19)*. Even so, because he acted as if he were great, He told him to sell everything off and follow Him. Then the young man thought, “Ah, I really acted as if I were great, but I am not. Everything inside me has been exposed. I am a worthless person,” and, feeling that he would be disgraced if he stayed any longer, he hurriedly went away.

"It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven"

This is a word being spoken to you and me now. When we come before God, we all come with our own greatness. We all come with our greatness, saying, "I am great in this area," and "So-and-so is great in that area." We all come carrying it, saying, "This is how I believe in God." But how many people come knowing properly how worthless they themselves are? How many people really come knowing that they are worthless?

Everyone simply comes carrying his own greatness. They say that they have kept the Lord's Day well, served the Lord well, believed in God well, not lived like the Gentiles, hardly told any lies, been faithful unto death, and that they cannot tell you how well they live. They only say that they are a little lacking in other things. They still have a great many things they are great in. After this young man left, Jesus said, *"Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:23)*. This means that it is harder for those who say they are great to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to go through the narrow eye of a needle. It means that a camel might be able to go through the eye of a needle, but people who have their own greatness, people who do not know that they are worthless, can never enter the kingdom of heaven. It means that He said the kingdom of heaven is absolutely impossible.

Of course, after that, to the question of who then could be saved, the Lord said, *"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26)*. I believe this speaks of how the Lord, through the gospel, comes to this earth for the worthless, removes their sins, saves them, and gives them eternal life. But before that happens, there are many people who, like this young man, leave when He tells them to sell everything off

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and follow Him. Why is that? It is because they have many things they are great in. If they really knew that they were worthless, they would confess, “Lord, I am truly a worthless person. I acted as if I were great, but it was all theory. I am a worthless person.”

“I said that I had kept all the word of God, that I had kept all the commandments, but I admit that it was very rude of me to come before You until now talking big, without knowing that I am truly a worthless person before God. And I kneel down. I am truly a worthless person.” What I mean is, let us try thinking this way once.

Seek mercy before the commandments of God

As for what this commandment is, it is the law of God and the word God has spoken. To say that this is something we may keep or not keep, that it only plays the role of making people realize sin, and that for the rest we need only believe the gospel, is to know it very feebly indeed. In fact, we are not people for whom it is optional to keep God and the word God has spoken. God is the One who has existed by Himself and exists by Himself, and He has spoken to us in this way. Therefore, when we stand before the word of God and examine ourselves in its light, we must acknowledge that what is not so is not so, and that what is so is so, and kneel down. If we are worthless, we must admit and acknowledge before God that we are truly worthless, just as we are. We must go beyond the level of admitting it and acknowledge it, and then plead for the mercy of God.

If not, and we know it only in theory, what use is it? Dear fellow believers, among those who have many things they are great in before God, who has ever been saved? People who have

many things they are great in before God cannot be saved even if they hear the gospel thousands of times. Why is that? It is because, since they do not know or acknowledge their own worthlessness, they cannot ask God for help, and they cannot joyfully accept the gift and blessing of the salvation with which God saved you and me—God, who said *"with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26)*.

Salvation comes upon the one who first acknowledges his own worthlessness and gratefully accepts the mercy and salvation God has given. But people who have many things they are great in end up despising the words Jesus speaks, just as this young man left Jesus. It means that they leave, saying, "You are not my type." We, too, believe in Jesus in the same way, but those who go before God with their own greatness have many things they are great in because they have not tried standing before the word of God. If they had really stood before the word, then since He said not to murder and not to commit adultery, what could they say they are great in if they had committed adultery, whether in their hearts or in their actions? They would have no choice but to acknowledge it as it is. Then, will it end with their being truly worthless people who did not live according to that word? Are they not going to hell? Is it not true that that sin does not go away?

With what can sin be removed? Does it go away if we only admit our wrongdoing? We cannot remove it by ourselves. Since He said, *"With men this is impossible" (Matthew 19:26)*, it cannot be done by man. Since it cannot be done, are we not going to hell? We are going to hell. That is because we are worthless. When we stand before God, our worthlessness is revealed, so we are worthless people. Then will it end with our being worthless people? Have we not gone as far as going to hell? If we have sinned and that sin has been revealed, does it end with saying, "I

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have sinned like this"? Punishment follows. It is the same. *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*. In the end, if we have not kept the word of God 100 percent, we are people who go to hell. Is that so, or not? Yes, it is.

But if we acknowledge that we are people who will go to hell, what would we have to be great in? Then, naturally, the next thing we would do is ask God to have pity on us and to show us mercy. Would it not be our turn to seek mercy, saying, "I have done many wrongs before God, so please cancel all my sins and grant me salvation"? Then would God not show mercy to that person? The point is that He shows mercy to such a person.

Who I was before I met the Lord

In the past, before I met the Lord, I, too, was great in my own way. Everyone thinks himself great. When people who believed in Jesus told me to believe in Jesus, I said, "You go ahead and believe well. Believe well and do well. I live well without believing, so you go ahead and believe well. Live good lives." But as I came down with a disease, the knees of my body were brought down to the ground. I had fallen seriously ill. The first thought that came to me was not so much that I was going to die, but that from now on I would live causing harm to people, and that I would not be able to benefit people. "My life has become truly miserable. My life has become a shameful one. How can there be such a life?" If one cannot benefit others, is that not truly a miserable life?

"All right, let me bring my life to an end. But let me think about it a little more." And so, to bring my life to an end, I went before the Lord. I had never prayed such a prayer before. "Jesus, they say You died in the place of sinners? I am about to bring

my life to an end on this earth, and I have done so many wrongs, too. They say that if I believe in You, You give salvation? They say You remove my sins? Please remove my sins. I have done many wrongs in such and such areas. I have sinned. I intend to put everything in order cleanly, so please remove my sins first. Before I go, I want to resolve the problem of my sins. And I want to be saved." That is how I prayed.

I did not even know how to pray, nor did I know about praying in the name of Jesus. After praying like that, as I came out of the dark chapel, I felt—I do not know what it was, but should I call it gentleness, or should I call it warmth?—a tremendous warmth. So the next night, too, I went to the chapel where no one was and said the same thing. "Jesus, please resolve the problem of my sins. I am about to bring my life to an end now. They say You bore the sins of bad people and died in their place? They say that if I believe in You, I will receive the remission of sins? Please resolve it."

Then I came out again. But after that, a new energy took hold of me. I do not know what it was, but a new hope suddenly sprang up from within, and a bright energy began to spread inside me. I was about to bring my life to an end, but strangely, it was like that whenever I went into the chapel and came out. So on the third day I went once more, and it was even more so. Then the thought came to me, "If I believe in You, even the disease of my body will be healed. And I might even be able to make a new start." I believed so. And the disease really was healed. To tell it all would take all night, so I will cut it short by saying that I was healed.

Even now, when I get tested at the hospital, traces of having had that disease remain, but they say that I am very clean now. It is a miracle. In the old days, many people died of that disease.

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But I was completely healed. So from that time on I believed in Jesus, and I became an evangelist and preached the gospel.

When I first read the Bible, I thought I knew it fairly well. After reading through the Bible once, I could know everything, even the Bible verses. What word was in which chapter and verse, and what it meant—I liked that so very much. The word poured right into me. Memorizing Bible verses was not difficult, either. Though I had read it only once, what was in which chapter and verse came back to me vividly, like watching a movie. I disliked everything else, but it seems I liked Bible verses that much. It seems they went right into my heart.

Becoming a sinner after believing in Jesus

But I was convinced that I had received the remission of sins by believing in the blood of the Cross, and yet even while believing in Jesus, I kept committing sins, starting with small ones. "This should not be—why am I like this? This is not it. This is a problem." After believing in Jesus, sin had truly arisen in my heart. Before that, I had no sin because I had no law that defines sin, and I thought that if I just said I was wrong when I had done wrong, that was enough. But now I had become one who breaks the word of God, and I had become a sinner. It was not that I came to know the Lord and came to know love; rather, when I came to know the Lord and came to know sin, I became a sinner.

The Bible says that if we believe in Jesus, our sins go away: *"Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18)*. Even after I had read both the Old Testament and the New Testament, it was right that sins go away, and God could not possibly lie, but after believing in Jesus, I

became a sinner, and my heart was in anguish. I was even preaching to others, but in reality I was someone who had sin yet regarded himself as righteous by faith. I thought that since Jesus had removed all my sins, I would go to the kingdom of heaven in the end.

Nevertheless, there was actually a sense of guilt in my heart. "Then how did this happen? Isn't this a serious problem?" Other people looked at me and made a fuss that my faith was good, but that was only what other people said. What others say to me is not important. When I look at myself with my own conscience, I must be a decent person. What others say does not matter at all. If I am a decent person when I look at myself, then it is all right, and if I am not, then it is not all right. But since I had sin, how could I be a decent person? So, because my heart was in anguish, I began to read the Bible closely.

With a dictionary beside me, I read it closely, and read it closely again, and again, comparing the Old and New Testaments. While studying theology, too, I thought, "Even if I do nothing else, I must make this area absolutely clear." So I gathered the books of Calvinism, Arminianism, and various denominations and studied them all. Theology students usually study only the theology of the denomination they belong to, but I studied that of the denomination I belonged to, and I also gathered and studied all those of other denominations.

The conclusion was the same. Only the denominations and the forms differed; all of them said that if you commit sin, you offer prayers of repentance and your sins go away. I studied all of theology, but it did not come to an end. I still had sin. So from then on, whenever there was something I did not understand while reading the Bible, I prayed, "Lord, what does this mean? Please teach me." For even if I looked in books, it was not there anyway. And whenever even a small wrong arose, I frequently

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fasted for two days, for three days. It is shameful, but I did so until my heart felt relieved, until my heart could accept it.

The Lord, who met me through the word

Did my sins go away even then? They did not. I would feel relieved for a while, but after a little while I would run into sin again. While living like that, as I was reading the Bible, I saw the scene of Jesus receiving baptism from John the Baptist. "What does this mean? Is it a formality? Is it a ritual?" I asked, "Lord, what does this word mean?" But since the Lord did not speak to me directly, I asked professors, pastors, and PhDs, all of them.

There was no one who answered. And this was when I had asked them not to tell me what is found in any dictionary, such as baptizo (βαπτίζω) and baptisma (βάπτισμα), but what its spiritual meaning was. When I asked professors, they said, "Don't you, a student, even know that?" Isn't it because I do not know that I am asking? "Aren't you ashamed, a graduate student? Asking that?" Isn't it because I am a graduate student that I am asking? In a little while I will become a pastor. Will I ask this after I become a pastor? I must ask it while I am a student. So I said, "Professor, if you know it so well, please tell me."

Then he told me to come to the faculty office later. When I went, he said, "Don't ask such things in front of so many people." I said, "I am sorry. I am in the position of learning from you, Professor, and I am sorry I asked such a question in front of many people. But what does this mean?" Then he said, "That is what is called baptisma, and it means immersion, being submerged, being buried. It refers to Jesus bearing our sins and dying, and His coming up out of the water refers to the

resurrection, His coming up out of the tomb." "Ah, I see. Would I have asked the question because I did not know that? Is there nothing else?" He said there was not. "From now on, don't ask such things in front of many people." I never asked again. So I agonized and prayed, and the Lord met me through the word.

As I searched and searched the Bible, and asked and asked, a light came on while I was reading the Bible. Dear fellow believers, when you turn on a fluorescent light, unlike an incandescent bulb, it flickers and flickers and then suddenly comes on fully, doesn't it? Something had always flickered, as if about to come to mind and then not, and then it came to mind. "So this is why Jesus received baptism from John. So this is why He said that all righteousness is fulfilled. At this time, through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He had all sins transferred to Him. So He had my sins transferred to Him, too. He had the sin of mankind transferred to Him, too. So this is how Jesus could be nailed to the Cross, die, and rise again." I came to know that.

Then what is this? I majored in theology—does this mean that theologians do not know this? Did they speak of it and I failed to understand? Did I fail to find it? More than the joy of meeting the gospel, I was sunk in tremendous anguish for thirty minutes. "What, then, are the people who taught me, what are the overseas missionaries, what are the Christian believers all over the world, and what are the doctors of theology?" And I quietly knelt down. "Lord, thank You so much for meeting me. I have no sin. When You received baptism from John, You had my sins transferred to You, You had the sins of my whole lifetime transferred to You, and You had the sins of all the people of this world transferred to You, too. That is how You became the Savior of mankind. And You bore the sin of the world, went to the Cross, and died hanging on it, saying that it is

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finished, and You rose again from death and became our Savior." Then the whole Bible, from Genesis on, fit together.

That was when I first prayed like this: "Lord, I am nothing, but I will preach this gospel to the whole world. I know it is like striking a rock with an egg. No one will believe what I say. But if even one person on this earth hears what I say and believes, I will preach even for the sake of that one person." That is how I finished praying.

Looking back, before I met the Lord, I was a worthless person with sin. Before even the commandment concerning people, to love your neighbor as yourself, the first commandment is *"You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3)*. God existed and still exists. But God said not to have other gods before Him; had I had other gods, or not? When I thought about it quietly, I had a great many other gods. Money, and the opposite sex, too—when I thought about it, there were a great many. Also, He said not to make idols besides God, not to make any image, and not to bow down, but I cannot tell you how many times I bowed in ancestor worship, bowed down before big rocks in the mountains, and did so, knowingly and unknowingly. "Oh, I believe that You exist and that You are God. You said this, and this is the first command; if I have not done this command, then even setting everything else aside, I am completely finished. I am completely bound for hell." I had become completely worthless. It was not a matter of knowing or not knowing something; I had become completely worthless.

A faith that pities Jesus

This young man in the Bible was someone with so much greatness that he came forward asking what good thing he

should do to have eternal life. But when the Lord told him to sell all he had and follow Him, he left without knowing his own worthlessness, saying, "I cannot do that. I have kept all Your law, too, so I cannot do that." We must believe in Jesus knowing our own worthlessness properly. What happens if we believe in Jesus as the Savior without properly knowing our own worthlessness? It becomes nothing more than a formality.

It amounts to our pitying Jesus. "How painful it must have been for You! You have become our Savior, and You seem to be begging us to please believe in You, so I will do You the favor of believing in You." Do we not then become people who bestow pity like this? Instead of our seeking mercy before God, do we not rather become people who bestow mercy on God? Will salvation come upon such people? Will the Holy Spirit come upon the hearts of such people? Countless people on earth believe in Jesus in the same way, but salvation does not come upon those who believe in Jesus out of pity for Him. Such a person has more greatness of his own than Jesus.

But if someone comes before Jesus and, before this word of the commandments Jesus spoke, realizes how worthless he is, unable to keep even the commandments concerning people, and, knowing that he is a worthless person, asks God for help, would there be even one person anywhere who could not be saved? I believe that all are saved. I believe that if they properly know their own worthlessness and accept Jesus, salvation comes upon them all. Dear fellow believers, is that so, or not? Yes, it is.

He said that it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. A rich man cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. What kind of rich man? The rich in heart can never enter. The rich in the flesh can enter. But the rich in heart are not in the kingdom of God. Among those who come before God, the person who is rich in

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heart, the person who has much greatness of his own, can never go to the kingdom of heaven. He can never be saved before Jesus. No matter what kind of person he may be, it is so. The person who considers himself to have something to be great in distances himself from salvation.

I hope you will quickly realize that you have nothing to be great in. That is the fastest way to be saved before God. It is a crash course. If you do not know your own worthlessness, then instead of the crash course, you must complete all the regular semesters and take the exams, too. The kingdom of God is not something attained by studying a long time; rather, you must quickly know your own worthlessness and quickly accept the righteousness of God. When a worthless person, a person who has nothing to be great in, goes before God, the fact that God has saved us with the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit is accepted naturally. It is easier than drinking water. It is very easy.

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

I have already preached twice at funerals with this word. One was the funeral of an elderly person who had hardly ever come to church. That elderly person had not opened their heart to the gospel until then.

But when they fell ill and were facing death, they asked their family to preach the gospel to them, and upon hearing and accepting the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the family preached, they were saved. When I went to the hospital on a pastoral visit before they passed away, they had been lying there under the effects of medication, but they opened their eyes wide,

looked straight at me, said, “Pastor, you have come,” and raised their feeble body. That was the only time they properly greeted me. When they passed away, at the funeral I preached the word *“With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26)*. I said that, seen through human eyes, there had been nothing to boast of, but since the deceased had gratefully accepted what God had done and been saved, those present should not grieve but give praise.

The other time was a different funeral, and there, too, I preached this word. How can a person remove his own sins by himself? How can he change his own worthlessness into greatness by himself? It is absolutely impossible. It absolutely cannot be done. Dear fellow believers, is there a way for you to recover from your own worthlessness? You can never do it by yourselves.

We need a Savior because we are worthless

But there is just one thing we can do. Because we are worthless, we seek mercy before God and gratefully accept the love and salvation God has bestowed on us through Jesus. Then our worthlessness changes into greatness. We become children of God. We change completely. God said that He would never again remember our sins. He does not remember them. Dear fellow believers, I believe the Lord is telling us that when we realize that we ourselves are worthless, the blessing of God comes upon us. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

I was saved because I was worthless. There are countless pastors on this earth, but I was not saved because I was greater than they are. I am truly a worthless person. Even my temper is no good. I have an upright personality and tend not to know how

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to compromise, so if the word of God says it is right, it is right, no matter what, and if it says it is not, it is not, no matter what. Even if the whole world comes at me saying that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not right, I do not care. I tell them that if it is not right, they should not just say so in words, but put it in writing, in a book. That is because what remains in writing cannot be disputed. I only preach that the Bible says this. Since I met the Lord through the word, I have preached this word until now.

The Lord said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24)*. We must not follow the Lord acting as if we were great when we have nothing to be great in. We must know that we are worthless. Because we are worthless, we need a Savior. Because we are worthless, we absolutely need the righteousness of Jesus. "Lord, we need You. Because we are worthless. That is why I believe in You. Because I am worthless. If I were great, why would I believe?" I believe that when you acknowledge in your hearts that you yourselves are worthless, the salvation of God comes upon you. I pray that God, who loves you, embraces you, and saves you, will give you the blessing of that salvation coming into your hearts. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

We must be poor in heart

< Matthew 19:16–30 >

“Now behold, one came and said to Him, ‘Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’ So He said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ He said to Him, ‘Which ones?’ Jesus said, ‘“You shall not murder,” “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “Honor your father and your mother,” and, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”’ The young man said to Him, ‘All these things I have kept. What do I still lack?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, 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.’ When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But Jesus looked at them and said to them, ‘With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’ Then Peter answered and said to Him, ‘See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?’ So Jesus said to them, ‘Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have

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followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.'"

Dear fellow believers, it is good to see you. Not long ago, one of our brothers went to the Lord's kingdom. Even while reading this word today, I find myself thinking of that brother.

When one of our brothers or sisters goes before God, what weighs on our hearts most is whether that person believed in the gospel or did not believe. If he believed and went to the Lord's kingdom, there is nothing at all to worry about. If he believed, it is truly something to celebrate, but if he did not believe, it is a great disaster. It becomes not a celebration but truly a funeral of sorrow. But starting a few days before he went before the Lord, that brother had fellowship through the gospel and also had assurance before God. And he was embraced in the Lord's arms peacefully, as if falling asleep.

I shared this word at the funeral service, sent that brother off well, and came back. Those who have never sent a believing brother or sister to the Lord's kingdom do not really know how it feels to send one. We come to have all kinds of thoughts, such as, "Did he really go to the kingdom of heaven? What will the family left behind do?" and we come to think deeply once again about the work of God and the kingdom of heaven.

"It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven"

In today's word, a certain young man asked, *"What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16)*. The Lord asked him why he asked about a good thing when no one is good except God, and told him to keep the commandments God had given. When the young man said that he had kept them all, He told him to sell everything he had and give it to the poor, and then said, *"Follow Me" (Matthew 19:21)*. At that word, sorrow piled up in the young man's heart, and having boasted of his own faith before Jesus, he went away. After that, Jesus said to His disciples, *"Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:23–24)*.

It means that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. As for how hard it is, it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. It means that for a rich man it is absolutely impossible. As you also know well, this word was spoken in view of the young man who appeared earlier. Where was the young man's heart? It was in his wealth. He was sorrowful, thinking, "I can keep the commandments God gave well and do everything well, but He tells me to sell all my property, give it to the poor, and follow Him…" and he spoke no more about eternal life and simply went away. Therefore it means that it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

This young man relied on his wealth. What is clear is that if our hearts rely on something of this world and regard it as precious, we cannot enter the Lord's kingdom. Hearing these

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words of Jesus, the disciples asked Jesus who in this world could enter the kingdom of heaven if a rich man could not enter it.

"But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible'" (Matthew 19:26). With men it was impossible, but with God it was possible, and He did it. Through the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, God has removed all the sins of you and me. We cannot keep even the law 100 percent. We are weak and often fall. In our thoughts we want to do well, but because our flesh is weak, there is also much that we fail to do well. Yet Jesus, who is God, came to this earth clothed in human flesh for the shortcomings and iniquities of you and me, had our sins transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment for sin on the Cross, rose again, and saved us. That is certain. Do you believe so? We believe so.

If our hearts are rich, we cannot fully enter into the gospel

We believe so, yet our Lord said that it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. This word was not spoken about those who are rich in the flesh. Just as He said that the poor in spirit are blessed, it means that the person who is rich in heart cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Then, since the gospel is clear and it is clear that the Lord saved us through the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, where does the reason lie that some enter the kingdom of heaven and some cannot enter it? That is what I am saying.

In the end, it means that the person who is rich in heart cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. That the Lord saved us through the

gospel of the water and the Spirit is certain, even if the heavens were to split in two. Yet why are there people who always hear the gospel but cannot fully enter into that gospel and live powerfully in the assurance of salvation? It is because their hearts are rich.

Then what, specifically, does it mean for the heart to be rich? The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the real thing. This gospel saved me, saved you, and saved all the people of the whole world. Even so, why are there people in whose hearts the assurance of salvation is faint and who cannot enter the kingdom of heaven because they have no faith? It is because, as the Lord said, they are rich in heart.

In what respect are they rich? Even though the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth, if there is a heart that relies on what one believed long ago—"Only the blood of the Cross is the gospel. Only the blood of the Cross has saved us"—then, because faith in that remains, one cannot go all in on the gospel of the truth. If there is even a little expectation placed on that in the heart, that is being rich in heart. Even though the Lord has clearly saved us through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, if someone relies on what he heard long ago, thinking, "Isn't there salvation also in what I heard long ago?" then there is wealth in that person's heart too.

There are very many people in the world who live a religious life. If someone thinks that much of the word he heard at the church he used to attend was right, and has a heart that depends even a little on that place even though it was not the gospel of the water and the Spirit, then he cannot go all in here, even though the Lord has saved us this clearly. Only when it is clear to us, "What I knew was not complete. That is not it," can we say, "Yes, that is right," when the Lord gives us what is complete, and fully believe and fully enter in.

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But if someone says, “The word I heard long ago also makes a good deal of sense,” he cannot go all in here. Do you understand what I mean? It means that if one regards the word heard in the past as making a good deal of sense, then even when the gospel of the water and the Spirit comes, part of one’s heart is still placed there, so even when the truth draws near, one cannot fully go all in. It is because one’s heart and expectations are placed there.

The heart that relies on the things of the world is wealth in the heart

This is just like the fact that people go all in on God only when they have completely failed and are completely disappointed in the world. If you have many lingering attachments to the world, can you fully go all in on the Lord? You cannot. But material things, fame, and the people of the world are all nothing. Further on, there is the word, *“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19:29)*. If there is a certain amount of property in our household and we have a heart that relies on that property, that becomes wealth in the heart. We become rich. Because we have something to depend on, we cannot depend entirely on the Lord. Do you understand?

If there is someone in a high position among our brothers or relatives and we have a heart that relies on that, then even though we hear what the church preaches, or the gospel of the truth that the Lord has saved us, and even though we say it is indeed right, it does not come deep into our hearts. How long would such a

trifling thing last in the world? Even a high position in the world does not last more than a few years.

This does not mean to abandon houses or brothers or sisters or parents or children. It does not mean to abandon our parents or to abandon our children; rather, it means that if we have in our hearts the thought, "Even if I fail here, I have something to lean on over there," that becomes wealth in the heart, and we become rich in heart. Since He said that it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, it means that we should not become like that. If our parents and relatives are well off and can help us, we may receive help, but since that is not eternal, it means that we should not set our hearts on it. That exists for a little while and then disappears, so it means that we should set our hearts on God. Because, while it is impossible with men, God can do all things, God came to you and me and saved us completely from sin. It is by believing that that we enter the kingdom of heaven.

Dear fellow believers, we hear the gospel and say, "Right, right," but believing wholly and following, saying in our hearts, "This truth is 100 percent right. I died with Christ and lived with Him. Now everything I have is all the Lord's," is faith. The Lord's saving us took a single moment, but the many hours that remain are daily living. If our daily living relies more on relatives or wealth than on God, it is impossible to follow the Lord, and going further, it is also impossible to be saved. The gospel comes in one ear and flows out the other.

We will all go before God someday. So let us stand rightly before God and think about our lives. Let us look back to see whether there is perhaps something rich in our hearts, whether there is anything we rely on other than God. If there is such a thing, we very often tend to be unable to believe fully even when we hear the gospel. We say it is indeed right, but because we

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have something we rely on, the part of the heart that fully offers praise with thanksgiving, gives glory, and follows is small.

So the rich young man went away because of his property, with sorrow in his heart. He asked what good thing he should do to obtain eternal life. Dear fellow believers, how do we obtain eternal life? We obtain eternal life by receiving the remission of sins through believing in what God has done. What is hard about believing that? It is extremely easy. But if our hearts rely on something of the world and think highly of it, it is hard to obtain eternal life. Even though God came and saved us, we end up absurdly insisting on our own thoughts, holding on to our own stubbornness, and perversely setting ourselves against it. Dear fellow believers, do you think we, of all people, will live long? Do you think you and I will live long without anything happening?

The person who is poor in heart follows the Lord

Dear fellow believers, the person who has truly been saved and truly follows the Lord is not the person who is rich in heart but the person who is poor in heart. He knows that what he himself has, as well as his family's wealth, property, children, wife, and everything in this world, are all vain things that will soon disappear. So he becomes a person who is poor in heart, and by faith in what the Lord has done he enters the kingdom of heaven, by faith he obtains eternal life, and by faith he becomes a disciple of the Lord. And by faith he can live the life of a disciple of the Lord. Dear fellow believers, do you say amen?

But why are those who are not like that the way they are? It is because their hearts are rich. It is because there are many things they rely on other than God. That is why it is hard. It is

hard even to follow the Lord, and they say that, though they have received the remission of sins and this truth is indeed right, they cannot tell you how hard it is. "Why must I live struggling and straining that much? I could just do a little, use the rest for myself, and live comfortably."

Dear fellow believers, if your hearts are set much on such things, you become like this young man. What good thing can we do? It is by faith in what the Lord has done that we are saved, by that same faith that we obtain eternal life, and by that same faith that we can follow the Lord. All the rest is fleshly. In the flesh, there is no difference between those who are saved and those who are not. They are all the same.

"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me"

I am not saying this to single anyone out; it is the same with me and the same with you. You work hard to serve the gospel, and I devote all my strength to the work entrusted to me. Then, if there is a funeral, I go and preach the word, and I come back and again do the work I have been given. When the Lord met the Samaritan woman and was teaching her the truth, the disciples went into the town to buy food, came back, and set food before the Lord, asking Him to eat. Then the Lord said, *"I have food to eat of which you do not know" (John 4:32)*. The disciples murmured to one another, *"Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?" (John 4:33)*. Then the Lord said, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34)*. This means that doing the work of fulfilling the Father's will became the food of our Lord's heart, the food of the spirit.

Dear fellow believers, we are just the same. You and I are just the same. The work I do and the work you do are just the

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same. Eating and drinking in this world are also all the same. During the ten-odd waking hours out of the twenty-four hours of a day, we work this way and work that way. Doing the work of the flesh is working, and doing spiritual work is also working; the Lord commanded us to spread the gospel to the whole world, and we are serving the gospel by working. If we do not do this work every day, our hearts have no food and feel empty. There is no sense of fulfillment, and we think, "Did I not live in vain again today?"

But whether we cleaned at the workplace or cooked at home, whatever we did, if we too took part in some portion of the work the Lord is doing, our hearts are glad. Because we have served the work the Lord entrusted to us, we have eaten the food of the spirit, and so our hearts are glad. That is why we are living with peaceful hearts, boldly and joyfully. Dear fellow believers, is that right? When I stand all day long and work this way and that, I get tired just as you get tired. It is not just for a day or two. When I wake up after sleeping, I have to do it again, and there is no end. Isn't this much enough, you ask? We must do it until the Lord's will is completely accomplished on this earth. When we do that work, we eat the food of the spirit.

Then, though our bodies are certainly tired, our hearts are at peace and have a sense of fulfillment. As we do this day by day, something is prepared as time passes, and I keep doing the work of laying the foundation so that you can work. You also keep working. We do the work the Lord has entrusted to us on this earth and then go. The Lord also did the work the Father had entrusted to Him, that is, the work of saving us completely. Because, while it is impossible with men, God can do all things, the Lord, who is the Son of God and our God, had our sins transferred onto His own flesh through the baptism He received from John, was hung on the Cross and died, rose again from

death, removed our sins, and gave us eternal life. I too live that way, and we too live that way.

Do not rely on the world, but fully accept the salvation the Lord has given

The reason I speak this word to you every day is not to show off what I know. This is not the first or second time I have preached a sermon like this. Why do I speak this word? It is because I worry that, among our church family, there might be someone who, even though it is being clearly proclaimed in the church that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth, relies on the things of this world because he is rich in heart. I worry that someone who relies on many things—relatives, parents, children, or something else—though he should eagerly take and eat the salvation the Lord has given, saying, "Thank you," as a person who has starved for three days receives food, may fail to do so, eat only a little, saying, "It is indeed right. It does taste good," and not come to have complete faith, and then meet death in that state; I speak this to you because I feel sorry about that.

Dear fellow believers, people are nothing special. Even those younger than us go before us. People are all bound by what they know. But what actually saved you and me? What God did for you and me—that is the very truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Through that work God saved you and me. Then what is there in what we know to rely on? It is nothing. Where does it come from that we can follow the Lord joyfully, that we can follow by uniting with those who have gone ahead of us in serving the Lord, and that we can follow the Lord without falling

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into the world, though we are lacking? It is possible when we are poor in heart.

Dear fellow believers, what use is it to rely on the world? When I was in real difficulty, I too leaned on people, but I came to realize that there is a limit to people's help. Once I actually went through it, I said many things to myself: "I did something pointless for nothing. Relying on the world just because I was in difficulty was itself a mistake. I must earn money tenaciously and serve the gospel."

Even if someone helps, he helps expecting something later; would he sacrifice himself completely as the Lord did, to save us, remove our sins, and give us eternal life? Who is there that gives everything he has for the happiness of another? Who is there besides God? Can parents do that? Can parents go to hell in place of their children? They try not to go to hell. Dear fellow believers, I am talking about living forever, about His having given us eternal life. The Lord did not merely save us; He gave us eternal life. It means that He gave us life that never dies.

"Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever"

So, whatever one's life on this earth may be like, the person who believed in the Lord's kingdom and went to the Lord's kingdom is a very happy person. Moreover, if a person met the Lord while serving the gospel in union with the Lord and the Lord's church during life on this earth, that person is a remarkable person. Why is he remarkable? Because the Lord said, "*Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43)*, and in the book of

Daniel, too, it says, *"Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3)*.

All people, whether they believed or did not believe, will rise again. There is the first resurrection and the second resurrection, and people like us who have received the remission of sins take part in the first resurrection. The Lord comes as the Lord of the second coming to take those who will take part in the first resurrection. That is the first resurrection. He takes them and has them live together with the Lord. They enjoy the kingdom of heaven. And when a thousand years have passed, He raises again, in the second resurrection, all those who will be judged, sits on the white throne, and judges them. One kind of people enter the eternal lake of fire, and the other kind of people live in the place where they enjoy eternal life. This is the Lord's plan revealed in the Bible. The Lord's saving us does not end there but continues until it reaches eternal life. How remarkable this is!

Because the young man was rich in heart and his heart was set on his property, though he had met the Lord, he could not believe and follow Him. We too, if we believe in and rely on what we knew, come to be unable to believe wholly in the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and follow with thanksgiving, even while hearing it in the church today. We can follow when it has become clear that the things of this world are nothing special. Then we become thankful for the gospel, thankful for salvation, thankful that He gave us eternal life, and thankful for serving the gospel in the church and for living together in union.

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Jesus took away all the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John

When I met the Lord, my heart was extremely poor. It was because there was sin in my heart. I am not someone who has much money in the world. I had no background worth boasting of, either. So there was nowhere to rely on. Frankly, it is best to live without relying on anything rather than relying on something. But when I believed in the Lord in order to receive the remission of sins and become a worker of God, whereas before I had considered only what I did through deeds to be sin, after believing in the Lord even the wrongs I did in my heart all became sin. Sin truly came into being in my heart. For ten years after believing in Jesus, there was so much sin in my heart that it was very hard. So I read the Bible countless times, again and again, and prayed: "Lord, there is sin in my heart. People say that it is all right for those who believe in Jesus to have sin, but looking at the Bible, did You not clearly promise that our sins would become white as snow? Did You not speak of it in the book of Isaiah as well, and did You not clearly say in the New Testament too that it is finished? Then why is there sin in my heart? What people say does not seem to be right."

As I read the Bible again and again in this way, praying and even praying with fasting, one day the Lord taught me the word about the gospel of the water and the Spirit. He taught me what the baptism Jesus received from John means.

After that, as I read the Bible asking the Lord for help, the Lord resolved my questions through the word. He taught me how sin was passed on to Jesus and how Jesus took away my sins and the sins of all the people of the world. When John the Baptist tried to prevent Him from receiving baptism, Jesus said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. By

John the Baptist's giving baptism to Jesus through the laying on of hands, sin was passed on. "It is fitting in this way to fulfill all righteousness, to remove the sins of all people. So you, give Me baptism and pass the sins of all people on to Me. Let us remove all the sins of all people in this way." When Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John and came up from the water, there was a voice from heaven saying, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)*. God the Father proved that Jesus is the Son of God and our Savior.

And Jesus carried the Cross, was nailed to it, and breathed His last, saying, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*. And He died and rose again. Jesus became our Savior. "*Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18)*. Because, while it is impossible with men, God can do it, God did it. He removed my sins, removed all your sins, and removed all the sins of all the people of this world.

The kingdom of heaven is given to the person who is poor in heart

But because there are many in the world who are rich in heart, because they rely on many things in the world, there are many people on the earth who, even after hearing this gospel, cannot accept it, cannot fully hold on to it or believe it, and so live without being saved, without obtaining eternal life, and without becoming disciples of the Lord. That is why we preach the gospel to the whole world by doing the work of serving the gospel. It is not only the people around us who are people.

The people of the nearly 200 countries of the whole world are all people of the world. It means that we should give all these

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people an equal opportunity. The Lord clearly told us to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We do the work of preaching it to them, and those people receive the booklets and read them and hear with their ears, become poor in heart, realize the fact that they are insignificant, and go to the kingdom of heaven by faith. On God's side, the Lord has clearly, perfectly, and completely removed all the sins of you and me. What we must do is make that ours by faith. It is receiving the remission of sins by faith. By faith we obtain eternal life, and by faith we can become disciples of the Lord. All we can do is believe. There is nothing else at all.

Why is that so? It is because the eternal life the Lord has given is so precious. How precious it is to live forever, to live forever and ever in the kingdom of God, in the kingdom of heaven! If we could live that way through our own efforts, by paying money, would that be precious? If someone went to the kingdom of heaven by paying an enormous amount of money, how would that be precious? Because it is so precious, and because the remission of sins is also so precious, God has accomplished our salvation and gives it to us. To whom does He give it? To those who are poor in heart He says, "If you only believe, it becomes yours. The kingdom of heaven becomes yours, salvation becomes yours, eternal life becomes yours. Believe." Dear fellow believers, do you believe? I believed and so became one of God's people and a worker of God.

There is one more thing I am concerned about. If, perhaps, there is anyone among us who knows the gospel of the water and the Spirit yet, having a heart that relies on the things of the world like the rich young man, cannot accept it fully, has no joy in the heart and little assurance of salvation, and so finds it hard to follow the Lord and lives a hard life, I hope that person will not live that way. I hope you will be people who, while living, live

purely and cleanly, powerfully, rightly, and fruitfully, upholding the Lord's will, and then, when the Lord says to come, go to meet the Lord. I want to become like that too, and I hope all of you will likewise become like that.

If it is the work of God, there is nothing I am ashamed of. Doing unpleasant tasks, and your washing dishes and cleaning in the kitchen, are all the work of God. Where is there anything that is not the work of God? It is all necessary and all precious. I am so happy to have met you. How hard you labor! Before the Lord, you truly labor very hard.

While living on this earth, what will we do to satisfy our hearts? The best thing is to receive the eternal life and salvation God has given, to unite our hearts with God, to live a life of walking with the Lord while living on this earth, and then to meet the Lord. There is nothing better than the work of God. Let us all become people who are poor in heart, accept by faith all the blessings the Lord has given, walk with the Lord, and then meet the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

We cannot follow the Lord with human desires

< Matthew 19:16–22 >

“Now behold, one came and said to Him, ‘Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’ So He said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ He said to Him, ‘Which ones?’ Jesus said, ‘“You shall not murder,” “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “Honor your father and your mother,” and, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”’ The young man said to Him, ‘All these things I have kept. What do I still lack?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”

Although the world is murky in many ways, we must keep our hearts steady and live the rest of our lives with the faith that believes in the Lord’s righteousness and love, and so become people who are beneficial to the Lord’s kingdom.

The word we have read today is a word we know well. *“Now behold, one came and said to Him, ‘Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’” (Matthew 19:16)*.

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The Lord, saying that there is only One who is good, told him to keep the commandments. When the young man asked, *"Which ones?" (Matthew 19:18)*, the Lord spoke of the commandments concerning people. *"'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 19:18–19)*. The young man said brashly before Jesus that he had kept all the commandments concerning people and asked what he still lacked. This man did not know well what he himself was like. Let us suppose that he did keep the commandments concerning people in his own way. Among people, he might even be recognized as having lived well, keeping ethics and morals. Even supposing that is so, the question is, what about the commandments concerning God, from the first commandment to the fourth commandment? The Lord did not say that directly, but said as follows: *"If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matthew 19:21)*. When the young man heard this word, he went back sorrowful, because he had much wealth. He left Jesus.

When one's own desires and the Lord's will collide

Dear fellow believers, this word tells us truly many things. Above all, it tells those who want to follow the Lord that if they have the fleshly desires of human beings, they cannot follow Jesus. Dear fellow believers, can you follow the Lord while holding on to your own desires? What a person wants, he will probably be able to accomplish to some degree by making an effort, in most cases, even if not 100 percent. But can a person

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do what God wants from people? If he can, how can he do it? To put it more directly, how can we follow the Lord? It means that if we try to follow the Lord without throwing away the fleshly desires we have, we come to have two masters over ourselves and can never follow the Lord.

Dear fellow believers, how can you follow the Lord when you have the desires of your own flesh? Even supposing you have received the remission of sins, and even supposing you believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, how will you follow the Lord? Can you follow Him just because you want to? To this young man, who said he kept human ethics and morals well, the Lord said to sell everything he had, give it to the poor, and follow Him, and that then he would have much treasure in heaven. Then the young man went back. The appearance he had shown when he came boldly before the Lord, wanting to follow the Lord and boasting of it, vanished completely, and with a dark shadow falling over his heart, he left Jesus. Why did this young man do that? It is the same for this young man and for you and me, who are now following the Lord. If we have the desires of our own flesh, can we follow the Lord while still holding those desires? We cannot. When desire collides with desire, a fight breaks out. We want to do this and also want to do that, but the Lord tells us to believe in the righteousness of God and to spread and serve that righteousness. Yet we have the craving of our own flesh. It means that we want to satisfy that craving and want to follow that craving, but craving collides with craving and they fight. Then one side must be given up, and if we cannot give up what is our own, we must give up the Lord. So the person who cannot give up the desires and the cravings of his own flesh ends up giving up the Lord. But the person who gives up the craving of his own flesh ends up, as a result, following the Lord. In this world there are many people who give up the Lord. It means that

there are many such people even after they have believed in this gospel of the Lord.

Why is it hard when we want to follow the Lord? Why is it difficult? Why are our minds so complicated, and why is it so hard? It is because we have not given up ourselves. The Lord tells us to spread this gospel, since He has saved us and has saved the people of the whole world through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. He also says that, because we cannot follow the Lord with our old self, the Lord, in Christ, put our old self to death by bearing our sins and dying for us on the Cross. So we have become a new creation. The old self has passed away, and we have become a new creation. It means that because we have become a new creation and our old self has died, we are fully able to follow the things that please the Lord. Why is that so? It is because our old self has died, so we have no need to follow our former desires. So we can follow the Lord well. If we truly believe well in the Lord's righteousness, believe that the Lord's word is right, and have the faith that we died together with Christ and came to live together with Him in the Lord, we are fully able to follow what the Lord wants. The Lord wants the gospel to be spread throughout the whole world. Because that is right, we can follow it. But if our own desires still remain there, they keep colliding, and it is hard to follow. Can we follow? We cannot. We have received the remission of sins, but we cannot follow.

"I have been crucified with Christ"

So I cannot possibly follow the Lord by myself. *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20)*. This word of Galatians came into my heart as I was reading the Bible after dozing off during the dawn

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prayer meeting. “Ah, it is truly so. I died, and I came alive. So I do not need to follow the desires of my flesh. It is not by my own strength that I follow the Lord. If my old self has died and I have become a new self, then I just need to believe in the Lord’s word and follow it, and the Lord takes responsibility for everything concerning me; following the Lord by my own strength is impossible and hard. Because I myself am so weak, when Christ had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, bore it, and died on the Cross, my old self also died. When the Lord died, I also died, and when the Lord rose again, I also rose again.” It means that this is faith in the Lord. “That is right. If it is not my old self that follows the Lord, then following Him is something I can manage. For I just need to follow by faith.” So from that time on, I lived with boldness, preaching the word. Even until now, I follow by that faith. At times many worries of the flesh come too. But more than the worry that comes for fear that I might somehow not get by, there are times when it is hard because I fear that I might not fully carry out the tasks the Lord has entrusted to me, and to all of us, and that, while the adversaries and obstructers are many, I might depart without having fully testified of this gospel. So, though I am lacking, I am doing the Lord’s work in the Lord, who gives me strength. I too carry out hard tasks every day. Even so, I do it because the Lord gives me the strength to carry out that work.

The reason I can follow the Lord is that I have thrown away the desires of my flesh. If I followed the desires of my flesh, how could I follow what the Lord wants? That is why the Lord said to sell everything one has, give it to the poor, and follow Him. Therefore, I myself and you as well must throw away the desires of our own flesh and live with the new desire the Lord gives, a new craving, that is, the craving to save other people. In that way

we must follow the Lord. Only then can we follow Him. We must know the thoughts the Lord wants, the heart the Lord wants, the faith the Lord wants, and the life the Lord wants, and press on toward the mark. Otherwise, we end up following our own thoughts. If we follow our own thoughts, we rejoice when things go well, and when things do not go well, we grieve and have a hard time.

Dear fellow believers, our following the Lord's will means that, even if the work is not accomplished quickly, we follow, even if slowly, because it is the Lord's work. It means that we follow toward the goal within the strength the Lord gives. That is all it takes; what else could there be? We must truly, as people of faith, follow the Lord by faith, and know and believe that we have become a new creation in Christ, and follow by faith.

Set your goal on the Lord

Dear fellow believers, in the Bible there are countless people who tried to follow Jesus. A certain man came forward, saying that he would follow the Lord wherever He went. But the Lord said, *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Luke 9:58)*. It means that on this earth there is not even a hand's breadth of land in the Lord's name, and nothing at all belongs to the Lord. It means that although the whole universe is the Lord's, He did not register even a hand's breadth in His name. His saying so means that the way of following the Lord is not the way of gaining the things of the world.

Dear fellow believers, receiving the remission of sins is also very important. Receiving the remission of sins means receiving the remission of sins by believing in the Lord, and if we ask what

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comes along with it, there is following the Lord. If we receive the remission of sins and still do not follow the Lord, we make that remission of sins vain. If, after receiving the remission of sins, we instead go out into the world and live following the desires of our own flesh, we become enemies of the Lord. *"To be carnally minded is death" (Romans 8:6)*. Then would the Lord be pleased? The Lord delights in the work of bringing dead souls to life; would it be right if we held only the desires of our own flesh and tried only to make our own flesh live well? Following the Lord is very important. To follow the Lord, we must forsake ourselves. We must live by faith, receiving and enjoying what the Lord gives within the bounds the Lord permits; if we set the goal of our life ourselves and follow it, we will be disappointed when that goal is not achieved. Dear fellow believers, we must set our goal on the Lord. We must set it on the Lord, and we must want what the Lord wants, rejoice in what the Lord rejoices in, and desire to follow wherever the Lord leads us. Only then can we follow the Lord.

Dear fellow believers, should we become like this young man? Many such people appear in the Bible. A certain man wanted to receive his share of property. He came to the Lord and said that he and his older brother had to divide their property, and asked Him to help. Then the Lord asked who had made Him a judge or a divider of goods over them, and told them to reject covetousness. Dear fellow believers, after we have met the Lord, we must have the goal the Lord wants. That is, if we have received the remission of sins. If, after receiving the remission of sins, we live a life with no mark that says, "This is how I am going to live," Satan the devil snatches us away. Dear fellow believers, even when we set a goal and run, we keep trying to go off onto side paths; if we have no goal, then after running for a while, if our direction turns even a little, we go completely the

opposite way and end up back where we started. Where is the final goal of the life of you and me, who have received the remission of sins? It is the Lord. It is going to the Lord. We are going anyway. Even if we try not to go, we cannot help but go. That is why the Lord said such a word. Are you and I perhaps following the Lord while holding the desires of our own flesh in our hearts? If so, throw away the desires of the flesh. Following the craving of your flesh and also following the Lord—these two things cannot go together. If you say, "If they cannot go together, it cannot be helped. I will follow my own craving," you will lose the Lord. If you lose the Lord, what will you become? Even if you have received the remission of sins, that life ends up being in vain.

Our happiness depends on the Lord

Dear fellow believers, only when our Lord makes things go well for us do things go well for us, and only when He makes us happy do we become happy. So the Lord leads us onto the right path. When the Lord leads us onto the right path, if we follow the Lord's will, we become happy. We become righteous. We not only have no sin but also live a righteous life. We come to receive blessings from God. We become like Abraham, like Isaac, and like Jacob. Dear fellow believers, we do not receive blessings because we are great; rather, because we obey and follow by faith in the process of the Lord leading us onto the righteous path, we come to receive and obtain the blessings the Lord gives. Therefore it does not depend on us but depends on the Lord. It means that salvation depends on the Lord, our happiness depends on the Lord, and the most righteous life in our lives also depends on the Lord. So we must set our mark and

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our goal well and follow rightly. We have received the remission of sins anyway and must go anyway, and the Lord must be our goal. Even if we are lacking, if we follow, will the Lord not give us a reward? Then the Lord helps us. But if we live setting our goal not on the Lord but on ourselves, dear fellow believers, our direction is already set wrong. Then as time goes on, we become more and more unhappy. We are laboring in vain. The Lord knows everything about us. He knows our every move, every step we take, every single movement of our hands, and our thoughts and personal goals. He knows all the crookedness and evil of our hearts and also knows all our weaknesses. But if we have set our goal on the Lord, even if we are lacking, the Lord holds us and leads us, guiding us to come into His will, into the goal. In the end, we come to succeed.

Dear fellow believers, when you listen to the word during the worship service, you come to unite your heart with the word of God, and then that word works by faith in your heart and leads your life onto the right path. It leads you onto the path of blessing and lets you receive blessings. Because the word of God is like that, we must listen carefully to the word of God and understand it as the word God has spoken.

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"

Dear fellow believers, let us live by faith. Let us throw away the desires of our own flesh and follow the Lord. That is, even though you and I have received salvation. Is everything done once we receive salvation? Is it enough for a person just to be born from his mother's womb? Being born takes a moment. Real life begins after being born. A person has been born as a human

being, but what matters is from then on. It means that our life of faith is the same. We must teach our children well too, and you and I, who have received the remission of sins, must also look back on ourselves while hearing the word of God, asking, "Am I perhaps a person like this rich young man? Am I not one who follows the desires of my flesh?" Human beings cannot be without fleshly desires. But if we first accept the Lord's will and what the Lord wants and make that our goal, the Lord also fulfills the wishes of our flesh along with it. The order must be right. That is why the Lord said, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33)*.

Dear fellow believers, those who follow the Lord after receiving the remission of sins do not simply follow. They follow by throwing away the desires of their own flesh countless times, spurring themselves on, believing and obeying what the Lord wants, and asking for strength and help. That is how we have come this far. We will go on that way in the future too. I earnestly hope that no one will give up following the Lord in order to pursue the desires of his own flesh. Hoping that God will hold all of you and me, I desire that you and I become those who live with the Lord, the Lord's will, as our goal. I desire that our God will hold us and bless us. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

With men it is impossible, but God does it

< Matthew 19:23–30 >

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, 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.’ When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But Jesus looked at them and said to them, ‘With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’ Then Peter answered and said to Him, ‘See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?’ So Jesus said to them, ‘Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.’”

The word of salvation that astonished the disciples

After the young man who had much wealth went away sorrowful, Jesus told His disciples that it is hard for a rich man

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to enter the kingdom of heaven, and went on to say that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Greatly astonished on hearing these words, the disciples asked who, then, could be saved. At the very place where they had seen one young man go away, the disciples' question widened to the salvation of all people.

The comparison Jesus made shows a difficulty that cannot be overcome by human strength. A camel going through the eye of a needle is not something that comes about by striving a little harder, so the disciples, too, before the Lord's words, came to ask again about the possibility of salvation they had been thinking of. So even if people have much and think there are many things they can do by themselves, they cannot enter the kingdom of God by that.

For the young man, wealth was what stood in his way and kept him from accepting the word to follow Jesus. So rather than the size of his property, we must look at what he relied on and could not let go of. Wealth is only something used for living and cannot remit sin or give eternal life, but if people make it the basis for holding on to their own life, they end up rejecting the very words of Jesus, who gives life. That Jesus said *"And again I say to you"* and let them hear the same word once more was also so that the disciples would not pass over this matter lightly.

We, too, live resolving many matters with the abilities and possessions we have. But being saved from sin does not come about by gathering more of that strength, so as long as we leave unchanged the heart that relies on our own deeds and possessions, we cannot obtain the kingdom of God. Rather than what we can do with what we have, we must know who the One who saves us is.

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God, who accomplished the salvation that people cannot accomplish

Let us read chapter 19, verses 25 and 26. "*When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible'" (Matthew 19:25–26)*. Jesus did not say that since people are a little lacking, God makes up the rest; He said that with men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. With this answer, the weight of salvation is moved from the abilities people have to God. Therefore, when we have realized that we cannot be saved by our own strength, what we must listen to is the work of salvation that God has done.

God sent His Son Jesus Christ to this earth to accomplish that very thing which people cannot do. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and He had them all passed on to Him, including the sins of people who relied on wealth and the sins we commit throughout our lifetime. And as the price of those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross, received the judgment in our place, and died, and He rose again from death. In this way, God fully accomplished the salvation that is impossible with men.

We receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus has accomplished. So we do not look for the reason we can be saved in our own goodness or property or religious career, but we place the ground of our faith on the fact that God has solved the problem of our sins through Jesus Christ. As in the answer given to the disciples' question, salvation depends on God, so eternal life is given to those who believe in what He has accomplished.

When we believe this fact, the heart with which we treat wealth also changes. Since wealth cannot be the Savior, we come to use it rightly as a tool for living that the Lord has entrusted to us, and to use it to help those in need and to serve the gospel. That is, we break free from the heart that entrusted our own lives to wealth, and we live believing in God, who has saved us.

The promise given to the disciples who left everything and followed Him

After hearing the answer that salvation depends on God, Peter stepped forward and asked what, then, they would have, since they had left everything and followed the Lord. Jesus did not dismiss Peter's question, but answered by speaking of the time when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory.

Let us read chapter 19, verse 28. *"So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel'" (Matthew 19:28).* What He promised the disciples was that when the Son of Man sits on the throne of glory, they, who had followed Him, would also sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. That the world is made new does not mean that He will mend the present world and use it; it means that He will do away with the first heaven and the first earth and make a new heaven and a new earth. So the life of following the Lord now is connected to the glory we will enjoy with the Lord in that new world.

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What the disciples had left was visible, but the promised glory was not yet visible, so faith is needed to live holding on to this promise. If we take only what we have now as the standard, only what we have left and the labor we have done look large. But what we cannot see with our eyes also really exists, so if we believe the Lord's word, the future that is not yet visible becomes a clear hope. This is because Jesus Himself made the promise, saying, *"Assuredly I say to you."*

Let us, too, who believe in the gospel and serve it today, engrave this hope on our hearts. When labor continues, the heart easily lingers on the weariness and difficulties of the moment; at such times, think of the glory the Lord will give to those who follow Him. Jesus, who saved us, is the One who will sit on the throne of glory and reign in the days to come, so those who believe in the future they will share with Him gain the strength to endure today's labor.

Believe the promise given to those who have left things behind for the sake of the name of the Lord

In verse 29, when Jesus spoke of those who have left houses or brothers or sisters or parents or children or lands, He put the words *"for My name's sake"* in front. So this word does not speak only of the fact of having lost something, but of a life that has put Jesus ahead of what one had relied on, in order to believe in and follow the Lord. Doing it for the sake of His name means valuing the Lord more than all these things.

The losses suffered because of the Lord's name are truly heavy. Because they are matters bound up with the foundation of one's living and with close relationships, people sometimes come to stand in a place where they must make a heavy choice

between family and property. Jesus named houses, brothers, sisters, parents, children, and lands one by one, and promised that everyone who has left them would receive many times as much and inherit eternal life. So the life of following the Lord cannot be judged only by a list of losses.

The word about inheriting eternal life gives a hope that goes beyond the present life. The days we live on this earth end with being born, growing old, falling ill, and dying, but the life Jesus gives is eternal. So those who believe the Lord's promise do not take that hope lightly because of today's losses and tomorrow's worries, and even when they cannot fully reckon it by their own calculations, they trust and follow Jesus, who made the promise.

Also, keep in your heart the word *"for My name's sake."* At the center of this promise is not so much what and how much we have left, as for whose name we have done so. And the eternal life of verse 29, too, is received because, just as He had already said in verses 25 and 26, God has accomplished the salvation that is impossible with men. The One who saved us is the Lord, and the One who will give us glory in the future is also the Lord.

Faith that follows to the end rather than boasting of having become first

After giving the promise, Jesus added as follows: *"But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Matthew 19:30)*. This last word keeps the disciples from holding on to their present position as a fixed boast. The fact that someone began to follow first or labored first cannot be the ground of that boast, for the One who judges us is the Lord.

This warning is not a word that takes hope away, but a word that makes those who have received the promise follow humbly.

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If we set our hearts on comparing what we did earlier than others, we end up holding on to our own status more than to faith toward the Lord; so those who look to Jesus, who gave the promise, set their hearts on following the word given today. Treasure those who came to believe in the gospel and follow the Lord later as brothers and sisters just the same.

At first the disciples asked who could be saved, and Peter asked what they would have. Jesus answered with the salvation God accomplishes and with the promise of the time when the Son of Man sits on the throne of glory, so both the beginning of salvation and our hope are in God. So there is no reason to boast of our own strength, nor any reason to lose heart looking only at our own losses.

Let us give thanks to Jesus, who has given us eternal life. Even in the labor we endure for the sake of the Lord's name, let us do the work entrusted to us today, hoping for that day when the Son of Man will sit on the throne of glory. Let us lay down the boast of being those who are first and follow the word to the end. God, who has fully accomplished the salvation that is impossible with men, is our eternal hope. ✉

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CHAPTER

20

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

You also go into the vineyard

< Matthew 20:1–16 >

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.’ So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.’ And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’ But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as

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to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So the last will be first, and the first last."

"Many who are first will be last, and the last first"

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard in Matthew chapter 20 is a word that continues from chapter 19. A rich young man came to Jesus and asked: *"Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16)*. He was confident that he had kept all the commandments from his youth. But when Jesus told him to sell what he had, give to the poor, and come and follow Him, then *"when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:22)*.

When Jesus said that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, the disciples were greatly astonished and asked, *"Who then can be saved?" (Matthew 19:25)*. Jesus answered: *"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26)*. This means that people can never reach salvation by piling up good deeds by their own strength, but that God can do that very thing which people cannot do.

Then Peter stepped forward and asked: *"See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" (Matthew 19:27)*. After promising that those who have left everything for the sake of the Lord's name will receive many times as much and inherit eternal life, Jesus added these words: *"But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Matthew 19:30)*. And to explain this word, the Lord told the parable of the laborers in the

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vineyard. He also closed the parable with the same word: *"So the last will be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16)*.

Having believed first does not mean that one receives salvation first, nor does having come later mean that one falls behind in salvation. Then by what is salvation received, and how should those who have been saved live? The answer is contained in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard.

The landowner who sends laborers into the vineyard

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard" (Matthew 20:1–2). One denarius was a worker's wage for one day in that time. The landowner went out early in the morning, agreed with the workers to give them a denarius a day, and sent them into the vineyard.

The owner went out again at the third hour, and at the sixth and the ninth hour as well. In the marketplace there were people who were just standing there because they had not found work. The owner sent them, too, into the vineyard. When he went out at the eleventh hour as well, one hour before sunset, there were still people standing there. When the owner asked why they had been standing here idle all day, they answered, *"Because no one hired us" (Matthew 20:7)*. They were people who had been spending the day in vain because no one had called them. The owner called even them into the vineyard.

The vineyard is the Church of God, and the laborers are the saints called into it. God, who is the owner of the vineyard, still goes out into the world even now and calls people. Some are

called when they are young, some at the midday of life, and still others when the sun is about to set. God came to people whom no one would use, people who were useless even in their own eyes, and called them, saying, *"You also go into the vineyard" (Matthew 20:7)*. Even being called was already the owner's grace.

"Did you not agree with me for a denarius?"

When evening came, the owner told the steward to give them their wages, beginning with those who came last up to those who came first. Those who had come at the eleventh hour received a denarius each first. How glad they must have been, having received a full day's wage though they had worked only one hour! When those who had come first saw it, they expected that they themselves would receive more. But they, too, received a denarius each, just the same.

Then they complained against the owner: *"These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day" (Matthew 20:12)*. The owner answered one of them: *"Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you" (Matthew 20:13–14)*.

The owner did not break his promise. To those who came early in the morning, to those who came at the third, the sixth, and the ninth hour, and to those who came at the eleventh hour, he gave one denarius alike. Then what is this one denarius that God has promised alike to all the people He has called into the church? It is none other than salvation. It is the blessing of receiving the remission of sins and being born again of water

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and the Spirit. God does not give more of this salvation to some and less to others. He gives the same salvation both to those who came first and to those who came later.

Salvation is not received in the order in which people came

Having come to church first does not mean that one receives salvation first. Nor does having believed in Jesus late mean that one receives salvation late. It is not that one is born again only after living a life of faith for ten or twenty years, nor is it that a person who has served in the church for a long time and given many offerings receives salvation first. Salvation is not received according to years, merit, or order.

There are many people who believed in Jesus and served the church for a long time, but who have lived on as sinners because they did not know the meaning of the baptism Jesus received and of the blood of the Cross. Then there are people who receive the remission of sins at last, only after hearing the gospel of the water and the Spirit decades later. On the other hand, a person who did not know Jesus at all and kept away from church may one day hear this gospel for the first time and receive the remission of sins right there. Those who are first become last, and those who are last become first.

Where does the reason lie that people do not receive the remission of sins even though they have believed for a long time? It is because they believe only in the Cross of Jesus. If they do not know that Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, then no matter how much they believe in the Cross, the sin in their hearts remains as it is. Even if they feel at the moment of believing that their sins

have been removed, when they commit sin again the next day, they become sinners again. Even if they offer prayers of repentance, the sin in their hearts is not removed. Then in the end they come to lean on the doctrine that says, "Sin is still there, but because we believe in Jesus, we are regarded as righteous." But that is only a doctrine made by people, not the salvation the Bible speaks of.

"Whatever is right I will give you"

When the owner sent the people he met at the third hour into the vineyard, he promised them as follows: *"You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you" (Matthew 20:4)*. What is it that the Lord has given us as what is right? It is none other than salvation. Having all our sins washed away and becoming righteous, and becoming children of God—this is what is right that God has given us.

This salvation is greater than anything a person can receive. Having seen visions after believing in Jesus, having spoken in tongues and received healing, or having built many church buildings cannot be compared with this salvation. An owner on this earth would end by paying wages for as much as one has worked and adding a little more, but God the Father has given us what we could not obtain however much we worked. Those who have received the remission of sins obtain eternal life and become children who call God Father. *"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)*. Even if this body dies, when the Lord comes again, we will rise again in an incorruptible body and live with God forever. A person who, while living in weakness every day in this world, has not a single

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sin in his heart—that person is one who has received this salvation.

How did God accomplish this great and precious salvation? God the Father sent His Son Jesus to this earth. As He began His public ministry, Jesus went to John the Baptist at the Jordan River. When John tried to prevent Him, Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*.

The word *"thus"* refers to passing on sin in the most fitting way, just as in the sacrifices of the Old Testament a sinner laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed his sin on to it. When John, the representative of mankind, laid his hands on Jesus' head and gave Him baptism, all the sins of the world were transferred to Jesus. That is why the next day John saw Jesus and cried out as follows: *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. Jesus, who had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, bore that sin, was hung on the Cross, and shed His blood and died. And He said, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*. Jesus, who rose again on the third day, became the Savior of all who believe.

This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross are the sure evidence of our salvation. The apostle Peter testified as follows: *"There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21)*. Those who believe this gospel come before God with a good conscience, having no sin in their hearts. As the word says, *"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)*, the person who

has been born again of water and the Spirit is the one who has received the one denarius.

The rich in heart and the poor in spirit

When the laborers who had come first complained, the owner said, *"Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?" (Matthew 20:15)*. Those who had come first were counting the work they had done. They thought that since they had labored all day and endured the heat, they should receive more. The owner's goodness was not visible in their eyes.

So it is with God's salvation, too. In the eyes of people who count their own labor and their own righteousness, the grace of God is not visible. Like the rich young man who went away sorrowful because he had much wealth, people whose hearts are full of what they themselves have cannot enter this salvation. People who are rich in heart are not only those who have much wealth. They are people whose hearts are full of their own knowledge, their own thoughts, and the doctrines they have learned. Even though the Bible says that Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him completely through the baptism He received from John and accomplished everything on the Cross, people who are rich in heart say, "As far as I know, that is not so," and put their own thoughts ahead of the word. Such people cannot receive this salvation.

But people who are poor in spirit are different. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)*. People who are poor in spirit know that they cannot remove sin by their own strength. They know that even if they weep and repent, even if they fast and pray, the sin engraved on their hearts

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is not removed. So when they hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord has accomplished, they believe that word just as it is. As the word says, *"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26)*, God has accomplished for us what people cannot do.

How thankful to the owner the one who had worked only one hour and received a denarius must have been! It was because he knew he had received something he could not otherwise have received. *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9)*. Salvation is not payment for the work we have done but the gift of God. The more people know their own sin and shortcomings, the more they know how great this gift is and the more deeply they give thanks.

Work in the vineyard until evening

Then, since we have received a denarius, is there nothing more for us to do now? That is not so. When Peter asked what they themselves would have, Jesus said that those who have left everything for the sake of the Lord's name will receive many times as much and inherit eternal life. And right after that, He spoke of those who are first and those who are last.

This word also applies to life after being saved. Even among those who have received the remission of sins, there are those who follow the Lord closely and those who follow at a distance. Even if one was saved first, if he follows the Lord from afar, he becomes one who is last; and even if one was saved late, if he believes the word just as it is and follows the Lord closely, he becomes one who is first. The standard is not how much

theology one has studied or how long one has been in the church. The person who, when the word says that something is so, believes it, saying, "That is right," and denies himself, the person who lays down the things of the world for the gospel—such a person is one who is first before the Lord.

The laborers in the vineyard worked in the vineyard until evening. We, too, must live serving this gospel in the Church of God until the Lord comes again, until the day our life comes to an end. It is not that we work to receive more wages; rather, we do the Lord's work because we are thankful for the salvation that is right, which we have already received. The apostle Paul, too, confessed, *"By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10)*.

Living bound to the Lord's work can sometimes feel heavy. But wherever people go, they live bound to something. Rather than living in vain bound to the world, it is a blessing to be bound to the Lord and serve the gospel. Just as no one farms alone, the work of the gospel, too, cannot be done alone. When we work with one heart together with the saints who have been called with us in the Church of God, the fruit of the gospel is borne.

Even now, there are many people in the world who stand in the marketplace, saying, *"Because no one hired us" (Matthew 20:7)*. They are people who, though suffering because of their own sins, spend day after day without knowing the way to resolve them. Just as the owner of the vineyard went out even at the eleventh hour and called people, the Lord wants to call them, too, into the vineyard before the sun sets. We must preach to them the promise of the one denarius we have received, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we, who have received it first, preach this gospel, they, who come later, will also receive the same salvation.

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If there are any of you who have not yet received this salvation, I hope that you will believe the word that Jesus had all your sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John and received the judgment for those sins on the Cross. And I hope that we, who have already received salvation, will become workers who give thanks for this salvation that is right and work joyfully in the Lord's vineyard until evening. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

A heart that rejoices in the goodness shown to others

< Matthew 20:1–16 >

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.’ So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.’ And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, ‘These last men have worked

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only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So the last will be first, and the first last."

The complaint that arose against the owner, who kept his promise

When the day in the vineyard was over, the laborers who had come first received the wages that had been promised. But right there, on the very spot where they received them, complaining began. It was not because the promised money fell short, but because those who had worked only one hour also received the same money as they did. What was in their own hands remained as it was, but after they saw what had been given to other people, the way they looked at the owner changed. Through this parable Jesus asks us with what kind of heart we receive the goodness of God.

So when we read this parable, we must distinguish between what the owner actually promised and what the laborers expected later. The owner promised one denarius a day early in the morning, and it was only after the day had ended and they had seen the wages that those who came last were receiving that those who came first thought they would receive more. They placed on top of the promise made with them an expectation they had formed by comparing themselves with others, and when that expectation was not met, they complained against the owner,

who had kept his promise. Only when we know where the complaint came from can we also rightly hear the answer the owner gave next.

The will of the owner, who went out to find people to work

Let us read verses 1 and 2. *"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard" (Matthew 20:1–2)*. In the first scene of the parable, the one who moves first is the owner. The owner went out early in the morning to hire laborers and send them into his own vineyard, and it was also because the owner sent them into the vineyard that the laborers were able to work that day. Jesus, who likened the kingdom of heaven to this owner, shows first the steps of the one who bestows rather than the record of those who work.

The owner goes out again at the third hour, sees people standing idle in the marketplace, and tells them, too, to go into the vineyard, saying that he will give them whatever is right. At the sixth and the ninth hour he again goes out and does likewise. The owner does not stop after seeking people once in the morning, but goes out again and again throughout the day, meets people, and sends them into the vineyard. Therefore, if we see those who came later only as people who take away the share of those who came first, we miss the owner's will.

When the owner, who went out even at the eleventh hour, asks why they have been standing here idle all day, they answer that it is because there is no one who would hire them as laborers. If we pass over this answer and regard them as lazy people, we

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replace the reason the text reveals with a different reason. The owner told them, too, to go into the vineyard, and the fact that little time remained that day did not stop that call.

Here our own eyes, as we look at someone who comes in late, are also set right. A person who knows that the call of the same owner came to that latecomer as well can rejoice that he comes in. On the other hand, if we regard our having heard and believed the Lord's word and having come to serve only as something we gained by our own resolve and zeal, our eyes for looking at other people also become that much narrower.

The laborers' expectations revealed by the order of payment

Let us read verses 8 through 10. *"So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius" (Matthew 20:8–10).* The owner tells the steward to give them their wages, beginning with those who came last to those who came first. Because of this order, those who came first came to watch what those who came last received, and when they saw those who came at the eleventh hour each receive a denarius, they thought that they themselves would receive more. Although they had heard no new promise from the owner, they set their own share anew on the basis of what had been given to others.

Their expectation arose from seeing what others received, and when that expectation was not met, it led to complaining.

Their words that they had endured the toil and the heat all day were also true; the problem lay in their regarding as unjust, on the basis of that toil, the owner's doing good to other people. To respect a person who has toiled and to think that this person has the right to decide even the grace that others will receive are two different things. The owner kept his promise to the first laborers just as it was, while also giving generously to the last laborers.

There are times when we, too, look with displeasure on the opportunities given to people who have newly come, on the grounds that we have long been doing the work entrusted to us. At such times there is no reason to treat your own toil as if it had never happened; rather, examine whether the fact that you have toiled is flowing into the conclusion that other people must not receive grace. We cannot store up, with the time we have spent serving God, a right to belittle others.

The standard of judgment that the owner gave back

Let us read verse 13. *"But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?'" (Matthew 20:13).* The owner begins his answer by calling the man who was complaining *"Friend."* Then he first goes back to the promise and makes clear, by the promise of one denarius, the reason he has done him no wrong. So the owner's answer is not words that belittle the toil of the man who complained, but words that make him confirm what was promised and what he received. Just because expectations grew larger does not mean that the promise was broken, so only when this distinction is accepted can the grounds for complaining be examined honestly.

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Let us continue by reading verses 14 and 15. *"Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?" (Matthew 20:14–15)*. The owner makes clear that it is his will to give this man who came last the same as well. It was not that he took some away from the one who came first and moved it over to the one who came last, but that he did good with what was his own according to his own will. Therefore, taking issue with what the last laborer received becomes, in the end, taking issue with the owner's good will. When the owner asked at the end, *"Is your eye evil because I am good?"* he was speaking about the very heart that looks on this will with displeasure.

This word sets our judgment before the goodness of God. If our hearts are set only on the share we will get, then even God's having compassion on other people feels like a loss. But if we acknowledge the owner's goodness, the joy of other people and our gratitude can stand together. For the grace given to others does not make smaller the grace we have already received.

The person who believes in the goodness of the One who has given salvation

The goodness of God is clearly revealed in the gospel of the remission of sins. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him all at once, and that was the work of Jesus, to which we did not lend a single hand. To pay the price of those sins that had been passed on to Him, Jesus hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died in our place, and He rose again from death. Since even the sins each of us will commit throughout our lifetime are included in them,

those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins. Because the basis of salvation is in Jesus, we cannot put forward our own toil and look down on the remission of sins that another person has received.

Even a person who has believed for a long time can fall into the same heart as these laborers. If such a person regards the years of believing only as evidence of privilege, it becomes hard for him to accept comfortably that someone who heard the gospel later and received the remission of sins rejoices together with him. But when you think of the Savior who has held you up through those years, the reason to give thanks becomes clearer, so let your saying that you have believed for a long time be a confession of thanks offered to the Lord rather than a yardstick for measuring other people.

A person who gives thanks respects the will of the owner, who entrusts work to other people as well. For both sending even the people he met at the eleventh hour into the vineyard and deciding what to give them depended on the owner, who said he would do *"what I wish."* Yet because such a person treasures the will of the One who called him, he does not treat lightly the work entrusted to him but does it faithfully. A person in whom toil and gratitude are together has no reason to block other people's joy in order to keep his own place.

The final answer needed by the person who came first

Let us read verse 16. *"So the last will be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16)*. With this word the parable ends. In the parable, those who came first were in the vineyard to the end and also received the promised wages, but they looked on the

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owner's goodness with an evil eye. This is why no one can be sure of knowing the owner's heart rightly merely from the fact of having come first. So before putting forward at what hour you came in, look back on how your heart stands before the answer the owner gave when he called out *"Friend."*

Dear fellow believers who were called first, every time you see those who come after you, see there how good the owner is in his giving. The person who continues the toil entrusted to him while trusting God, who keeps His promises, has no reason to turn his own toil into complaining, nor any reason to demand that the share of others be reduced. When we see the grace that the person who came later has received, let us rejoice together in God, who has done good to him. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus, who went the way of the Cross knowing it in advance

< Matthew 20:17–19 >

"Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, (Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify: and the third day he shall be raised up –ASV)."

Jesus, who heads toward Jerusalem

As Jesus is about to go up to Jerusalem, He tells His disciples what He will suffer there. He made clear in advance, on the road before He reached Jerusalem, to whom He would be delivered, what sufferings He would undergo, and what would happen after that. So when we read along with this word, our eyes, which had looked at the Cross only as the evil decision of people, turn toward the way of salvation that Jesus took as He went up to Jerusalem, knowing what lay ahead.

Let us read verse 17. *"Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them"*

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(Matthew 20:17). Jesus takes the twelve disciples aside and speaks to them on the road. The disciples were walking along following Jesus, but they did not fully know the meaning of that way merely from the fact that they were walking with Him. So Jesus took them aside and explained the way He was going; thus a disciple's faith stands on the word Jesus has spoken about Himself rather than on the expectations the disciple has held about Jesus on his own.

At this point, Jesus does not ask the disciples for a way to avoid suffering, but tells them what is going to happen. The disciples heard this word first on the road, before the mocking and the Cross took place. Therefore, when those things happened, they were things that came about exactly as Jesus had said in advance. Indeed, in chapter 27 Jesus is delivered to Pilate the governor, and after being scourged, He is delivered to be crucified.

The word that was given before the verdict of people

Let us read verse 18. *"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn him to death" (Matthew 20:18)*. While clearly stating the destination to which they were going up, Jesus included the disciples who were now walking with Him and said that *"we"* are going up. And He says that at the end of that way the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and that they will condemn Him to death. The disciples who were going up with Him heard first that what awaited Jesus in Jerusalem was not only the welcome of people.

The decision of the chief priests and the scribes is a decision to kill Jesus. The text places their office and their decision side by side. People who consider themselves to have the authority to speak about God would in fact come together in their intent to kill Jesus, and that judgment, made together by those who held religious offices, was a judgment that went against the will of God. Therefore, faith cannot entrust itself to people's judgment by looking only at their position.

Jesus' having spoken of those things in advance does not mean that people's evil turns into good; both the decision of death they will make and the suffering Jesus will undergo are revealed just as they are. Yet their condemning Him to death lies in the very middle of the word Jesus spoke, and the end of that word is *"the third day he shall be raised up."* Because Jesus also placed the promise of resurrection after the sentence of death that people pronounced, their decision cannot determine the end of what Jesus will accomplish.

He made known the sufferings of the Cross in detail

Let us read verse 19. *"And shall deliver him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify: and the third day he shall be raised up" (Matthew 20:19)*. Following His being delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, Jesus goes on to speak even of His being delivered to the Gentiles. Since He said *"shall be delivered"* in verse 18 and then said again *"deliver him"* in verse 19, the Son of Man is delivered twice. And He makes clear, one by one, the mocking, the scourging, and His being crucified.

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In the foretelling He gave in Galilee, it said that He would be delivered into the hands of men and be killed, but in this word even the word *"crucify"* appears. These sufferings are not a matter of one person briefly losing face, but the way in which Jesus' body is wounded and He gives His life. So when we speak of salvation, we cannot lightly pass over these real sufferings He underwent for us.

Jesus' love is revealed in the fact that He goes up to Jerusalem knowing all those things. It is not a way He goes expecting that there will be no suffering, but a way He goes while speaking of the suffering. So do not measure that love only by the standard of whether He gives you good circumstances. On the way on which He must give His own life, Jesus fulfills His will to save us.

What kind of salvation this way becomes for sinners can be known only when we view it together with what Jesus did at the Jordan River before He set out on this way. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins of my whole lifetime and of yours, transferred to Him once and for all. So the Cross on which He was nailed after being delivered to the Gentiles was the place where He paid the price of those sins that had been passed on to Him, and there Jesus shed His blood and died in our place, and then, as He had said, He rose again from death on the third day. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that gives us the remission of sins, and faith is relying on this salvation that Jesus has accomplished.

Therefore, when we think of the Cross, we do not remain only in sorrow, but come to know why Jesus went there and give thanks. It is because we believe in the salvation given by the One who received the judgment for sin in our place. Even those who tried to remove their own sins by their own efforts can, if they

believe this gospel, accept just as it is the remission of sins that Jesus has accomplished.

The One who spoke of what would follow after death

The last word of verse 19 is *"the third day he shall be raised up."* When we read verses 18 and 19 together as one sentence, delivering Him up, condemning Him to death, delivering Him over, mocking Him, scourging Him, and having Him crucified are all things that people do to the Son of Man. Yet the words *"shall be raised up"* that come at the end of this long word are what will happen to the Son of Man Himself. While Jesus spoke without reducing even one of the things people would do, He concluded that word with His own rising again.

And that word was fulfilled just as it was spoken. To the women who came to the tomb, the angel said, *"He is risen, as He said" (Matthew 28:6)*. The word Jesus had spoken in advance on the road was confirmed before the empty tomb; thus even when mocking and death actually came upon Him, the promise that He would rise again was not withdrawn.

Our hearts, too, are easily bound to the things that happen before our eyes. When suffering is vivid, the promise feels far away, but the resurrection Jesus spoke of in advance is not something determined by people's feelings. Because Jesus rose again from death, faith that believes His word has a basis that has actually been fulfilled; so faith is trusting the One who has spoken, even in the midst of difficulties.

However, do not turn this trust into setting a date for the solution of every problem we face. The word about the third day is a promise concerning Jesus' own death and resurrection.

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Because that promise has been fulfilled, we know what kind of One the Savior is; we entrust our lives to Him, who fulfills His own word, and hold on to His love even in the midst of suffering.

A disciple who hears the word to the end and follows

Jesus took the twelve disciples aside and, on the way He was walking, let them hear the word of these three verses to the end. After speaking of His being delivered, the mocking, the scourging, and the Cross, He spoke even of His rising again on the third day; so a disciple is one who hears that word to its last phrase and goes up following that way. The disciples heard that word before the events happened, and we hear it after it has all been fulfilled. The One who teaches us the way of the Lord is the Lord Himself.

When you look at the Cross, remember the fact that Jesus went up knowing this way. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus has accomplished has saved you from sin. Place your faith in Jesus Christ, who was nailed to the Cross and rose again on the third day just as He had said in advance on the road. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The one who serves is the one who is great

< Matthew 20:20–28 >

"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.' But Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So He said to them, 'You will indeed drink My cup; 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 by My Father.' And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as 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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A wish that must be set right even when asked for while kneeling down

The mother of the sons of Zebedee comes to Jesus with her sons. She knelt down and asked something of Him; she showed courtesy to Jesus and spoke of the kingdom of the Lord. But it was not the case that even the content of her wish agreed with Jesus' will. So this scene makes us examine, along with the form of prayer, what is being asked for, because words that exalt Jesus and a wish to exalt oneself can come out together from one mouth.

Let us read verses 20 and 21. *"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom'" (Matthew 20:20–21)*. When the mother knelt down and asked, Jesus asked, *"What do you wish?"* and only then was her wish revealed in words. It was that her two sons might sit in the kingdom of the Lord, one on the Lord's right hand and the other on His left hand. Within the expectation of calling Jesus King lay an expectation of the high seats her sons would occupy.

After hearing that request, Jesus does not begin by explaining how to obtain those seats, but first says that they do not know what they are asking. It is because, while seeking the glory of the kingdom, they missed the path that the King of that kingdom would walk.

We too can tell Jesus what we want, but a wish does not become right merely because it has been asked. So have a heart to listen when Jesus corrects it through the word. The more a wish is expressed in the language of faith, the easier it is to think

that it has nothing to do with our own greed; so the more a wish is like that, the more it must be examined before Jesus.

The question moved from the high seats to the cup of suffering

Let us read verse 22. *"But Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?' They said to Him, 'We are able'" (Matthew 20:22)*. To the people asking for the seats on the right and the left, Jesus speaks of *"the cup that I am about to drink."* Just before this, Jesus had made known the mocking He would suffer in Jerusalem and His death on the Cross, and since He speaks of the cup with that path ahead of Him, the disciples had to turn their hearts, which had been thinking only of glorious seats, toward the path of bearing suffering. To follow Jesus is not to pick out and take only the picture of being exalted beside Him.

Let us read verse 23. *"So He said to them, 'You will indeed drink My cup; 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 by My Father'" (Matthew 20:23)*. When the two answered that they were able, Jesus says that they will indeed drink that cup, yet He says that sitting on His right hand and left hand is not something He Himself will give. That seat is the seat that those for whom the Father has prepared it will obtain; so this answer does not accept the calculation that if one bears suffering, one will surely obtain the desired position as its price. The path of following is to be walked as the path of following, and the seat of glory is to be entrusted to the will that the Father determines.

To say that we entrust it to the Father does not mean that we may neglect our own faithfulness; it means that we must

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distinguish between the word we are to follow today and the seat we are to obtain in the future. If, every time we do the work entrusted to us, we first calculate whether we can obtain a higher seat than others, service ends up becoming a means of competition. So Jesus teaches the disciples to accept the Father's will rather than trying to push through their own will.

The word that even the angry ten must hear as well

In verse 24, the ten disciples hear of this and are greatly displeased with the two brothers. The request of the two shook even the hearts of the other ten, so one person's wish to be exalted changes the eyes with which people in the community look at one another. But Jesus does not end by rebuking only the two separately, but calls the disciples and teaches them together. This is because He had to let the ten who were displeased also know what order the kingdom of the Lord follows.

Let us read verses 25 through 27. *"But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—'" (Matthew 20:25–27).* Jesus speaks of the way the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over people at will and those who are great among them exercise authority, and He points out with the words *"You know"* that the disciples, too, know it. There was a use of authority that they had grown used to seeing in the world. But He said, *"Yet it shall not be so among you,"* so that way cannot be brought into the midst of the disciples just because it is

familiar. Jesus establishes that among them the person who desires to be great must become one who serves.

Here service does not end as a kindness that a high person occasionally shows, but continues into the word that whoever desires to be first must become a slave. The standard that measured how great one is by the power to move others according to one's own will is changed in this way, so now what must be revealed is what labor that person bears for others. When we accept this word, an office becomes a responsibility to care for others rather than grounds for demanding treatment for oneself.

As the work you have taken on grows larger, examine whether it is only the treatment you are to receive that is growing larger. Making known to others what they must do and using them for your own satisfaction are different from each other, so the person who helps others follow the Lord's will together also obeys that will first himself. When we listen to the difficulties of the work we have entrusted to others and bear the necessary labor together with them, service is revealed concretely.

The work of Jesus, who is the standard for the disciples

Let us read verse 28. *"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28)*. Jesus explains through His own work why the one who serves must be great. He is the highest One among all things, yet He forsook the glory of heaven and came to serve; the very purpose for which the Son of Man came was to serve, and that service reaches even to giving His own life as a ransom for many. Therefore, the standard for a disciple's life comes not

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from the position another disciple has obtained but from the life Jesus gave.

The word *"ransom"* makes clear that Jesus' death is a death for others. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and among those sins are included, without any exception, the sins you and I commit throughout our whole lives. And on the Cross, He shed His blood as the price of all those sins transferred to Him and gave His life in our place, and He rose again from death. So those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins. The Savior is not One who first received our service and then removed our sins, but One who saved us by giving His own life.

The service of those who have received this grace is not an effort to pay the price of sin. Jesus has already given the ransom with His own life, so the labor of the disciples comes from believing in that redemption. The heart of Jesus Christ is a serving heart, and the Lord has given that heart within us, who have been saved. So a disciple who has received the grace of redemption can turn away from the heart that regarded a person as a tool for his own glory, and do what is of benefit to that person.

A new direction for the wish to be exalted

At the beginning of the text there are the seats the two sons would occupy, and at the end there is the life Jesus would give. Between those two scenes, the disciples learn anew the meaning of the words "to become a great person." When we come to know for whom Jesus came and what He gives, it also becomes clear for whom we ourselves must live; so service is not a vague

encouragement to become good people but a teaching to follow the way of the Savior.

If there are people and work entrusted to you, look at whose benefit you are seeking in them. If you set your heart on how highly people regard you, the longer your service goes on, the greater your disappointment becomes; but if you set your heart on for whom Jesus came, the reason you must take on the necessary labor becomes clear. Just as this word, which began with the request of the mother who sought seats for her two sons, ends with the word of the Son of Man, who gave His life as a ransom for many, I hope that our service, too, will begin from the place where we have received that life. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Those who believe in God the Savior meet the Lord

< Matthew 20:29–34 >

“Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, ‘Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!’ Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, ‘Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!’ So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, that our eyes may be opened.’ So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.”

If we look at today’s passage, when Jesus was going out of Jericho, two blind men were sitting by the road, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out. *“Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” (Matthew 20:30)*. In this way they shouted in a loud voice and cried out, asking Him to have mercy on them. Then Jesus stood still and asked, *“What do you want Me to do for you?” (Matthew 20:32)*. They answered, *“Lord, that our eyes may be opened.”* This means that they wanted their

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eyes to be opened. So it says that Jesus had compassion, and He must truly have felt pity for them. In their souls they had not received the remission of sins, and in their bodies they could not see what was in front of them. Since their eyes could not see, they had to grope to find where the road was, and since even that did not go well, they must have been sitting somewhere and begging. Sitting by the road where many people passed by, they asked for a coin, and we do not know whether they had taken off a hat and put it in front of them or had spread out a cloth. But when they heard the news that the Lord was passing by, they shouted in a loud voice. They were asking Him to have mercy on them and to open their eyes. The Lord touched these people's eyes and made them see. And it says, *"They followed Him" (Matthew 20:34)*. This means that they became Jesus' disciples. We, too, in the past did not know about Jesus and did not know about the truth. Throughout the whole world there are many such souls.

"Have mercy on us, O Lord"

Throughout the whole world there are many spiritually blind people. How many people there must be who are seeking God! There must be many in every nation. These blind men called out, *"Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" (Matthew 20:30)*. These people knew that the Messiah would come and were waiting. And although they had not met Jesus in person, they had marked Him in their hearts as the very Messiah they had been waiting for. That is why, from the first time they called out, they shouted at the top of their voices and asked Him to have mercy on them. Since there were two of them, they must have said *"us."* When the two blind men shouted, the many people

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around them tried to stop them, saying that it was noisy. Perhaps they even blocked them roughly. But the more they were told to be quiet, the louder they shouted, asking Him to have mercy on them. Why did they do so? How long could it take for Jesus to pass by? It was because once He had passed by in an instant, it would all be over.

Dear fellow believers, imagine that Jesus is passing by in front of us. How many minutes would it take for Him to pass by? He would pass by in a moment. Once He passes by, it is over. Once He passes by, when would we meet the Lord again? When could we ask Jesus for help again? There is only this one opportunity. They asked for help in that way because they thought that the truly life-or-death opportunity was now and only now, and that once He passed by, there would be no more opportunity. They asked Him to have mercy on them and to open their eyes. So Jesus had compassion on them and opened their eyes. How desperately they must have clung to Him, asking Him to open their eyes! They must have grabbed hold of the hem of His garment and hung on. They must have been very earnest. They must have asked Him to open their eyes, saying that they would never let go. We can think of many things from this word, but we can think about one or two of them. First, these people believed in Jesus as their own Savior. The people of Israel were waiting for the Messiah, that is, the Savior, and as these blind men heard the news about Jesus, they settled it in their hearts that He was the very Messiah and believed so. Also, because they were having such a hard time physically as well, they asked Him to heal their illness, to solve their problems, and to give them blessings too.

Souls who are earnestly waiting

I believe that there are people around us, too, who are seeking God. I also believe that in many places throughout the world there must be people who, like these blind men, are earnestly waiting for the opportunity to be saved, for the day they will meet the Lord. I believe that at workplaces, in this society, and in the whole world, there are those who are earnestly waiting for the Lord. If we think that we are giving such people an opportunity, we become truly busy in the work of serving the Lord. It is not enough for us just to eat and live at this level; every day, in practical terms, our hearts become busy. The work of distributing to them the booklets that contain the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the booklets that contain the salvation that can open their spiritual eyes, is so urgent that our hearts cannot rest. Our hearts cannot be at ease. Even when we finish one task in front of us and bring it to a close, our hearts are very pressed, because we must distribute these books so that people may receive the remission of sins. It is because there are many such people throughout the whole world. How many there must be! There truly are people who are earnestly seeking. If they had come across, even once in the past, such booklets as the ones we deliver to them, their lives would have been like those of these blind men. They would have met the Lord spiritually, and their circumstances would have flourished physically as well. How many such people who earnestly seek the Lord there must be in every nation! That is why we feel a sense of urgency. We keep working, and we never settle down just because we have now come this far.

A certain chairman who led a world-class company said that a proud heart that settles down in complacency is the enemy. He said that one cannot rest comfortably just because one has

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become the top company, and that even a top company, if it neglects research and does not run forward for just two or three years, can quickly become a second-rate company. The work we are doing now is work to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If we neglect the work of preaching the gospel to the world, if we do not do the work of distributing books, it will not even take two or three years. Even if we stop the work of distributing books for just a month or two, countless souls will die without being saved. Even if there are people who are seeking God, it is of no use even if they search. Dear fellow believers, there have to be books for people to read, don't there? How many Christian books there are! But what good is it that there are many? We must give souls exactly the book they truly need, but that book is not there. Try searching to see whether there is anyone who has spoken on this subject, the gospel of the water and the Spirit. These days, since it is the Internet age, if you search for the gospel of the water and the Spirit, everyone who has discussed this word comes up. But it is hard to find anyone who rightly preaches this gospel that sin was passed on to Jesus through His baptism. It was hard to find anyone who had spoken rightly about this most central subject in the Bible. The only times when this gospel was fully preached are the time of the early church and this present age. Right now throughout the whole world there are many people who are waiting for us, waiting to meet the Lord, and wanting to have their own problems solved physically as well. There are many in this land, too.

The blind men believed in Jesus as the Savior

Dear fellow believers, what does it tell us that these blind men met Jesus? Isn't it telling us that they received salvation? They said, *"Lord, that our eyes may be opened" (Matthew 20:33)*. This means that they had faith in their hearts. They believed that Jesus is the Savior, that He is the Son of God and the Savior, that He is the Son of the Almighty God and is the very Creator, and that He becomes their own Savior and their own shepherd. They also knew that He had such power, and they also knew that He had come to save people from sin. The Lord is the Savior, who, to save us from sin, had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and rose again from death. That is why they asked that their eyes be opened.

Dear fellow believers, if a beggar called out to you and asked for help, and when you tried to give him money, he said he did not want that but asked you to open his eyes, what would you do? Wouldn't you be startled and think, "To think he would ask me for such a difficult thing!" The blind men had that much faith. They truly believed. They truly waited, and so they received salvation. Right now in places all over the world, how many people must be waiting! How earnestly they must long to come across a book that contains this gospel! A certain person, while believing in Jesus, was deeply troubled by the sin in his heart, and somehow he discovered on the Internet a book containing the gospel of the water and the Spirit and ordered it. He read that book, received the remission of sins, and sent us word. What he sent was only a few words long, but is that nothing? Put yourselves in that person's position. If you believe in Jesus and yet there is sin in your heart, your heart becomes sick. If you wear a necktie, put oil on your hair, and walk around stiff and

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starched, you may look like a perfectly sound person, but if there is sin in your heart, your thoughts are not sound. Your thinking is short-sighted, you cannot think deeply, you are swayed a great deal by your emotions, and you are toyed with by the devil. Dear fellow believers, didn't you have such an experience in the past? Such people have no peace in their hearts and are anxious.

Dear fellow believers, if you do not meet the Lord, your heart is anxious. Since you have no shepherd and no guide, how anxious you must be! If the object of faith is not clear, and if there is no faith that the Lord loved that person, removed his sins, and became his shepherd, what will happen? That person is anxious. Because I know that there are many such people, I cannot rest for even a single moment. Even the work I am doing now, I will not end with that, but will do it again. We must again set things in order, prepare, and distribute books. One book we distribute can become the way for that person to hear the gospel and go to the kingdom of heaven. This one book is a tremendous thing. I hope that you will know the fact that there are many such people and will not let your guard down.

The one who laughs last is the winner

Dear fellow believers, we who have already met the Lord are tired from serving the Lord, but there are also many people in this world who have not yet met the Lord. If they depart from this world without meeting the Lord, where will they go? To hell. If they go to hell, then whether they were sick or healthy while living in this world, whether they ate well and lived well or not, that life is a failure. There is a saying that the one who laughs last is the winner. We must be able to laugh at the end. If someone cries at the end, that person is a failure. Even if it is

faith as small as a mustard seed, a person must know the Lord as the Savior, believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit as the truth, and so have the faith that the Lord has remitted all of that person's sins. When that is so, that life has succeeded.

If you go to a big hospital, there are very many patients. How many of them might have met the Lord? Dear fellow believers, coming to church is, first of all, to meet the Lord and to receive the remission of one's own sins. Jesus is the Savior. But even if you believe in Jesus the Savior, if there is sin in your heart, that is not having met the Lord. People do not know when they will die. Every year very many people lose their lives in unexpected accidents. Therefore, we must not feel at ease just because we are alive. We must meet the Lord, receive the remission of sins, and secure the kingdom of heaven.

What the church must do is solve the problem of sin

How good a thing the remission of sins is! Some people taught wrongly and made people shake their heads at merely hearing the words "the remission of sins," but the remission of sins is in the Bible. Today's word, too, is all about it. The blind men calling on the Lord and asking Him to open their eyes—that is precisely a request that He let them receive the remission of sins. The Lord touched their eyes and opened them. We do not have such power, but we must help people who are in difficulty. Of course, that is something we naturally must do. But will temporary help become permanent help? What a blind man needs most is to have his eyes opened. What a sinner needs most is to be enabled to receive the remission of sins, to have his sins removed. That is what the Lord did, what the church must do,

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and what you and I must do. Solving people's fundamental problem, that is, the problem of sin, is what the church does. People who attend church must seek to have the problem of their own souls, the problem of the sin in their own hearts, solved. If they do not seek to have it solved, they are attending church in vain.

However, there are cases where offerings are made a burden to church members. Then people who have no money cannot even attend church. They may truly have no money that day and be unable to give, and how embarrassing that would be! Offerings must be given voluntarily, because one truly wants to offer them to God. If offerings are forced, it is hard for the church to fulfill its proper role. Of course, those churches, too, must have some circumstances of their own. Offerings that church members have given by working hard must be put to precious use.

Since there are pitiful people who have not met the Lord, we must by all means not relax our vigilance. Until the time they meet the Lord, until the day when even a single person on this earth who is seeking God meets the Lord, we must become those who accomplish all the work we must do. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus, who stopped at the cry

< Matthew 20:29–34 >

“Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, ‘Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!’ Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, ‘Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!’ So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, that our eyes may be opened.’ So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.”

Two different responses on the same road

Behind Jesus, who was leaving Jericho, a great multitude was following, and by the road two people who could not see were sitting. The people moving along after Jesus and the people calling to Jesus from the roadside are together in one scene. But in their attitude toward the two men, the multitude and Jesus differed from each other. The multitude rebuked them and told them to be quiet, and Jesus stood still and called them.

So we cannot consider that we are following His heart merely because of the fact that we are near Jesus. Even while following Jesus, the multitude blocked the voices of the two men who were asking Jesus for help, and Jesus heard those voices and spoke to

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the two men. When we say that we follow the Lord, what we must learn becomes clear as we see, in this way, whom the Lord treats and how He treats them.

The cry of the two men who sought compassion

Let us read verses 29 and 30. *"Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, 'Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!'" (Matthew 20:29–30)*. The two men, who had been sitting by the road unable to see, hear that Jesus is passing by, and they cry out and ask for help. What they asked for was that He would have mercy on them.

They call Jesus *"O Lord"* and call Him *"Son of David,"* and they ask Him to have mercy on them. Their cry was directed toward Jesus, who was passing by. What they want is not said until verse 33, so what this first cry contained was a single plea: that He would have mercy on them.

A person who seeks compassion does not spend his strength hiding his own shortcomings, nor does he try to stand before Jesus like someone who does not need His help. A person who is in sin, too, comes in that way to the One who will save him, revealing his condition just as it is. This is because there is no reason to claim that one's own strength is sufficient for receiving the grace the Lord bestows.

The supplication that continued after they were told to be quiet

Let us read verse 31. *"Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, 'Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!'" (Matthew 20:31)*. The multitude rebuked them, but the two men cried out all the more. This was because the One they were calling was not the multitude but Jesus. Yet the cry of verse 31 does not differ by a single word from the cry of verse 30. What changed after they heard the rebuke was the loudness of their voices; the name they were calling and the compassion they were seeking remained the same.

So do not regard people's reactions and Jesus' will as one and the same. Just because those around you do not welcome it when you have asked for help, you cannot conclude that the Lord also has the same heart. To know what kind of One Jesus is, you must look at the words that Jesus Himself speaks and the works that He Himself does, and in the text, too, the action of Jesus, who calls them, follows the words of the multitude that rebukes them.

Meanwhile, we who follow Jesus must not see the attitude of the multitude as only someone else's affair. We may silence someone on the grounds that his supplication makes our own steps uncomfortable, so at such times, examine how the Lord treats him. Following the Lord is not gaining the right to push people away by our own judgment.

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The Savior, who stands still and asks

Let us read verses 32 and 33. *"So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' They said to Him, 'Lord, that our eyes may be opened'" (Matthew 20:32–33)*. Jesus stands still and calls the two men. He does not stop at hearing their cry, but calls them so that they can answer, and asks what they want Him to do for them. Jesus hears the words of these men whom the people around them had told to be quiet, and through that question the two men gain the opportunity to tell Him their wish directly.

This question shows that the two men's need was not ignored before Jesus. They answered that they wanted their eyes to be opened; so, instead of vaguely hoping for a better condition, they told Him just what they needed. We too, when we ask the Lord for help, can tell Him honestly about our condition. Rather than words dressed up to look good to people, the words we speak to Him, believing in the Lord who will help us, are prayer.

That Jesus stopped is an action in this story that cannot be passed over. On the road along which a great multitude was following, He turned His heart to the two men, so one person's difficulty does not become smaller because he is among many people. Yet a heart may arise in us that does not look at someone asking for help, merely because the work we have been given keeps us busy. When we learn Jesus' steps, we come to find reasons to listen to that person's words.

The touch in which His compassionate heart was revealed

Let us read verse 34. *"So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him" (Matthew 20:34)*. Jesus had compassion on them; this was the heart that felt pity for the two men. That heart was followed by the touch of His hand on their eyes, and the compassion that the two men had sought twice, saying *"Have mercy on us,"* was thus revealed through Jesus' hand. The two men immediately came to see and followed Jesus.

Even after hearing the rebuke, the two men did not stop crying out, and Jesus heard that cry and touched their eyes. It is Jesus who opened their eyes. So the One whom we too must look to is the Lord, who has compassion and helps, and what we rely on is His heart and power.

In the remission of sins as well, the ground that gives us life is the work the Savior Himself accomplished. Through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and within them are included even the sins each of us commits throughout our lifetime. And to pay the price of those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place, and He rose again from death. There is the remission of sins for those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, so the Lord's compassion did not remain as a thought toward sinners but was revealed in the work by which He actually accomplished salvation.

The compassion that the two blind men asked for, saying *"Have mercy on us,"* is the very compassion that we, who have received the remission of sins, have also received. We are people who have received compassion from God, so treasure the

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compassion He has bestowed on us. Even when you discover your own shortcomings, do not forget who the One is from whom you should seek help. The weakness that remains in those who have received the remission of sins does not become a reason to leave the Lord, but rather becomes a reason to live relying on the Lord.

The steps that continued after grace was received

This event does not end at the moment their eyes were opened, but ends with the word that the two men followed Jesus. At first they sat by the road and called to Jesus as He passed by, but now they join in the steps of following Jesus. The healing they received and the life that came after it are connected in this way, so the confession that one has received the Lord's grace grows into a life of following the One who bestowed that grace.

Verse 29 begins by saying that a great multitude *"followed Him,"* and verse 34 ends by saying that the two men whose eyes had been opened *"followed Him."* Now the two men stood on the same road as the multitude that had rebuked them, but they walked that road as people who had experienced Jesus standing still, calling them, and touching their eyes. Our steps of following the Lord, too, begin from that very place where He first had compassion on us.

Look to Jesus, who stopped at the cry of the two men. Do not let people's words discourage you so that you stop speaking to the Lord, and lend your ear even to the small cries in front of you. Just as the two men who had been sitting by the road had their eyes opened and followed Jesus, let us, who have received compassion, also follow Jesus, who stands still and calls, and walk that road together. ✉

◇ About the Next Series

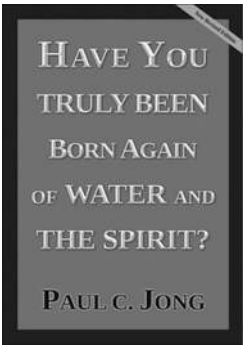
The ***'Biblical Exposition & Sermon Series from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit'*** will continue to be published following this book.

We sincerely hope that the books by Pastor Paul C. Jong, which will continue to be published, will serve as spiritual nourishment to strengthen your faith.

News about newly released books, as well as various ways to access them—including eBooks (PDF, EPUB), audiobooks (M4A, MP3), and online reading—can be found at **www.bjnewlife.org.**

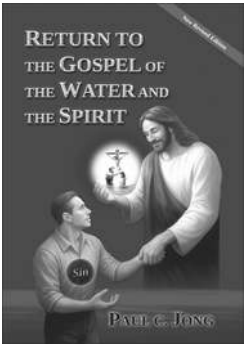
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

HAVE YOU TRULY BEEN BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT? [New Revised Edition]



Among many Christian books written about being born again, this is the first book of our time to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in strict accordance with the Scriptures. Man can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit. To be born again means that a sinner is saved from all his lifelong sins by believing in the baptism of Jesus and His blood of the Cross. Let's believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven as the righteous who have no sin.

RETURN TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT [New Revised Edition]



Let's return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Theology and doctrines themselves can't save us. However, many Christians still follow them, and consequently have not been born again yet. This book clearly tells us what mistakes theology and doctrines have made and how we can believe in Jesus in the most accurate and certain way.

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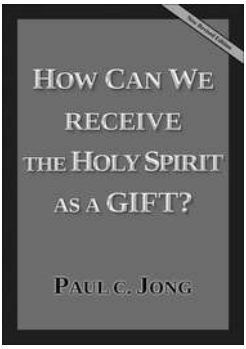
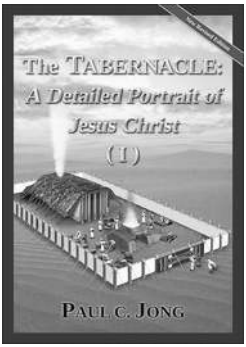
HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]



In Christianity, the most significantly discussed issue is salvation from sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However, few people have the exact knowledge of these two topics. Nevertheless, in reality people say that they believe in Jesus Christ while they are ignorant of true redemption and the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the true gospel that makes you receive the Holy Spirit? If you want to ask God for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then you must first know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and have faith in it. This book will certainly lead all Christians worldwide to receive the Holy Spirit through the washing away of all their sins.

The TABERNACLE : A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (I) [New Revised Edition]



How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

In fact, the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen manifested in the gate of the Tabernacle's court show us the works of Jesus Christ in the New Testament's time that have saved the mankind. In this way, the Old Testament's Word of the Tabernacle and the Word of the New Testament are closely and definitely related to each other, like fine woven linen. But, unfortunately, this truth has been hidden for a long time to every truth seeker in Christianity.

Coming to this earth, Jesus Christ was baptized by John and shed His blood on the Cross. Without understanding and believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, none of us can ever find out the truth revealed in the Tabernacle. We must now learn this truth of the Tabernacle and believe in it. We all need to realize and believe in the truth manifested in the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen of the gate of the Tabernacle's court.

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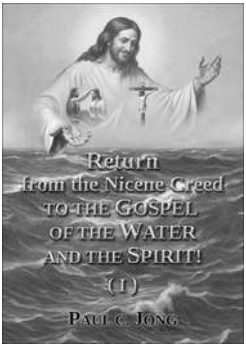
Return from the Nicene Creed TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT! (I)



-Why must we return from the Nicene Creed to the gospel of the water and the Spirit? –

The gospel that the early church preached was precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That gospel was the gospel that Jesus actually shouldered and washed away the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John.

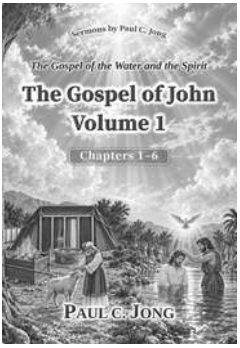
The baptism Jesus received from John was to fulfill the law of the sacrificial system found in Leviticus. That is, just as sin was transferred to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, the substance of that sacrificial law was fulfilled through Jesus's baptism.

However, in the process of the Nicene Creed's formation, the ministry of Jesus having the sin of the world transferred to Him by being baptized by John was deleted from the creed's contents. As a result, this truth has been passed down in a hidden state within Christianity for about 1,700 years, reaching the present day.

Today, many people are struggling to receive the removal of their sins without knowing when their sins were transferred to Jesus. Because of this, even while saying they believe in the gospel of the cross, they fail to reach true assurance of salvation and live amidst repetitive repentance and the pangs of conscience.

The reason we must return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit is clear. This is because only this gospel allows us to meet the Jesus who became the sacrificial offering as the sin of the world was transferred to His body, and thereby have assurance of salvation.

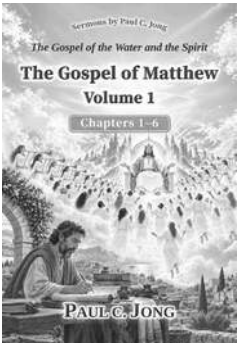
The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of John (3-Volume Series)



"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

John chapters 1–6 reveal who Jesus is. He is the Savior—the God who created all things, who Himself came in the flesh, received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, bore the sin of the world, received its judgment on the Cross, and rose from the dead, thereby saving us perfectly once and for all. The testimony of John the Baptist, the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus' words to Nicodemus about being born again, the Samaritan woman, the sick man at Bethesda, and the bread of life all point to the same One, and the Word is unfolded in light of the salvation accomplished by Christ Jesus. Those who believe in the work of salvation accomplished by Jesus, who is God, are born again of water and the Spirit and receive eternal life.

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Matthew (4-Volume Series)



The very first thing Jesus did as He began His public ministry was to receive baptism from John at the Jordan River. Through that baptism He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and after He was judged through the blood of the Cross, He rose again and fulfilled all righteousness. This book proclaims, in order, the baptism of Jesus, by which He fulfilled all righteousness; the promised salvation and the assurance of the remission of sins; Jesus, who called His disciples and gave the Sermon on the Mount; and a life lived by believing in the righteousness of God. Through the sermons of Pastor Paul C. Jong, which expound the genealogy and the birth, the worship of the wise men from the East, the temptation in the wilderness, the calling of the disciples, the Beatitudes, and the Lord's Prayer, it proclaims the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is the basis of the remission of sins, and the way of living by believing in that righteousness and praying to the Father.

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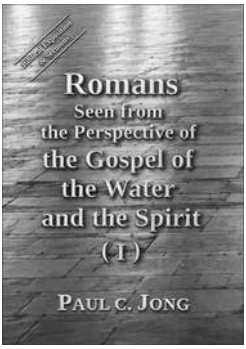
Paul C. Jong's Biblical Exposition & Sermons

Romans seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)



When Looking at Romans from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit,

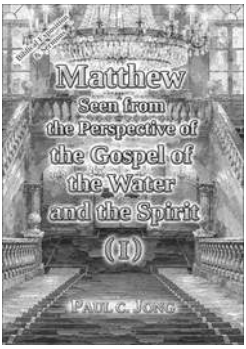
A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and resurrected, it finally begins to be seen why Paul introduced himself as a "debtor to the gospel" and so boldly declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel."

The Apostle Paul, after revealing the sins of the Gentiles and the hypocrisy of religious people in turn, proclaims the righteousness of God manifested apart from the law. That righteousness is not a righteousness built up by human moral effort, but the righteousness completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection. The righteousness Abraham received when he was uncircumcised is the evidence of it, and the "blessing of not imputing sin" that David sang of is the result of it.

A person who believes this gospel knows that he is one who has already been justified. Only upon that conviction does peace with God reside, and the path opens where even tribulation leads to perseverance, character, and hope. This mystery—that a life which was placed under the reign of death over sin through one man, Adam, has received the removal of sins through one person, Jesus Christ, and has been transferred under the reign of righteousness—takes its place within us.

Salvation has already been completed at once. Now, what remains is the matter of receiving that gospel with the heart and living as a righteous person.

Matthew seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)



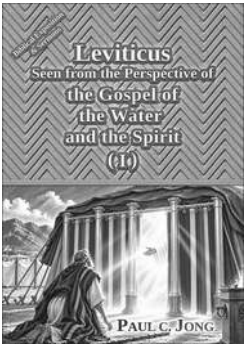
Why does sin still remain in your heart, even after believing in Jesus, reading the Bible for years, and attending church faithfully? Through Matthew chapters 1–4, this book answers clearly from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Tracing Jesus' birth and the wise men's worship, the ministry of John the Baptist as the last high priest, the saving work Jesus began with His baptism in the Jordan, the temptation in the wilderness, and the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, this book testifies that through His baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus took the sins of mankind upon Himself, was judged and died on the cross, and rose from the dead, overcoming sin and death.

If you know the blood of the cross but not when and where your sins were passed on to Jesus, look to the unchanging word of salvation rather than your feelings. In the Bible-based gospel of the water and the Spirit, see what the 'all righteousness' God fulfilled truly is.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

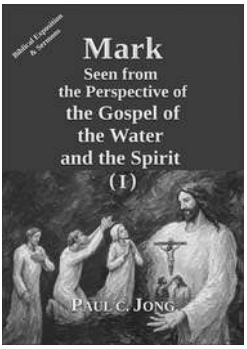


Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) examines how the Old Testament law of sacrifice prefigures the salvation of Jesus Christ, looking at the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering, as well as the consecration ceremony of the priests, Aaron's first sacrifice, and the incident of Nadab and Abihu.

The author, Pastor Paul C. Jong, has long preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and in this book, he also explains the eternal atonement Jesus completed with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, connecting it to the sacrifices of Leviticus.

How can a sinner be made sinless? This book gives a clear answer to that question through the Bible.

Mark Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)



Who do you believe Jesus to be? Through Mark chapters 1–4, this book testifies to the beginning of the gospel, the Lord's authority to remit sins, and the ground of the heart that hears the Word.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed onto Him, bore the punishment for those sins in our place on the Cross, and rose from the dead and gave us eternal life. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins at once and the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Do not read this book merely to add to your knowledge. Examine what kind of ground your own heart is, and lay down your own righteousness and religious stubbornness. Receive the Word of life just as it is and enjoy true rest, and relying on the Lord even in the storms of life, bear the fruit of faith.

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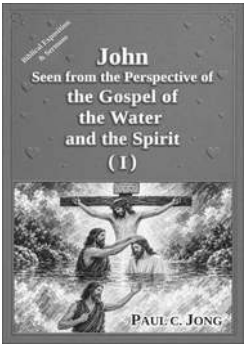
John Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)



John seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) is a book that examines, through the entire Gospel of John, how the Word, who is God, came to this earth clothed in flesh and saved sinners from sin.

The author, pastor Paul C. Jong, has long preached, through the word of the Bible, "the gospel of the water and the Spirit" that Jesus Christ completed with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection. This book does not explain the signs and words of the Gospel of John as mere knowledge of the Bible or records of miracles, but guides readers to the faith by which they are saved from sin and obtain everlasting life by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

May everyone who opens this book meet Jesus Christ, of whom the Bible testifies, and obtain true life.

Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)

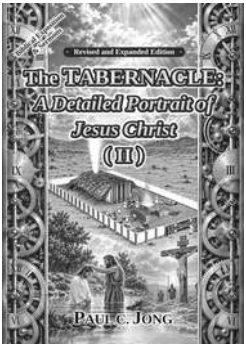


"Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)" expounds the Word from Luke chapters 1 through 6 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Each chapter is composed of three parts: Biblical Exposition, Questions and Answers, and Sermons. The central message conveyed by this book is clear. Salvation is not accomplished by human goodness or merit. Rather, Jesus, who is God, received the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died on the Cross to pay the price for those sins, and rose from the dead, thereby giving complete salvation from all sins to those who believe in this truth.

Pastor Paul C. Jong of The New Life Mission is a servant of God who has devoted his life to preaching the true gospel. Through the Word he preaches, this book will lead souls held captive by sin to the joy of the remission of sins and to eternal life in Jesus.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

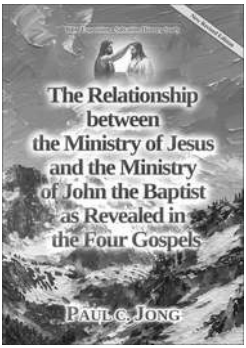
The TABERNACLE: A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (3-Volume Series)



God had the tabernacle set up in the wilderness in order to dwell among the people He had delivered out of Egypt.

Through the Biblical Exposition of Exodus chapters 25–31 and the sermons on the tabernacle, this book conveys the heart of God, who wants to make His sinful people holy and keep them near. The promise of salvation contained in the tabernacle was fulfilled when Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of that sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again. Looking into the utensils and sacrifices of the tabernacle and the office of the high priest, we come to know the meaning of the remission of sins received by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and of the eternal atonement. Through the tabernacle, we seek to know God's love for us and to share the joy of living together as His people.

The Relationship between the Ministry of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptist as Revealed in the Four Gospels [New Revised Edition]



The Ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist — Preparation and Fulfillment: The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit, Believed in the Order the Bible Records It

Why do the four Gospels introduce John the Baptist before speaking of Jesus' public ministry? Matthew records the baptism by which He fulfilled all righteousness; Mark, the messenger who prepared the way; Luke, the birth into a priestly family; and John, the testimony of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. These four books of the Bible—the four Gospels—together shed light on the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist.

This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete our salvation.

We must believe in the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist exactly as the Bible records them, receive the remission of sins, abide in the assurance of this completed salvation, and live as witnesses to it.

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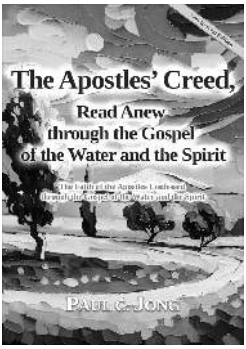
Paul C. Jong's Special Features

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 (I)



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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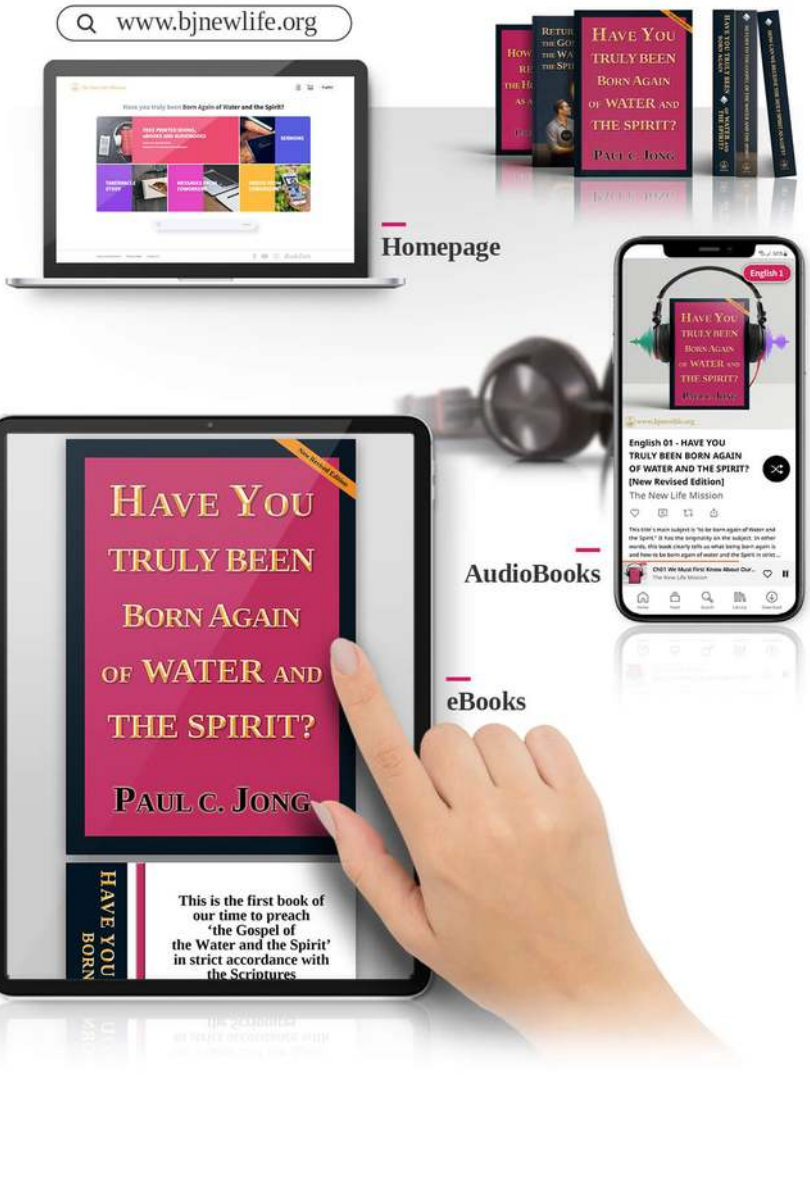

Our The New Life Mission is distributing Pastor Paul C. Jong's spiritual books in 'printed book' form through coworkers who have been born again by water and the Spirit.

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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Would you like to join us in our mission of bringing the word of truth to more people around the world? If so, we would greatly appreciate it if you could link to our website on your blog, social media, website, etc.

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Please help us spread the true gospel of Jesus Christ through our books so that more people can be born again of the water and the Spirit. We would also be grateful if you could introduce our website and books to many people and invite them to visit.

THE NEW LIFE MISSION
Contact: John Shin, General Secretary
E-mail: newlife@bjnewlife.org



Recommendation for E-book and Audiobook Storage and Downloads

In preparation for rapidly advancing AI, rapidly changing world affairs, and environmental changes, we strongly recommend downloading and storing God's true sermon messages to your personal storage devices.

Please prepare in advance by saving e-books and audiobooks to your external hard drives, USB drives, CDs, mobile phones, or MP3 players, so you can read and listen to them from your personal storage during the last days.

We pray that you will live a victorious life through God's blessings in these last days within the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

"The New Life Mission's sermon series and audiobooks are available worldwide in multiple languages, offering both paid books and free e-books."

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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 suffered for a long time because his problem of sin remained unresolved. In the midst of this agony, he came to believe that Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world through His baptism by John the Baptist, and subsequently bore the judgment in our place on the cross.

For 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.

How were all our sins canceled?

"Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt" (Matthew 18:27). The servant who owed ten thousand talents promised to pay it all, but he had nothing with which to pay. The master did not merely put off the deadline for repayment; he did away with the debt. Our sins before God are also like this. We cannot pay the price of the sins we have committed with resolutions never to sin again and with repentance, and even if we strive all our lives, we cannot wash away our own sins.

But God paid, through His Son Jesus, the price of sin that we could not pay. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and in order to receive the judgment for those sins in our place, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and rose again from death. The sins we have already committed and the sins we will commit in the future are all included in that sin of the world. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit have the debt of all their sins completely canceled. It is because Jesus, who came to this earth as the sacrificial offering, paid in full the price of your sins and mine that we receive the remission of sins and enter the kingdom of heaven.

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