

The Three Most Important Things¹

March 19th, 2013, Kichijouji Bible Study
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Numbers

8:14 This is how you are to separate the descendants of Levi from among the Israelis. The descendants of Levi belong to me.
 [International Standard Version]

8:16 Since they've been set apart for me from among the Israelis. "I've taken them for myself instead of the first to open the womb—every first born of the Israelis,

8:24 Now regarding a descendant of Levi who is 25 years and above, he is to enter work in the service at the appointed place of meeting,

Ezekiel

44:15 The descendants of Zadok, Levitical priests who took care of my sanctuary when the Israelis wandered away from me, are to come near me to minister to me. They are to stand before me to offer the fat and the blood to me," declares the Lord God.

44:16 They are to enter my sanctuary, approach my table to minister to me, and carry out my requirements.

44:28 Now with respect to the priests' inheritances, I am to be their inheritance, and you are to give them no possession in Israel, since I am their possession.
 [International Standard Version]

In these verses we just read, the word 'Levi' appears a number of times. Well, words repeatedly used in the Bible must have some significant meaning for us. We find some resemblance in the famous first verse of Isaiah, Chapter 43.

Isaiah

43:1 But now this is what the Lord says, the one who created you, Jacob, the one who formed you, Israel: "Do not be afraid, because I've redeemed you. I've called you by name; you are mine.

These words were written, not only to Levites, but to all those who are of contrite and humble spirit. "You are mine"—when we hear these words, we won't have to

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worry about anything anymore. We will be free from all anxieties and can move forward to our future in relief. Let me read some other verses from the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter 6. These are basically stating the same point.

1 Corinthians

6:19 You know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God, don't you? You do not belong to yourselves,

6:20 because you were bought for a price. Therefore, glorify God with your bodies.

This morning, I would like to discuss with you the intention of the Lord and what the Lord wants us to be like in our lives. The desire of the Lord God is to save as many people as He can, but that is not all. The Lord also wants the presence of Jesus to be revealed to the entire world through the saved people.

The Lord Jesus dwells inside us. The presence of the Lord within us proves that we were regenerated. When people see us, they will see Jesus living in our hearts. Only when we dedicate ourselves to Jesus and testify to Him, do we deserve to call ourselves the witnesses of the Lord.

The verses we read at the beginning of this sermon describe how the Levites worked in the tabernacle of the congregation, whose duty was to bear the ark of the covenant. Verse 16 indicates that the Levites were completely set apart from all other people to serve the God.

Numbers

8:14 This is how you are to separate the descendants of Levi from among the Israelis. The descendants of Levi belong to me.

The descendants of Levi dedicated their whole life to the Lord. The Levites, who sacrificed everything to serve the Lord, can be regarded as the ideal people to glorify of the Lord. So, today, I would like to talk about the Levites for a while.

The Levites bore the ark of the covenant, which represented the presence of the Lord, when the people of Israel walked through the wilderness. When the people of Israel saw the pillar of cloud standing, which indicated the presence of God, they set out from the camp. They walked while being led by the cloud and they encamped where the cloud stopped.

When the cloud of the presence of the Lord stopped moving, the Levites stopped accordingly. They did not even think of questioning, "Why?" or "For what?" No

matter how unpleasant the place was to stay in, no matter how scruffy the place looked, they stayed there, as guided by the cloud.

How about us? Do we follow our own inclinations and choose the pleasant place to move in? Or, do we follow the guidance of the Lord and walk obediently with him? As a matter of fact, this world we are living in is like the wilderness no matter where we are, isn't it?

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Some place may look so comfortable and you decide to live there, but after a while, you will find that it is just another wilderness. So, shouldn't we keep walking where the Lord leads us, just like the Levites did? His presence is revealed in the land which is in His hands. The Levites had three distinctive characteristics.

Firstly, they worshiped the Lord; secondly, they served for humans; and thirdly, they fought against the evil spirits.

And in actuality, these three are exactly the same characteristics the Lord wants in our life today.

Let's begin with the worship to the Lord. When we think of worship, Verses 23 and 24 of John, Chapter 4 will come to our minds.

John
4:23 Yet the time is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Indeed, the Father is looking for people like that to worship him.

What is it to worship after all? To worship is to acknowledge to the Father God your recognition of the strength of His son, Jesus and to proclaim the preciousness of Jesus from the bottom of your heart. When you look at yourself through the eyes of your heart, you may find yourself miserable, sinful, separated far from your God and too weak to serve him. Then, if you see the salvation Jesus offers filled with compassion, you will be compelled to worship him.

Those who don't realize the love and strength of the Lord God, and thus do not belong to Jesus, can't worship Him in the true sense. Not only those who refuse to believe in the Lord Jesus, but even some believers who have been saved do not truly understand the value of Jesus. It will take forever to fully understand the greatness of Jesus.

We want the Lord to open the eyes of our hearts wider so that we realize the wonder and magnificence of our

Lord, don't we? It is indispensable in our worship to have the eyes of our hearts wide open to the greatness of the Lord. As people understand the strength of the Lord better, they will be led closer to true worship.

As we understand the greatness of Jesus better, we will worship Him more sincerely. As we worship Him more, more of his magnificence is revealed to us. To those who worship the Lord, another new aspect of the Lord is unveiled. Those who see the Lord are compelled to fall down before Him in worship. When we begin to be governed by the Lord, who was taken up into heaven and seated on the throne, we will be able to worship him sincerely deep in our hearts.

How are we in reality? Is the true worship of the Lord God placed at the center of our daily lives? Does the worship occupy the most important position in our lives? Very often, when our jobs become our primary concerns and time for worship is taken away by some worldly preoccupations, worship fades away from our life without us being aware of it. Isn't it the reality of our lives?

We live in this world as someone saved by God's grace and mercy. But, do we also live our daily lives as worshipers? The eyes of the Lord God constantly roam throughout the earth, looking for those whose hearts completely belong to Him and those who offer sincere worship to God. Our lives have to be dominated by worship to the Lord. Actually, all aspects of our lives have to be governed by worship.

Among the characteristics of the Levites included the worship to the Lord. The second characteristic was their service to humans, their ministrations. So what is the service after all? The answer is given in the Gospel according to John.

John
6:29 Jesus answered them, "This is the action of God: to believe in the one whom he has sent."

The words "the action of God" are used and it refers to the service for the Lord. This is a very strange definition of service, isn't it? True service should be an act derived from faith. Even though we devote our whole life and offer everything we have, it will not be regarded as the service to the Lord if we don't have true faith. Chapter 11 of Hebrews explains eloquently what faith is and how the attitude of believers was.

Hebrews
11:6 Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever comes to him must believe that

he exists and that he rewards those who diligently search for him.

It is meaningless to get close to the Lord without true faith. Likewise, to serve the Lord without faith is utterly meaningless. After all, what does it mean to believe in the Lord? It is the work of faith that makes us serve the Lord God.

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Whatever it is you are commanded to do, if you are convinced that it is the intention of God, you can move forward without hesitation, without indecision. This is what is called the faith, that is to say, it is to entrust everything to the Lord, to rely totally on the Lord.

Generally speaking, when we begin a new task, the initial phases may bring us anxiety and apprehension. Generally speaking, when we start something new, at the beginning, we feel anxious, whatever it is. It is because we realize our weakness and uselessness. However, as we continue working on it, we see some improvement, which gives us some hope. Eventually, we come to feel confident and believe that we can achieve success through our own strength and determination. This is extremely dangerous (when it comes to the service). In our service to the Lord, we ought to look up to the Lord alone at all times and rely more and more on the Lord as we continue to serve Him.

We can see from the Old Testament, that the Levites served the Lord in various kinds of ways. The Bible also tells us that the Levites did not depend on their own abilities in their service, but relied upon the strength of the Lord alone. Our service also has to be the outcome of our faith. If it is, every task we perform, no matter how trivial, will be viewed as the true service.

Colossians

3:23 Whatever you do, work at it wholeheartedly as though you were doing it for the Lord and not merely for people.

If we just try to serve people, we will likely end up being disappointed, because while it makes some people happy, others criticize you.

1Corinthians

10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.

Whatever actions you carry out, should always be with an intent to glorify of God. If you do it with sincere faith

for His glory, then it can be regarded as a true service. Avoid being caught up in your own thoughts or any outmoded traditions, instead remember to rely on the Lord and lean on the Lord alone as you continue walking. We want to dedicate our whole selves to the Lord, to testify that our whole lives are dominated by the Lord, don't we?

I mentioned three distinctive characteristics of Levi. Firstly, it was the worship to the Lord. Secondly, it was the devotion to men. And finally, they fought the battle against the evil spirits. They had these three notable features.

Actually, these three qualities are what the Lord still wants from us in our daily lives. When we think of struggles in the Bible, I guess that Chapter 6 of the Ephesians comes to our minds.

Ephesians

6:12 For our struggle is not against human opponents, but against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers in the darkness around us, and evil spiritual forces in the heavenly realm.

Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesos that they had to struggle against the evil spirit. The devil concentrates his attack on those who are chosen to serve the Lord, those who are willing to devote themselves faithfully to the work of the Lord.

Those who propagate the existence of God, those who deserve to serve the Lord, will certainly be exposed to relentless hatred from hell. They are targeted by the devil. If we are not under attack from the devil, undoubtedly our worship, our service is fundamentally flawed. In fact, this battle is the hard reality we face every day.

Even while we are engaged in this furious battle, we have to be firmly convinced that the Lord will accomplish his work, that the Lord won a sweeping victory over the devil, who was defeated mercilessly. No matter what the reality our eyes can see is, the Lord is alive and he governs us by leading us closer to Him. Your distress, worries and anxieties for your future; these are all unfruitful. If we look away from the Lord Jesus, who is seated at the right-hand of the Father God, our faith will slip away and we will lose strength needed to work as the witnesses.

Then, we will be falling into the same state as all non-believers. When the enemies surrounding the Israelites saw the tabernacle of the congregation, they realized the presence of the Lord above the tabernacle. When non-believers come into our gathering, do they see the light of the Lord shining

inside us? Or do they only see totally distressed, devastated and wretched people? What do you think?

When our battle begins, actually it is already won. With Jesus who already won a sweeping victory, we ourselves cannot be the winners and as a matter of fact we do not need to be. No matter how powerful the devil is, no matter how fierce his aggression is, we have to remain firm in the victory that Jesus has won for us.

Are we standing within Jesus' victory? Undoubtedly, the Bible proclaims the victory of the Lord. We might have won once in the past, but are we still standing within the same victory? Is the cloud of the Lord's presence still above us? Are we still the ones who please the Lord?

Do we comprehend the greatness of the Lord and are we living as the true worshipers? Do we rejoice in the Lord with all our strength and all our hearts? Or, do we undertake the duties of the Spirit through the strength of our flesh? Do we bring the victory of Jesus into all aspects of our lives and rejoice in that victory?

We should aspire to live like the Levites, who worshiped the Lord, served people faithfully and fought the battle against the evil spirits. And we have to reveal the presence of the Lord. I would like to conclude this sermon by reading some verses from the First Corinthians, Chapter 6. The people of Corinth were not exemplary Christians. Although they were once saved, they were not the glorifiers of God. This was why Paul had to write these words to them;

1Corinthians

6:19 You know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God, don't you? You do not belong to yourselves,

6:20 because you were bought for a price. Therefore, glorify God with your bodies

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