

The Blessing of Drawing Near to God

April 5th, 2016, Kichijouji Bible Study
Gotthold Beck

神の近くにいる幸い
2016年4月5日、吉祥寺学び会
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1 Kings

3:1 Later, Solomon intermarried with the family of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt by taking his daughter and bringing her to the city of David to live until he had completed building his own palace, the Lord's Temple, and the wall around Jerusalem.

3:2 The people were sacrificing at various high places because the Temple had not yet been built and dedicated to the Lord.

3:3 Solomon loved the Lord, and lived according to the statutes that his father David obeyed, except that he sacrificed and burned offerings at the high places.

[International Standard Version]

A man called Solomon might have been the richest man in the world, or he might have been the wisest man of his time. However, these things do not matter to us at all. The most impressive fact about this man can be found in this chapter 3, verse 3. "Solomon loved the Lord." It is a wonderful blessing if the same is true for us. I would like to begin this sermon with a few verses from the Psalms:

Psalms

16:11 You cause me to know the path of life; in your presence is joyful abundance, at your right hand there are pleasures forever.

73:28 As for me, how good for me it is that God is near!

David confessed this way, which pleased the Lord. What is it that Jesus desperately wants from us?

John

15:11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

This exactly is what the Lord wants from us. What is important for us is to obtain a new life and to be motivated by the love for the Lord, isn't it? There was this brother who was raised to heaven several decades ago. He used to sing, "Brothers and sisters, being filled with joy, we love Jesus, we love Jesus so much." This was his favorite hymn.

The important thing is not that we believe in as many religious teachings as possible. Rather, it is whether we have actual fellowship with Jesus or not. To those who already believed in Jesus and loved Him, the Lord had to say these words. These are very harsh words:

Revelation

3:17 You say, "I am rich. I have become wealthy. I don't need anything." Yet you don't realize that you are miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

If you realize it, you still have a chance. But, it is tragic if you do not realize what you really are. It is a problem if you do not know what is wrong with you. But, the real tragedy is that you are even unaware of your own unawareness. Many things are said about what kind of man Solomon was, as I mentioned above. But, the Scripture simply describes that he was a man who loved the Lord. Peter said similar things about the believers of his time:

1 Peter

1:8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy.

The Lord God is love itself. When we think of this fact, we are compelled to thank Him and worship Him indeed. Jesus Himself, who was delivered to this sin-filled world and was put to death, is the proof of this love. All those who have experienced this love sincerely thank Him, worship Him and certainly rejoice in Him.

It is also true for each one of you who are gathered here today that the only thing that matters is whether he or she loves the Lord wholeheartedly or not. What is it that is most critical in our lives? Needless to say, we need to understand what is most significant in our lives and always value it. Let us look at what Jesus urged us to do, rather than what He taught us.

We all know this verse by heart; verse 28, chapter 11 of Matthew, "Come to me." He is waiting for us to come to Him. When we come to Jesus, we realize how much we are loved by Him, which makes us liberated and greatly rejoice. We are told in the Scripture, "You must love the Lord your God."

This is the greatest and most important commandment. The Lord God is seeking our single-minded love for Him. The Lord wants sincere and wholehearted love from us. True love only comes from the Lord. There is no true love without the Lord. True love and the Lord God cannot be separated from each other.

1 John

3:16 This is how we have come to know love: the Messiah gave his life for us.

The Lord gave up his life on behalf of us.

A man called Saul had a strong hatred for Jesus for many years and persecuted His believers. Nobody at all could persuade him to return from this wrong path. Then, how was he transformed to the most enthusiastic evangelist, the witness who introduced Jesus to the world?

He explained it in one brief sentence in this famous verse 20, chapter 2 of the Epistle to the Galatians, "The Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Paul instantly understood this love, which overwhelmed him.

This love changed the life of Paul fundamentally. This love, which overwhelmed Paul compelled him to abandon everything he had and sacrifice his life in order to proclaim the same love into the world.

What is the cross telling us? "I am your Creator and I am your Savior. I am love itself. I sacrificed myself and became a man of suffering, a man of sorrow; I was cursed, I was made sin and I paid the price for your salvation."

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important commandment; so, clearly stated Jesus. However, we all have to admit one thing when we honestly reflect on ourselves.

It is impossible to obey the laws of the Lord and to keep the commandments of the Lord on our own accord. We need to draw near to the Lord Jesus and tell Him, "I tried to obey, but I couldn't. I am a loser. It is absolutely impossible unless you help me. There is absolutely nothing good inside me. Relying on my own strength alone, I can't help but live in a self-centered manner."

Let us look at these wonderful words of Isaiah:

Isaiah

57:15 For this is what the high and lofty One says, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "He lives in the height and in holiness, and also with the one who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite."

Have I abandoned the love I had at first? Shouldn't we

all ask this question to ourselves?

Revelation

2:4 However, I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first.

2:5 Therefore, remember how far you have fallen. Repent and go back to what you were doing at first. If you don't, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place—unless you repent.

The love we had at first refers to the fellowship with Jesus. It means that we do not seek anything apart from Jesus and we do not attempt to accomplish anything without Jesus. If, day by day, the Bible serves as the fountain of our strength, the source of consolation, the foundation of our joy, and if Jesus stands at the centre of all our thoughts and actions, it is certainly the proof that the love we had at first is maintained in us.

It is a necessary requirement for the lamp stand to be left in its place. What is special about the love we have at first? It helps us to be silent in the Lord's presence. It makes us surrender everything to the Lord. It makes us thoroughly rely on the Lord alone. It makes us obey the will of the Lord. And, it makes us totally trust in the Lord and His guidance, doesn't it? It will be a wonderful blessing if we love the Lord sincerely just like Solomon did.

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