

Main text: Philippians 2:6-11

Title: Self-denial and the kingdom of God / translated by Myung-Ha Kim

1. Misconceptions about salvation

Recently, a documentary called "In the name of God" was uploaded on Netflix and became a hot topic. This is a story about the big heresies in Korea's modern history. It is a documentary that reports on Jung Myeong-Seok of JMS, Sun-Ja Park of Five Oceans, and Jae-Rok Lee of Manmin Central Church. People like Jung Myeong-Seok, Park Soon-ja, and Lee Jae-rok each claimed they were the messiah, and that people could gain salvation through their name. They used the offerings and property assets, and even the lives of the followers to fill their stomachs. Rather than being a group, they were an interest group created to satisfy their own desires. Why did these people appear? There may be many reasons, but I personally think the biggest factor is having the wrong view of salvation. The characteristics of these pseudo-cult leaders spoke sweetly as if they had received salvation as a monopoly. 'If you believe in me, you are guaranteed to go to heaven. If you give all your possessions to me, you can go straight to heaven.' This was the logic. But that sweet lie made people fall for it.

Do established churches in Korea not have this problem? Korean Christians yearn for the kingdom of heaven where they die, and they are very interested in personal salvation. Korean Christians sometimes thought of pastors as people who could secure their tickets to heaven. Therefore, it has been true that even if the pastor has moral flaws to some extent, followers had no problem covering up for the pastor. Even if the pastor's son embezzled church money or the pastor had some scandals with women, people turned a blind eye to it, saying that it wasn't that significant. Pastors have used this to pretend that they have received the monopoly of salvation. The temple system in the days of Jesus is like that of the high priests who said the forgiveness of sins and salvation is accomplished only in the temple. Jesus said to those who were paralyzed or with withered hands, "I have forgiven your sins. Live freely now." He has released the forgiveness of sins and salvation that were locked up in the temple. Monopoly is a word that is fitting to be used for commodities and crops such as tobacco or ginseng, but it is not appropriate to use it for salvation. Some pastors showed a tendency to distort and interpret the Bible to secure their vested interests as special occupational groups with the monopoly of salvation. Of course, I know it's hard to generalize about all pastors. There are many pastors who live such pure and beautiful lives. However, we cannot deny the fact that there is a problem with the Korean church's view of salvation. In the Korean church, ordinary believers still understand salvation as an escape from this world. We understand salvation by escaping with Jesus to the

world of the other side, somewhere in Andromeda. With the mindset of, "This sinful world is not my home," believers often dream of the vague kingdom of God that we all go to someday, and heresy and pseudo-science are digging into this point.

However, the expressions describing the world after death in the Bible are less than 1%. Rather, the Bible says that salvation is to renew the earth. Heaven is not going but coming and arriving. This is the content of the gospel that Jesus cried out in Mark 1:15. "The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand." It expresses that the kingdom of God has come close to us (Greek-ἐγγίζω Enggizo, come near). Jesus himself proclaimed that it was the gospel that came to establish a new heaven and a new earth. The state of salvation is when all things become new, and God's reign prevails over the earth. Salvation is the state of true shalom, in which all creatures are reconciled with God, and greed and sin disappear. Salvation is not about getting a ticket to heaven where you don't know where you are. I think the misunderstanding that led to this wrong view of salvation began with a misunderstanding of justification by faith. "Justification by faith" means that salvation is obtained through faith. However, there is a wrong tendency in Korean churches to understand that the subject of this 'faith' is obtained with my faith. When we say that we are justified by faith, the subject of faith is not me, but Jesus Christ. Righteousness is given to me through the atonement of Jesus Christ. When we accept Jesus as our savior, we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. It is not that we are justified by our faith, but that we rest on the righteousness of Christ. The door of salvation opens in our lives as we lean on the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. It is not a one-time event that you will go to heaven by accepting Jesus as your Savior. The door to salvation has only been opened by accepting Jesus, but after that, salvation must be completed.

2.

In that sense, I understand salvation as "coming into the reign of God." In this world, two forces are sharply opposed. It is the power of God and the power of darkness. Receiving salvation is a change of status. It is a change of citizenship moving from a kingdom ruled by Satan to a kingdom ruled by God. What makes this change of status possible is the atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross. We become children of God by putting on the righteousness accomplished by Jesus Christ. This is the beginning, not the ending. Being a child of God means accepting God's reign and coming into God's reign.

In a place invisible to our eyes, the reigns of God and Satan are sharply opposed. Ephesians 6:12 describes Satan's rulers as "rulers, authorities, the power of this dark world." In the old Bible, it was expressed as "principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world." These are

terms taken from the feudal order. Feudal society refers to a system in which lords govern their lands autonomously under a king. The land governed by a feudal lord is sometimes referred to as a feudal tenure or a duchy. The person in charge of the dukedom was called a duke. Understanding Satan's reign as principality, authority, and ruler came from the worldview that understood the kingdom of God as an extension of the feudal system.

By such a worldview, Jude 6 records how the rulers of darkness were born. "And I remind you of the angels who did not stay within the limits of authority God gave them but left the place where they belonged. God has kept them securely chained in prisons of darkness, waiting for the great day of judgment." This verse is based on the contents of the book of Enoch, which is an apocryphal book. God gives Michael, Rafael, and Lucifer each a third of the kingdom of God. So, God's created world was divided into the feudal territory of these three angels. However, one-third of the angels led by Lucifer rebelled and rejected God's rule. The angels who rebelled with Lucifer are called principalities, authorities, and rulers of the world.

The forces that are within the territory of God the King, but not under God's rule, are called principalities, authorities, and rulers. They have ruled the world very systematically. One of the purposes of Jesus' coming to this earth is to subdue these groups who reject God's reign. Satan, the devil, ghosts, principalities, and authorities, these expressions are spiritual realities that exist. Just looking at the work of Jesus, Satan, and demons appear a lot. Jesus was tested by Satan in the wilderness. Mark 1:34 'Jesus healed many people who were sick with various diseases, and he cast out many demons. But because the demons knew who he was, he did not allow them to speak.' The Bible tells us that the demons knew who Jesus was. "Go away! Why are you interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" (Luke 4:34)." Jesus did not destroy them, but only drove them out. They are doomed to annihilation on the last day. The process of restoring God's territory that was taken away by the forces of darkness is the construction and expansion of heaven. Jesus came to this earth to start a fierce battle to restore God's territory that had been taken away by Satan.

3.

A question arises then, how will the kingdom of God expand? This text is an important word that tells us the principle of how Jesus' reign is expanding on this earth. Today's main text shows Jesus' self-emptying and lowliness. Jesus is God who shares the same essence as God. However, Jesus, who shared the essence of God, left the heavenly throne, and came to put on a human body. He had to put on a human body to save humans. Jesus obeyed Heavenly Father to the

point of death, and death on the cross was the result. The death on the cross revealed the extreme self-denying and humbleness of Jesus.

Verses 8 and 9 teach us a very important principle. "He humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names." God speaks of the principle that He will exalt those who obey Him even unto death on the cross. In other words, it is the principle of exalting those who have lowered themselves a lot. The kingdom of darkness, that is, the kingdom of Satan, is the opposite of this. It is a nation that seeks to expand in a way that exalts itself, disobeys, and rebels, revealing its own name, not the glory of God. Jesus humbles himself endlessly and empties himself endlessly. By doing so, God rather puts Jesus in the highest place in the world. He exalted Jesus by placing him at the right hand of God's throne. Jesus did not exalt himself. He was raised by God. But Satan's method is self-exaltation. It's a way to elevate yourself. It's the opposite of God's principle.

Adam's failure began with trying to become like God himself. Like God, he tried to judge good and evil for himself. Furthermore, Adam and Eve crossed the line to have divine immortality. A slightly more advanced way of this is the way of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. Then they said, "Come, let's build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world." (v. 4). It is to expand in a way that raises oneself and raises one's own name. It is completely contrary to the way of God's kingdom. What did God promise to Abraham, who was chosen as an alternative to the Tower of Babel? "I will make you a great nation. I will make your name big". Abraham had to give up even deciding where to go and follow God in obedience. In the sermon last week, he had to show even the extreme obedience of giving up his own son. His way of emptying himself and following God is a characteristic of God's kingdom compared to Satan's. This principle of lowering oneself and exalting those who obey is a very important principle in the kingdom of God. Jesus is the representative model of this principle.

Look at verses 10-11 of the text. "That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (v. 10). All beings in these three realms will kneel before the name of Jesus. First, heaven is the realm where the "principalities, powers, and rulers of this world of darkness," are located. The kingdom of Satan, which holds the power of death and rules this world, will eventually perish and kneel before Jesus. Colossians 2:15

describes this part like this: "In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross."

The people on earth represent all the nations of the world. Those under the earth mean the souls of the people who have already died. In 1 Peter 3, it is said that after Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected, he went to the underworld (Sheol, Hades). He descended to proclaim the gospel to dead souls. There is a deleted part in the Korean language Apostles' Creed, but it is the contents of Jesus going down to Sheol after being buried. Those under the earth mean the dead. What do all beings in heaven and on earth and under the earth kneel before the name of Jesus and confess? They confess, "Christ is Lord," and glorify God. The Lord is 'Kurios', which was the title of the emperor of Rome. So, all confess that the Lord is the Ruler. It is an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the Lord. It expresses the state in which all the realms are under God's rule by restoring the territory God had given away to Satan.

4.

I have explained the way God's reign expands. It is a way of nailing yourself to the cross and denying yourself. The kingdom of God expands in such a way as to increase the number of people who submit to the name of Jesus by lowering oneself, humility, and destroying the Tower of Babel of vain desires in the name of Jesus. The church is the body of Christ that extends God's reign on earth. To do so, what the church needs to secure is potential energy. Falling from above has energy. Because of the law of universal gravitation, the formula for the potential energy of gravity is MgH . A falling object develops a force as it falls at 9.8 m/S^2 . The way to subdue evil spirits is to have high potential energy.

Colossians 3:1-2 explains this principle this way: "Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth (Colossians 3:1-2)." What does it mean to seek the things above? It means to pay all attention to the expansion of Jesus's reign in this world. The way we subdue Satan is to secure high spiritual potential energy. The way to subdue the spirits that work among the sons of disobedience is to follow the way of Jesus, the son of obedience. Jesus' method, as explained earlier, is the method of completely denying myself and obeying God's will. This is because God exalts those who obey and humble themselves even to the point of carrying the cross. As Jesus Christ showed us, we must have the high spiritual energy to overcome Satan. We must raise the altitude of holiness, love, and righteousness. The prayers you pray without securing a spiritual height are powerless. Would

Satan be alerted by a person who prays yet lives a life indulged in sin? When you long for a more holy life, your prayers will have power and your words will have power. We must practice the extreme love shown to us in the Sermon on the Mount. You must give your right cheek to the one who strikes you on the left cheek, go 10 miles with the one who asked to go 5 miles with, and you must practice a high degree of love by giving even your coat to those who ask for your shirt. The words of a person with high spiritual heights have power, and their actions bear fruit.

For our life to be meaningful life, use it to further the reign of Christ to the whole world. Again, to seek the things above means to give all your attention to extending the dominion of Christ. When we are buried in our busy lives, we often forget the reality we are in. We are living in the middle of a spiritual battlefield right now. We must struggle to regain the territory of God that has been taken away by principalities, powers, and rulers of this world of darkness. Jesus taught us the art of that fight. We gain strength when we secure a high degree of obedience, high purity of love, extreme righteousness, and, thus, a pure and holy life.

4.

To summarize, today's message can be said to be about Christian metaphysics. On the third Sunday of Lent, we need to draw a bigger picture of why Jesus Christ came to this earth. Jesus did not carry the cross simply to save each of us and take us to heaven. God does not stop at saving us, making us citizens of God's kingdom, and changing our status as God's children. Expanding the kingdom of God through us is His big picture. We are in the midst of a spiritual battleground. We must fight against the trend of the world that does not give glory to God. To do so, you must pursue the things above. Thinking of the expansion of God's reign, we must maintain a higher spiritual altitude. We must live more holily, live more lovingly, and live more righteously. The only way to secure spiritual altitude is to go low even further. Because God exalts those who are humbled. Lent is a period to look back on ourselves and reflect on the lives we have lived without finding the things above. It is time to reflect on the life I have lived following my desires like the children of darkness and to reorient my life in God's great vision. I hope you realize this amazing secret of God's kingdom that exalts the lowly. I hope that the fruits of humility will be borne in your daily life. Lastly, I pray in the name of the Lord that through our lives, God would expand his beautiful kingdom wherever we may be.