

Text: John 12:34-43

Title: A Mirror That Reflects the Light of the Lord / translated by Chungil Wi

1.

Our lives are full of miracles. Falling asleep at night and waking up in the morning is a miracle. What I sense and feel now is a miracle. Feeling the taste of delicious food, seeing gorgeous colors, hearing the sound of beautiful music, and feeling the warmth of the person next to me are all miracles. A person who realizes that all the circumstances and conditions given to me now are blessings and graces granted by God is a happy person. A crowd of people is gathering around Jesus and asking him questions. They are saying that the Messiah revealed in the words of the law and Jesus do not match. "Jesus, you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up, but who is the Son of Man?" They are asking Jesus, who is the Son of Man. They are also saying that they cannot acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus tells him, "You see the light but do not feel it as light." We call a person who cannot feel the light even though it is shining, blind.

In Han Kang's novel <Greek Time>, there is the main character, a man who gradually loses his eyesight. His family immigrated to Germany when he was a teenager. In such cases, the only subject that teenagers from Korea can do better than Western or American students is often mathematics. This main character excels in Greek as well as mathematics, surpassing German students. With his exceptional ability in Greek, he studies Platonic philosophy and receives a doctorate. However, he has a genetic disease that is passed down to the male members of his family, which causes him to lose his eyesight in middle age. Like his grandfather and father, he gradually loses his eyesight. He leaves his family behind and chooses to go to Korea. After coming to Seoul, he gets a job as a lecturer at an academy that teaches ancient Greek, teaching Platonic philosophy and Greek. The female character is an aphasic who comes to his Greek class and attends his lectures. She loses her ability to speak while giving birth to and raising her daughter. She eventually loses custody and gets divorced, but her speech does not recover. The novel follows the emotional lines of a man who is in danger of not seeing the light and a woman who has lost her speech, and delicately describes how they connect. One of the honest feelings I had while reading this novel was how great a miracle it was for me to be able to see. Jesus tells us to see while there is light, and to walk while there is light. In the novel, while the day when he will not see the light at all is coming to the male character, he tries to remember everything he sees and touches. It seems that his heart was exactly what Jesus wanted the crowd to feel. He said, "While you have the light, believe in the light and become children of light."

2.

John says that even after seeing countless signs, or miracles, that Jesus performed, they did not believe in Jesus. He describes the crowd as blind people who cannot see the light even though there is light. It is important to note that it is not seeing that is important, but the inability to decipher what they see. What is a sign? A sign requires deciphering. If you watch a baseball game, the coach sends signs. For

example, he tells the players before the game that if he touch his hat, they will steal. Even if the coach touches another part of the field and poses, if he does not touch his hat, they cannot steal. The other party who cannot decipher the sign will not be able to perceive the essence that the director is trying to convey through the sign. This is because it cannot be deciphered. The purpose of a sign is not the sign itself, but the inner meaning that the sign is trying to convey. The reason for the sign is to interpret and decipher it. When Jesus says, "Look at the birds flying in the sky, look at the flowers in the field," those who respond by saying, "I saw flowers, what do you want me to do?" or "The birds are flying well in the sky" do not understand Jesus' words. The inner meaning is that through seeing the birds and flowers, we can feel the hand of God who cares for and clothes them. That is what a sign is. We need eyes to decipher the inner meaning that the sign is trying to convey.

Even though Jesus performed signs such as resurrecting Lazarus from the dead and opening the eyes of a man who had been blind for 38 years, the crowds could not read that Jesus was the Messiah through those signs. They were saying, "What do you want me to do?" Jesus hid himself from those who did not understand even when he showed him. The light has disappeared and the time of darkness has come. Jesus told them to believe in the light while it was still there and become children of light, but when they did not believe, he hid himself. We need eyes of faith that can read Jesus' traces through all the things that happen in our lives. We need to know that our lives are full of miracles. We need eyes of faith that can recognize and decipher everything we see in our daily lives as miracles. We need to know that walking on water is not the only miracle, but also walking on land is a miracle. We need to realize that miracles are not only needed when things are not going well and our lives are full of difficulties, but that the moments of great happiness and dazzling brightness are miracles themselves.

3.

However, Jesus says that there is something that takes away this sensitivity from us, blinds our eyes, and dulls our hearts so that we cannot see miracles. Jesus points this out through the words of the prophet Isaiah. Why do we not realize that God has shown us such amazing signs and shined such bright light? The passage quoted in verse 38 is from Isaiah 53:1, and the passage quoted in verse 40 is from Isaiah 6:10. Jesus quotes these passages to point out that the Israelites of the prophetic era in the past are being revealed to the Jews of Jesus' time. "Lord, who has believed our message? To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" The question is who will receive and understand the signs that the Lord is sending through the movement of history. The prophet says, "The Lord has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts," but in reality, it was not the Lord who did this. They hardened their hearts themselves, making them dull. The prophet Isaiah saw the glory of Jesus through the history that was happening at that time, but the people of that time did not see it. This is because the Israelites did not have the eyes to read the course of God's history. Between 738 and 705 B.C., for about 30 years, Assyria took over many countries in the ancient Near East. Starting with Syria, 19 countries were destroyed by Assyria. If even Northern Israel was destroyed by Assyria, what should Southern Judah realize? They should have realized that they would become like other countries. However, they did not realize it even though they saw it. They were under the illusion that we would be safe even if all the surrounding countries were destroyed. It was a state of spiritual ignorance where we could not understand the path God was taking in history even though we saw it with our own eyes.

The reason they could not read the path of God's history was because their hearts were hardened. The eyes are the mirror of the heart. What the eyes cannot see is the same as saying that the heart cannot see and the heart cannot feel. If the heart is hardened, no matter how much you look, you will not see. As the weather got warmer and the trees began to turn green, a question arose. There was a large field next to the church. As I passed by, I wondered when the farmer would plow this field? When would he plow the field and plant the seeds? What kind of seeds would he plant this year? Last Thursday, a huge piece of farm machinery finally came into operation in the field. It was a huge machine with 16 furrow digging tools lined up along the side. I was so happy to see it that I went over to the field and watched it for a while. The farmer who was driving the machine happened to be taking a break, so I approached him and asked him about this and that. I asked if he was tilling the ground or sowing seeds, and he said he was sowing seeds. I asked him what kind of seeds he had planted, and he said corn. He had planted corn last year, but when I asked why he was planting corn again instead of soybeans, he said that corn was cheaper, so he had no choice but to plant corn again this year. I felt uneasy looking at the field that had not been plowed and had hardened over the winter. That field needs to be plowed in order to plant seeds. A stubborn heart means that it has not been plowed and is hardened. In order for something new to be planted in our hearts and for new changes to occur, our stubborn hearts must be plowed. In order for us to be sensitive and to sense the arm of the Lord revealing itself to us, our hearts must remain soft.

4.

Why do people's hearts become hard and stubborn? It is because they do not give up on themselves and are reluctant to change. There is no room for new things to penetrate into a person who is completely filled with themselves. The reason we do not realize that the light that shines in our lives is grace is because we are stuck in our self-centeredness and our hearts are hardened to the point of not being able to change. Last week, I explained how the character "I" (我) was formed. I told you that the character "I" (我) is a combination of the character "hand" (手) and the character "spear" (戈). Being stuck in self-centeredness means holding a spear in your hand to protect yourself and stick to your beliefs. I told you that only when you boldly break yourself with that spear and transcend yourself can you bear the fruit of new life like a grain of wheat. In order to see and feel the glory of the Lord that is already shining in your life, you must not harden your heart. You must plow it over. I am saying that you must create a space within yourself for the Word to sprout. When I was young, I once farmed a rocky field at the bottom of a mountain. The usual work in that field was picking out stones from the plowed field and throwing them onto the edge of the field. Plowing a hardened heart means removing impurities from the heart. In his poem, Confession, poet Yun Dong-ju describes this as "cleaning the mirror of the heart." The poet says that he cleans the copper mirror with his hands and feet every night. "Let's clean my mirror with my hands and feet every night." It is a pledge to clean the mirror of the heart until his complete self is reflected. We can feel the earnest confession of the young poet who wants to see the true light through the transparent and clean mirror of the heart. Faith is a journey to clean and clean my heart filled with impure egos and change it into the image of Jesus. When the mirror of the heart is cleaned cleanly, it can properly reflect Jesus Christ, the truth, through that mirror. It is to reflect Jesus to others through our clean mirror.

5.

The text clearly states what those who want to cleanse their hearts must be most wary of. It is loving the glory of men more than the glory of God. No one is free from this. Because there is nothing sweeter than the glory that men give. However, those who pursue the glory of men will eventually have unnatural lives. They are not free because all their motives in life are geared toward the eyes of others. When we are free from how others see us and how others evaluate us, our lives will experience true freedom, but that is not easy. It is said that there were some leaders in Jesus' time who believed in Jesus. However, they were afraid. They were afraid that if they came out as believers in Jesus, they would lose the privileges they enjoyed as leaders. This is because a stable life was the most important thing to them. There were people who obeyed them as leaders, and there was a cartel of strong connections that bound them together. They were filled with anxiety about breaking away from that. They knew and believed that what Jesus preached was right, but they had no determination to follow it. The Bible tells us that being kicked out of the synagogue was their greatest fear. That is excommunication. It means losing connection. They did not want the hassle of being excluded from their circle. The reason most people commit suicide is said to be 'social isolation.' Since there is nothing more painful than social isolation for a human being who is a social being, people choose extreme death when they feel that it has disappeared.

Faith is a decision. The decision to choose the right path even when there is social isolation is faith. When we try to choose only what is comfortable, safe, and seems to be, the heart to choose the right thing disappears. It seems that the leaders did not know that there is true freedom when making this decision. There was a French painter named Henri Matisse. At that time, he was a new-generation painter who pursued unique color combinations, breaking away from traditional methods. People were not familiar with his painting style. Naturally, his paintings did not sell well. Once, Matisse painted a landscape in a traditional way, and a rich man bought his painting for 400 francs and said this. "If you paint in this style, I will buy your paintings." Matisse thought about his words and thought about them again, fiddling with four hundred-franc bills. Then he went to his studio and tore up all his paintings that he had been painting in the traditional way. He decided to paint his own paintings using a new technique, even if he had to starve to death. He was determined to maintain his belief that "art does not remove discomfort, but gives inner peace." He decided to take the uncomfortable path. He later recalled that day to a reporter from a magazine and said, "I count that day as the day I was liberated." Faith is not choosing comfort and stability, but choosing to be uncomfortable for the sake of the truth. Only then are we given true freedom. The Lord's words, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free," come true.

6.

If there is one sole goal in our lives, it should be a life that glorifies God. It is a life where we enjoy God and feel and experience God in our daily lives. A life that lives according to the standards and framework set by the world is unfortunate. It is true that jobs and salaries that everyone in the world envies and the connections we have with such people give us a sense of stability. However, the life of a person whose life's goal and its only glory is truly unfortunate. A life that chooses and follows the right path even if it means becoming poor, inconvenient, or ridiculed by others is blessed. The leaders of Jesus' time were those in social positions that were envied by the people of the time. However, they were people who prioritized the safety of the path and the benefits of connections over believing in and following Jesus.

The church should become a club for those who believe in Jesus and become uncomfortable. It should become a club for those who believe in Jesus and have completely ruined their lives. Of course, they are ruined in the eyes of the world. We, as a church, should comfort each other by showing that life is blessed and meaningful even if we do not follow the glory that people give us. In order to boycott the ways of the world, the church should be filled with the spirit of celebration. The church should be filled with the spirit of celebration that life is so happy even if we do not live according to the ways of the world. To be filled with the spirit of celebration, we must become a community and a club. We must support each other. We must understand and relieve the anxiety of those who refuse to live according to the grand world's way of life. We must encourage each other with the words, "Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light." The goal of our faith must be to remove the dirt from our hearts and become mirrors that reflect Jesus Christ. We must break down the stubborn and hard heart that is locked up in us and create space for others with a soft heart. Your life is already filled with the light of God's glory. Feel and experience it directly in your daily life. I bless you in the name of the Lord that you may live a blessed life where you see, feel, and sense it and give glory to God.