He Knows and Is Grateful

3/18/2018
Y. Joe Kim

Matthew 25:31-46

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then
he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before
him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the
sheep from the goats, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the
goats at the left. 34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you
that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the
foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty
and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,
36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I
was in prison and you visited me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord,
when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you
something to drink? 38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and
welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39 And when was it that we
saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' 40 And the king will answer them,
'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members
of my family, you did it to me.' 41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You
that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and
his angels; 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you
gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me,
naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit
me.' 44 Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry
or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of
you?' 45 Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to
one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46 And these will go away into
eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

1. Celebrating the Life of Cho-Kim

Today we celebrate the life of Cho Kim. Diane Magnuson will come forward and explain why we have decided to celebrate her life, and she will read her autobiography.

Last week we talked about “A Call to Give Thanks.” When we reflect on what has happened in our lives, we are able to see what God has done in our lives and can be more grateful for the things that God has done. Last week when I was preparing the message for today, I wished I could have watched Rev. Cho-Kim’s documentary film or read her autobiography so that we could learn how God has been walking with her throughout her life. I hope we can envision what God has been doing in her life journey.

2. The Lord Knows What We Do

Matthew 25:31-46 is Jesus' final parable and teaching. In order to understand the context, we need to read Matthew chapter 24 first. Matthew 24:3 says, "***When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?***' " In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus answers His disciples' questions about the sign of His coming and the end of the age.

In verses 31-33, Jesus says, "***When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left***."

Jesus says that he will return for the final judgment and all people will be brought before him. They are a mingling of sheep and goats and Jesus will separate them. Then he will extend an invitation to those on His right hand, the sheep, to enter the kingdom that God has prepared. Jesus says the reason for their entrance, "***For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me***" (vv. 35-36). Those on the right side do not recall ever having ministered directly to the Son of Man. Jesus answers, "***Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me***" (v. 40). The Son of Man says everything they did to his children is like they did it to him.

Then the Son of Man pronounces judgment to the goats on his left hand. "***You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels***" (v. 41). The basis of their judgment is their failure to extend mercy to the people who are in need. (verses 42-43). They ask, "***Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?***" (verse 44). The Son of Man replies, "***Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me***." (verse 45). He then ends the discourse with a contrast: "***These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life***." (verse 46). In this parable we learn that those who are on his right hand are rewarded and those who are on his left hand are condemned.

What does this parable teach us? The "sheep" acted charitably, giving food, drink, and clothing to the needy. The "goats" showed no charity at all. This seems to result in salvation for the sheep and the damnation for the goats. Does this parable say that salvation is the result of our good works? Paul says in Romans 3:23-25, "***Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God;*** [24]***they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that***

is in Christ Jesus, [25]whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith." Our salvation is based on God's grace through Jesus Christ's sacrifice. So salvation is a gift of God. The message of the parable of the sheep and goats is that God's people will love others, and God will be aware of what His children do and will be grateful.

3. Cho-Kim's Life Journey

As you've heard from Diane, Cho-Kim lived her life during one of the most challenging times in Korean history. She was born during World War II and while Korea was under Japanese occupation. She experienced freedom from Japanese control on August 15, 1945. This is like our July 4, 1776, and is the day of independence of Koreans from the Empire in Japan. However, after Korea was freed from Japan, North and South Korea engaged in war and were divided into two regions controlled by the US and Russia. Since Cho-Kim was born in Pyongyang, North Korea, she left her hometown with her mother for their freedom in Seoul, South Korea. After she finished college in Seoul, she came to the U.S. to continue her education.

When I read her story, I felt like I was reading a dramatic story full of risks, sufferings, challenges, and difficulties. In the US, she also experienced discrimination, rejection, and humiliation. Even in the UMC, she experienced similar difficulties throughout her ministry as an Asian woman clergy member. Today, I am not going to highlight her bad experiences or her achievement. I would rather like to focus on what God has been doing, how God has been using her for His kingdom, and how the Holy Spirit transformed the churches she served.

When I was preparing this message, some words came to mind. The words were "full of passion." Even though she is retired from her full-time ministry, every week Rev. Cho-Kim writes a reflective meditation on the biblical texts in the lectionary and a sermon on a gospel text. As Diane said, Rev. Cho-Kim has written 6 books. Did you know that she published 3 books while she was receiving cancer treatment last year? She really wants to help pastors to preach the gospel with passion and love. Even though she is retired, she continues serving the Lord and serving preachers by writing lectionary reflections.

4. Active God

I am so thankful that God continues to use Rev. Cho-Kim to inspire others. Where do you think her active ministry comes from? It is from her active God. She wrote a book entitled, *God of Active Verbs, A to Z*. In the book, she shares how active God is based on her own experiences. She believes that God "assures, blesses, comes, delivers, encourages, forgives, guides, hears, invites, judges, knocks, leads, makes us whole, nurtures, offers, provides, quickens, redeems, speaks, transforms, uplifts, vindicates, woos, X-rays, yearns, and zips

us up." She suggests that we can come up with other verbs of God's actions in our lives. For me, the most important description of God is that God knows everything about us. He knows what is in our hearts and when we serve others even when no one else sees what we do. Yet we have to remember that our actions come out of God's love in us.

5. Conclusion

If people around us can't experience God's love through us, we have to ask ourselves whether we have a genuine faith in Jesus. 1 John 4:7-9 & 12 say, "***Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*** [8]***Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.*** [9]***God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him…*** [12]***No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us***."

There are hundreds of charitable organizations around the world. What is the difference between what the good groups do and what Christians do? The difference is that as Christians we do good because of God's love for us. As Christians, we choose to become followers of Jesus and to be Jesus' hands and feet in the world. When we do the works of Jesus in this world, we serve people who need food, water, clothing, or hospitality. But when we do these things, we are reminded this morning that we are also doing these things to Jesus at the same time. Paul says, "***Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men***" (Colossians 3:23).

6. Application

Rev. Cho-Kim has been an active part of our church during the time she has been here. She joined the choir, taught Bible study, and preached twice. Many of us have been blessed by her presence in our community. After the April Bible study, she won't be able to continue to worship with us. Yet she wishes for us to be a thriving congregation. Her vision for all Christians is to move forward "from a spiritualist to a true follower of the Way filled with the Holy Spirit; from a baby Christian to a mature Christian; from a passive member of a church to a disciple of Jesus Christ; from a reluctant bystander to a faithful participant; from an ungrateful worker to a thankful steward; from a bitter victim of injustice to a courageous change agent; from a mere baptized Christian to an ambassador representing the kingdom of God." She has been pursuing such a faithful and dedicated life. God would say to her, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

I pray that although she may not be physically near to us, God will continue to use her to share God's abundant love with other people and that we will continue to love others in our community with passion and enthusiasm. Many people may not know what we do, but God knows and will be grateful for our sharing. Amen.