

World Day Sermon

Young Oon Kim
May 3, 1973



I wish to share with you a story from the Apocrypha. The term "Apocrypha," a Greek word meaning "hidden things," was used in different ways. Sometimes the term referred to writings so important and precious that they had to be hidden from the general public and reserved only for the inner circle of believers. Other times, the term referred to writings which were hidden, not because they were too good, but because they were not good enough, secondary or questionable or heretical. However, today, the Christian Church generally follows Jerome's use of Apocrypha to refer only to those literary works not included in the Hebrew canon. We don't know the dates of these books; however, the practice of collecting them into a separate unit dates from the early 16th century.

The story I wish to share is included in the Apocryphal first book of Esdras and took place during the reign of Darius, King of Persia from 521 to 486 BC. Darius abolished all the autonomous kingdoms of his predecessor Cyrus the Great and divided the whole empire into "satrapies," each satrap being a Persian official with supreme authority in civil affairs and with a division of the army to maintain him and support him against outside attack.

One evening King Darius held a great feast for all those under him, his household, the chief men of Media and Persia, and the satraps and commanders and governors of his empire in the hundred and twenty-seven satrapies from India to Ethiopia. When they had eaten and drunk their fill, they went away, and King Darius withdrew. Then the three young men of the King's personal bodyguard said to each other: "Let each one of us name the things which he judges the strongest; and to the one whose opinion seems wisest King Darius will give rich gifts: purple clothing, golden eating vessels, and a golden bed, a chariot with gold-studded bridle, a fine linen turban, and a chain for his neck. His wisdom will win him a seat next to Darius and the title Kinsman of Darius." Then each wrote down his own statement, sealed it, and put it under the King's pillow.

One wrote "Wine is strongest," the second wrote "The king is strongest," and the third wrote "Women are strongest, but truth conquers all." When the King rose and was presented with what they had written, he summoned all the chief men of Persia and Media, satraps, commanders, governors, and chief officers. Then he took his seat in the council chamber, and what had been written was read before all. Then the young men were called to expound on what they had written.

The first, who wrote about the strength of wine, began. "Sirs," he said, "how true it is that wine is strongest! It dissolves the mind of all who drink it; king and orphan, slave and free, rich and poor, it has the same effect on them all. It turns all thoughts to revelry and mirth; it brings forgetfulness of grief and debt. It makes all feel rich and tend to exaggerate. When they are tipsy, they forget to be friendly to friends and relations, and are quick to draw their swords; when they have recovered from their wine, they cannot remember what they have done. Sirs, is not wine the strongest, seeing that it forces men to behave in this way?"

Then the second, the one who wrote of the strength of the king, began his speech: "Sirs, is not man the strongest, man who masters the earth and the sea and all that is in them? The strongest of men is the king; he is their lord and master, and they all obey his commands. If he bids them make war upon one another, they do it; if he dispatches them against his enemies, they march and level mountains and walls and towers. They kill and are killed; they do not disobey the King's orders. If they are victorious, they bring their spoils to the king. Those who work the land, sow and reap and bring their produce to the king. Though he is no more than one man all his people and his troops obey him. Besides this, while he himself sits at table, and goes to sleep, they stand in attendance round about him. They can never disobey him in anything. Sirs, of course, the king must be strongest when he commands such obedience!"

The third, Zerubbabel, who wrote about women and truth, said: "Sirs, it is true that wine is strong, and the king who commands many subjects is mighty, but who rules over them? Who is the sovereign power? Women surely! The king and all his people who rule the land and sea were born of women. Women raised the men who planted the vineyards which yield the vine. They make clothes for men and bring honor to men; men cannot do without women. If men have amassed gold and silver and all kinds of beautiful things, and see a woman with a lovely face and figure, they leave all these things to gape and stare at her.

They will all choose her in preference to gold or silver or beautiful things. A man will desert his father

who brought him up, desert even his country, and stay with his wife to the end of his days. Here is the proof that women are your masters: do you not toil and sweat, then give all you earn to your wives? A man will take his sword and go forth to plunder and rob, to sail on the sea; he faces lions, he travels in the dark; and when he has robbed. and plundered, he brings the spoil home to his beloved.

"A man loves his wife more than his father or mother. For women's sakes many men have been driven out of their minds, many have been sold into slavery, many have died or come to grief or ruined their lives. Do you believe me now? Certainly the king wields great authority; not one country dare lift a finger against him. Yet I watched him with Apame, his favorite concubine.

She was sitting on the king's right; she took the diadem off his head and put it on her own, and slapped his face with her left hand, and the king only gazed at her. When she laughed at him, he laughed; when she was cross with him, he coaxed her to make up. Sirs, if woman do as well as this, how can their strength be denied?" The king and the chief men looked at one another.

Zerubbabel then went on to speak about truth: "Sirs, we have seen that women are strong. The earth is vast, the sky is lofty, the sun swift in his course, for he moves through the circle of the sky and speeds home in a single day. How great is he who does all this! But greater and stronger than all else is truth. The whole earth calls on truth; the sky praises her. All created things shake and tremble; with her there is no injustice. There is injustice in wine, in kings, in women, in all men, and in all their works. There is no truth in them; they shall perish in their injustice. But truth abides and is strong for ever; she lives and rules for ever.

With her there is no favoritism or partiality; she chooses to do justice rather than what is unjust and evil. All approve her works; in her judgments there is no injustice. Hers are strength and royalty, the authority and majesty of all ages. Praise be to the God of truth!"

So he ended his speech, and all the people shouted, "Great is truth. Truth is strongest!" Then King Darius said to him, "Ask what you will, even beyond what is in the writing, and I will grant it. For you have been proved the wisest, and you shall sit by me and be called my Kinsman."

Then Zerubbabel said to the king, "Remember the vow you made on the day when you came to the throne. You promised to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple which the Edomites burnt when Judaea was ravaged by the Chaldeans, and to send back all the vessels taken from it. This is the favor that I now beg of you, my lord king, this is the magnanimity I request that you should perform the vow which you made to the King of Heaven."

King Darius stood up and kissed him, and wrote letters for him to all the treasurers, governors, commanders, and satraps instructing them to give safe conduct to him and to all those who were going up with him to rebuild Jerusalem. To all the governors in Syria and Phoenicia and in Lebanon he wrote letters ordering them to transport cedar-wood to Jerusalem and join with Zerubbabel in building the city. He gave all Jews going up from the kingdom to Judaea letters assuring their liberties; that no officer, satrap, governor, or treasurer should interfere with them, that all land which they should acquire would be immune from taxation, and that the Edomites should surrender the villages they had seized from the Jews. Each year twenty talents were to be contributed to the building of the temple until it was finished, and a further ten talents annually for burnt offerings to be sacrificed daily upon the altar in accordance with their law. All those who were going from Babylonia to build the city were to enjoy freedom, and their descendants after them. He gave written orders that all the priests going there should also receive maintenance and the vestments in which they would officiate; that the Levites too should receive maintenance until the day when the building of the temple and Jerusalem was completed. He sent back all the vessels which Cyrus had set aside. All that Cyrus had commanded, he reaffirmed, ordering everything to be restored to Jerusalem.

When the young man, Zerubbabel, went out, he turned his face toward Jerusalem, looked up to heaven, and praised the King of Heaven. "From thee comes victory," He said, "from thee comes wisdom; thine is the glory and I am thy servant. All praise to thee who hast given me wisdom; to thee I gave thanks, O Lord of our fathers."

This story is full of wisdom and lessons for life and I wanted to share it with you. Thus Zerubbabel became the first governor of Judaea after leading home the first group of returning Babylonian captives. Then he began his great work of rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and the temple.

Zerubbabel's statement that truth is the strongest is true. Zerubbabel was powerfully motivated to help Darius be truthful to his vow to rebuild Jerusalem, the temple, and return the temple vessels. Today we are not bound by such a motive. Then what is truth? Somewhere in the Divine Principle, it is said that the truth is the explanation of God's will. Is this all truth is? Today I would like to interpret the truth as the law of cause and effect which seem to be so absolute and the strongest. Through this law I receive clear direction and guidance in all complex and unjust situations. In the short run, everything looks unjust, but

in the long run, everything works in accordance with this law.

I will explain what I mean. Some people in loving God may fall into selfishness. "Ah, He's the God of Agape, unconditionally giving love. Therefore He will do what I want. And I want Him to fulfill my desires." This kind of feeling is not love that will please God.

When you really deeply know God, you see clearly how the law of cause and effect works. We want to be close to God. But we know the absolute goal He has. All of His energy is poured into the accomplishment of this goal. Unless we come to love and work for that goal, we cannot raise the quality of our spirit as high as He is. Only by doing this can we attract His love. Often I just burst out, "I'm so grateful for this law." It is a source of energy for me. Whatever we have done, small or large, good or evil, will return to us in the same way. Whatever we sow, we reap. There is an exact relationship between what we put out and what returns to us. This means we can depend on God and the absolute working of cause and effect.

All we need to do is to live our own lives in accordance with the law in order to develop the qualities that will attract Him'. I share such a tender sweet affection with God; and, at the same time, I feel absolute solemnity because of the law." We can perhaps express these as love and truth. When I interpret truth as the law of cause and effect, I feel a precise relationship.

To the extent that I live in accordance with the law, do I feel His infinite, embracing love. Without any sign I feel that He has approved and accepted me and is embracing me. To me law and love are not contradictory. God's love flows to me to the degree of my obedience to His law. Therefore, I don't expect or pray that God give me grace without regard for my actions. I rather pray that He give me the wisdom and strength to live naturally and gladly in accordance with His absolute law. Living this way, we can be completely free from fear and guilt. So we don't worry about judgment, immediate or final. Now, today, on this earth, we want to live according to that law. In this way our life is happy, full of hope and challenge.

Since this is World Day, let's look at the law of cause and effect in relation to material things. On the first World Day our Leader made a symbolic condition to restore all things to God. This does not mean that all things are now God's. The actual restoration of all things is still dependent on our sweat and blood.

As we win people's hearts one by one, we also have to win material things little by little from Satan's realm to God's. And through that process I am sure God will bless and help us to reclaim large amounts. But we can't look for these big results from the beginning. We must labor with our sweat and blood. It is against the law of cause and effect to gain a large reward without effort. If so, one day we will lose it all. We have a saying in Korea: No red flower lasts for more than 10 days; no power lasts for more than 10 years; no wealth lasts for more than 3 generations. This means that the generation which inherits great wealth easily will not hold it but will lose it. The one who receives wealth without effort will not appreciate its value, and will waste it, and eventually lose it. Therefore, there will be no free gift unless it is given on the condition of indemnity paid by someone visibly or invisibly.

Even before Leader blessed World Day, material goods were used for sacred purposes. I want to look at several such incidents from the Bible. At first, while man's spiritual state was so distant from God, there was no way for man to approach Him directly and closely. The sacrifice of a material thing provided reconciliation between man and God which man himself could not yet do.

As the Hebrews developed the law of sacrifice, they offered unblemished pure animals, or the first and best of their crops. For the animal sacrifices they often used cows, sheep, and pigeons. These animals were not only what the Jewish people commonly possessed, but they also had spiritual significance.

Cows symbolize' patient, industrious, persevering, hardworking character. Sheep symbolize innocent, obedient, gentle character. The dove represents the same. By sacrificing these animals, the Hebrews, knowingly or unknowingly, were offering to God their own qualities of industry, patience, gentleness, obedience, and innocence. Each of us should offer Him the same qualities through our prayers.

The three wise men from the East offered as gifts gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which respectively signify loving, prayerful, joyful, acknowledgement and thanks. Through such symbolic gifts the Persian astronomers expressed their thanks and homage to the baby Jesus. Another beautiful instance is that of a woman anointing Jesus' feet with precious ointment and then wiping them with her hair. Because of her love and dedication to Jesus expressed through this action, her sins were forgiven. The ointment and the woman's action expressed her love and thanks more dramatically and beautifully than any words could have. Jacob used all the animals he earned from Laban to reconcile himself and his brother Esau. This material expression was more effective in melting Esau's hostile heart than anything else Jacob could have done.

Dr. Schweitzer chose to serve mankind through material means in medicine, even though he could have used his theological achievement or musical ability. But he chose to serve the Africans through medicine

and thereby save many physical lives. Through saving their physical bodies, he taught them the words of God and saved their spiritual lives. Without material means his work would have been less effective. Material can vastly extend the scope of our services. Material is great, it is not despicable, somewhere the Bible says that David before he became famous was traveling with some companions and they were all very hungry. They went to the sanctuary and asked for bread. On the altar was some bread which was supposed to remain there several more days, but the high priest gave it to them. The saving of David's life was so important that the violation of regulation by the priest was not only forgiven but was praised by Jesus.

In Second Kings it says that the leprous Syrian army commander Naaman went to Elisha for healing and was told to go down to the River Jordan and wash his body. The River Jordan is very muddy and shallow. This command may have seemed insulting to this great foreign general, but he obeyed and was healed. A blind man was brought to Jesus for healing. Jesus spat on the ground to make mud which he put on the man's eyes and told him to go to Lake Siloam and wash his eyes. The blind man obeyed and received his sight. It is interesting to see how divine power is manifested not directly but through a material thing like mud and water.

Recently I saw people bless and express love to plants. Even inanimate plants can feel the vibration of love and blessing and grow well in it, whereas plants which are ignored or mistreated wither and die. In that sense, Jesus' cursing the fig tree because it didn't bear fruit may actually have caused the tree to wither. Therefore, the material itself must be happy and fulfilled when it is used for a good purpose.

In Luke (16:9) we read, 'So I say to you, use your worldly wealth to win friends for yourselves, so that when money is a thing of the past you may be received into an eternal home.' Material per se has little value. As this verse says, using wealth to make friends, we may be able to buy eternal life. The same wealth used for one's own selfish interest or pleasure will bring one the name pig.

Again in Luke (16:10-12) we read, "The man who can be trusted in little things can be trusted also in great, and the man who is dishonest in little things is dishonest also in great things! If, then, you have not proved trustworthy with the wealth of this world, who will trust you with the wealth that is real? And if you have proved untrustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own?"

Trustworthiness is inward and invisible; it cannot manifest externally, but through the use of material such inward value can be expressed. Our body is also material. We can manifest our inward trustworthiness through discipline of our bodies. When physical energy is used for merely sensual pleasure, the life is wasted. However, whenever that energy is used for higher purposes, for other individuals, for the nation, for mankind, for God, the energy is multiplied. With the same chunk of material depending upon its use, two results are possible: loss of life and waste of the investment of energy, or gain of life and measureless multiplication of the investment of energy.

I recall several incidents where the use of material caused tragic results. One is that of Ananias and his wife Sapphira. Previously Simon Peter had received the Holy Spirit and his manifestation of the great power of God inspired the people to sell their possessions and live communally, fasting together, witnessing together, and helping the poor together. Ananias and his wife felt compelled to sell their property and contribute. But according to the story, acting either from greed or fear of want, they gave only part of the price they received to Peter saying it was all. Peter with spiritual power exposed their deceit with the words, "You have lied not to men but to God." When Ananias and his wife heard these words, they dropped dead. They would not have been judged if they had told the truth. A second event concerns Judas Iscariot. For 30 pieces of silver he betrayed his master and committed an historical crime. In these two incidents insignificant material misused brought destruction of both spirit and body.

In the early days of our movement our Leader used to say our church money is heavenly treasure. If we misuse government money, we will be imprisoned according to civic law. If we misuse heavenly money, how much greater will be the indemnity to be paid by us or by our posterity. When our Leader gave \$500.00 to each pioneer, I wished each one would feel solemn responsibility for this money and use it wisely. If one cannot do the work, then he should return the money.

Elsewhere in the Bible, perhaps in the books of Moses, the chosen people were commanded to offer tithes to God. Why does the Creator of the whole universe need a tithe, some small material from us? When we think of Palestinian peasants, what a tiny insignificant gift their offering would be, only a few grains or corn, a small lamb, or pigeon. Why does God want that? Tithe means one tenth. The number ten signifies the whole, entirety.

We have ten fingers by which we signify the whole. In the parable of the ten virgins, five wise and five foolish, Jesus meant by the number ten the whole of mankind, the entire church on earth. One tenth, then, means the first and best out of the whole. Therefore, tithing meant giving God the first and best part of the man, that is, our heart and life itself. To bring our whole life under His dominion is tithing. Our heart and body will be in His domain. This is what God wanted through tithing. God didn't want that small portion

of material but our heart and life, and He wanted to teach that lesson to mankind.

One more illustration. When the multitude were following Jesus in the desert and it was time for eating, there was not enough food. The disciples were worried, but a small boy brought out five loaves and two fishes which Jesus blessed and fed to the multitude. Whether this was miraculously done or the multitude, inspired by the boy, brought out their own food, all had a satisfying meal. Not only the multitude of that time but countless Christians have been satisfied and inspired by this story, in which a seemingly insignificant material could be magnified and glorify God when it is used for higher purpose.

Jesus said where your treasure is, there your heart is. I would put it a little differently. Where your heart is, your treasure would follow. Where our heart is inclined, to whom our heart is dedicated, our treasure will follow. Would that not be the meaning of tithing? Therefore, in a restored world, our heart and body and our treasure would be in God's domain to be used for the purpose of goodness, loving God and conveying God's love to man.

To commemorate this World Day, I pray that our life is gradually led in this direction of complete harmony of heart, mind, body, and material. Invest your heart in God, and let your material goods be the means through which we invest God's heart in others. Some decades ago when I was innocently ascetic, I despised material things. I thought that without them my spirit would be free from burden and had less chance to deviate from God. I often remembered the words of Jesus which say, "store treasure in heaven.., not on earth." But then I discovered that material provides freedom and means to accomplish what heart and mind wish.

Therefore, in God, everything can be sacred and useful when we have the right relationship with Him and understand His will fully. Whatever we sow, we harvest. Let us remember this even in the material realm. Let the material play a significant and extensive role in the Father's dispensation of Restoration.