****

May 20, 2018

**Glory to God Alone**

Elaine Liang\*

\*Elaine is a recent seminary graduate and ruling elder at IPC. She and her husband Jonathan are involved in starting a new worshipping community among the Mandarin speaking of the East Bay Area. If you’re interesting in helping them send an email to: [jonathanelaine2017@gmail.com](mailto:jonathanelaine2017@gmail.com).

**Romans 3:23**

*...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

**John 12:23-28**

*23 Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. 25 Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.  
  
27 “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name!”  
  
Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.”*

*New International Version*

**I. Mission and China**

Today is Mission Sunday and I want talk about missions in China. Let’s begin with a two minute documentary called Missionary which tells about the history of the gospel in China.

It was these missionaries who sacrificed themselves one by one in the past two thousand years so that the gospel was able to come to China. It is believed that the earliest missionary to China was St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus. He went to Asia to preach gospel and was finally stabbed to death and buried in India.

In 1842, some missionaries from America came to my hometown of Xiamen to preach the gospel. Later, my great-grandfather became a pastor. This is a picture taken in 1946 showing my great-grandfather and some missionaries. I am a sixth generation Christian in my family. These are pictures of my brother and I taken at our hometown church. Today, thousands of millions of Chinese believe in Jesus Christ.

Today’s China is suddenly rising up and soaring. Many think that Christianity has nothing to do with the success of China. But in fact, all aspects in life of China are inseparable from the first work of the missionaries. Missionaries not only introduced the gospel to China, but also established China’s modern education and university system, sports, medicine and charity. They enormously sacrificed themselves. The famous missionary Hudson Taylor once said *“If I had a thousand pounds, China should have it; if I had a thousand lives, China should have them.”* Why did they love China so much? Hudson Taylor said “No! Not China, but Christ.” The missionaries did not seek for their reputations, their personal benefits or other people’s appreciation, but only for Christ, for God's glory alone.

I got to know Elder Ron and Joan at the first Northern California Chinese Presbyterian Church Conference in September of 2015. They sponsored this conference to help spread the gospel to the Chinese even though at that time Joan had been diagnosed with cancer. I remembered how they led our worship and devotion. Joan’s love for the Chinese people，her solid joy and faith deeply shocked me. Under their invitation, I came to the Tri－City Free Breakfast Program. There I saw many volunteers who were busy serving, some of them with fully grey hair. They couldn’t speak Mandarin, but have served the Chinese in our neighborhood for more than 20 years. Why do they love the Chinese so unselfishly? We know it is for Christ to glorify God. This is the picture of that first day at that breakfast showing the banner on the wall. Don’t you think Joan and volunteers in our church are all missionaries in our daily life?

China’s mission not only means crossing the ocean to mainland China, but also serving the Chinese in our neighborhood. China’s mission not only existed in the past, but also exists today and will continue in the future. I saw the missionary fire in our church, and at the same time saw more and more Chinese moving into our neighborhood. I have a vision to reach the Chinese with the good news of Jesus Christ. That’s the reason my husband Jonathan and I joined this church. I would like to give thanks to you on behalf of all those Chinese who have ever received and will receive your services. All of your support to China’s mission and giving to our Lord are much appreciated. May all glory be to God.

**II. Surrender and Sacrifice**

Why did God send so many missionaries to China to spread gospel? Why did God pay such a great price to save all of us? How much is it for human beings to be worthy for God to sacrifice His only begotten son for us? Because God wants to restore His image in us. The price of our redemption is the very image He placed in us when He first created us.

Paul said in Romans 3:23 *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* This is very important! We have sinned and it is not only our own business we hurt. but God in creating us put His own image in us so that we could be His witnesses and reveal His glory. When we sin, we not only fall short of our own, but also short of others, short of society, more importantly we fall short of God.

God saved us not only because He loves us but He also wants to restore His glory in us. Therefore, we can’t treat our faith as something like selfish games only for our own benefits. The supreme pursuit of our faith is to glorify God. Jesus said we must be the light of the world and let our light shine before people. Then he continued to say, so that they may see our good works and glorify our heavenly Father. To glorify God is our chief end，just like the missionaries are called to do. Their chief and highest end is also to fulfill God’s calling and glorify God.

How to glorify God? The most important and difficult is to surrender and to sacrifice.

In John chapter 12 verse 23 Jesus said that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. What does it mean to be glorified? Jesus continued to explain that unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seed. To be glorified means to fall to the ground and die.

For Jesus, to be glorified, meant dying on the cross. Remember how before Jesus went to the cross, he struggled in prayer. He did not pray for his own will, but God’s will be done. He obeyed to God and sometimes the consequence of surrender is sacrifice.

Jesus sent a calling that whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. Meanwhile Jesus gave a promise that his Father would honor the one who served him. Honor means glory.

**Chariots of Fire**

There is an Oscar winning movie called Chariots of Fire. It’s the story of Scotland’s Eric Liddell who refused to run the 100 meter sprint in the 1920 Paris Olympics because the event was to be run on a Sunday. In doing so he offended many people, including the Queen of England. But he was given special permission to compete in the 400 meter event that was going to held during the week. Just before the race, his older sister passed him a note with the phrase;. *“He who glorifies God, God will glorify him.”* Eric surprised the world by winning the 400 meter event which wasn’t even his specialty. God honored him because he first honored God. Later, Eric became a missionary to China, was captured by the Japanese and died in a prison camp. Eric’s last words were, "It's complete surrender". A world famous Olympic champion ended his life in such miserable way. While the world may not admire and respect missionaries, Jesus said his Father would honor the one who serves him. He who glorifies God, God will glorify him in eternity.

**III. Prompting and Action**

Our Lord Jesus was like the first kernel of wheat planted, and afterwards produced many seeds. Missionaries followed our Lord one by one. We too can follow our Lord and serve him just like those whether it be in our homes, churches and society. Sometimes, although we are willing in our hearts, we have been slow to obey and deny ourselves in our actions, so that God’s plan for us could not be fulfilled and we could not glorify God.

**The Story of Miss Ding**

As a child my grandmother often told me the story of a missionary called Miss Ding. No one knew her full name. She never married. People just called her Miss Ding. She came to the remote rural countryside in the Fujian province to preach the gospel and teach English. She was a coworker of my great-grandfather. In the 1950s, the Communist Party of China deported her she returned to England. When she left China - her second hometown, she was old and alone. After that, no one could contact her. She became just a story to me as a child. Later, after I believed in the Lord Jesus, this blurry memory would often inspire me. What kind of motivation drove her to give up the most precious youthful years of her life and come to an unfamiliar country to serve those strangers？

Ten years ago, when I lived in the southern United States, I was prompted to apply to a seminary. However, because of cross-cultural difficulties, I gave up and returned to China. I felt like a deserter. But God was full of mercy. Six years ago, I clearly confirmed God’s calling, and returned to the United States to be equipped in the seminary. Once again I was faced with different challenges, such as academic, language, and economic pressures, as well as the frustrations of ministry. I almost ran away. But so often at the right moment, Miss Ding became my biggest encouragement. Her wholeheartedness on mission, her surrender and sacrifice not only affected my great-grandfather, my grandpa, grandma, but also deeply influenced me. My grandpa and grandma stood strong during persecution in the Cultural Revolution, and bravely rebuilt the church. Today, with the unlimited grace of God, my husband Jonathan and I have the opportunity to start a Mandarin ministry here. Even though there are many challenges, we believe none of them are bigger than the challenges met by Miss Ding, my grandpa or grandma.

**Conclusion**

Today is our Mission Sunday. May the Holy Spirit who moves missionaries move us in a double portion. Whatever the Holy Spirit moves us to do whether it be handing out flyers in the community, inviting neighbors or friends to our Mandarin Life Group on Wednesday evenings or hopefully soon a Mandarin language Sunday worship service here we invite Christians who speak Mandarin to be coworkers with us. But we always invite those who don’t speak Mandarin to be our partners in prayer, in donations and in helping provide childcare for our little ones. Whatever it is that we’re called to do let us bravely obey God’s calling, and by this prompting move forward. No matter what the consequences are, no matter how much time we have left we will continue, whether we see the results or not. Do not be afraid or discouraged but move forward, because missions is God’s will for us. Along the way of following our Lord and serving him we have pain, sacrifice, our own cross, and our own persecution, but remember as long as we continue to surrender and sacrifice, in the end we will see the glory of God.

Let’s pray: Dear Lord, we come before you and say thank you for your grace. In the ancient past you remembered China, you kept sending missionaries to save us such unworthy sinners to become your children, your witnesses and a blessing for others. Dear Lord, please guard our hearts, do not quench the Holy Spirit, prompt us to action, with complete surrender and sacrifice to you. May your glory manifest in our life. May all glory to our God forever and ever, we pray in Jesus name, amen!

**TO LEARN MORE**

**Join a Wednesday Night Life Group (now also in Mandarin)**

**510/657-3133**

**To learn and encourage one another**

**IF YOU’D LIKE TO KNOW HOW TO**

**GET STARTED IN FAITH**

**1. Recognize that everyone has sinned and fallen short of God’s ideal**

**Romans 3:23-24**

**2. Know that the wages or payment for sinning is death**

**Romans 6:23**

**3. But God loved us so much that He sent His only Son to die for us**

**Romans 5:8**

**4. It is our responsibility to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and allow Him to become the master of our life**

**Romans 10:13**

**Invite Jesus into your heart by praying something like the prayer below…**

*“Dear Lord Jesus, in many ways I have sinned against you. I am sorry and want to turn from my sinful ways. I invite you to come into my heart and begin to make me like yourself. I commit my life wholeheartedly to you now. Thank you for saving me.”*